

Reflections on the Qatna Letters TT1–5 (I): Hittite Expansionism and the Syrian Kingdoms

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[The Qatna letters TT1–5 are hereby analysed from a geopolitical point of view. The aim is to contribute to sharpening our understanding of Šuppiluliuma’s conquests in Syria and the Levant, which precipitated the fall of Mittani. The difficulty to interpret these texts lies in the fact that the chain of events following the so-called First Syrian War (ca. 1340)—i.e., incursions, rebellions, betrayals, and coups d’état in a number of city-states in the Orontes course—probably happened at full speed. Thus, we need to understand the geopolitical grounds that influenced the furtive policies and ‘under the table’ dealings that no doubt took place among the different actors.]

Keywords: Geopolitics, Toponymy, Diplomacy, Qatna, Šuppiluliuma, Idanda, Hittite empire, Syria.

Introduction

Idanda’s archive, found at the remains of the Qatna royal palace, comprises over 60 texts. Their findspot led to conclude that the tablets were current and not ready to be filed when the palace was destroyed, and that Idanda was thus the last Qatna ruler to live in the complex—no text from the days of Akizzi, Idanda’s successor, has been found to date at Tell Mišrife.²

Five diplomatic letters, namely TT1–5 (Richter & Lange 2012: 44–75), stand out. The geopolitical issues dealt with in them provide a ‘bottom-up’ view of the Hittite takeover of Syria. TT1–5 have been dated to the aftermath of the First Syrian War, used as *terminus post quem*.³ The

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2. See Novák 2004: 304 and 313; Richter 2005: 109–110 and 121–122. The texts (TT1–62) are published in Richter & Lange 2012: 44–132 and 167–172. I follow their transliterations and translations of letters TT1–5, except where noted. As opposed to Akkadian terms, the Hurrian ones are marked in regular font.

3. Richter 2005: 123–125; Gromova 2012: 2; see *contra* Freu 2009: 12–18. The First Syrian War is also known as the “One-year Campaign”, after Šuppiluliuma’s famous boast: “Because of the hostility of Tušratta, the king, I plundered all these lands in a single year, and conveyed them to the Land of Ḫatti. I incorporated them into my territory from Mount Niblani and from the opposite bank of the Euphrates.” (CTH 51 = Beckman 1999, no. 6A, §5 A obv. 45–47; see Bryce 2005: 163). On the duration of the First Syrian War, see Cordani 2011b: 249–251; Gromova 2013: 100.

First Syrian War is believed to have taken place around Akhenaton's 6th or 7th regnal year.⁴ During or immediately following that year, a coalition of kingdoms including Nuḥašše, Niya, and Mukiš rebelled and was suppressed by the Hittites; the attack on Ugarit depicted in CTH 45–47 belongs to this period.⁵ However, nailing down the length and phases of this anti-Hittite uprising remains elusive. At some point, King Idanda was overthrown and Akizzi succeeded, claiming loyalty to Egypt in five Amarna letters (EA 52–56). Akizzi's coming to power is thus a *terminus ante quem* for TT1–5.

As of yet, we have not comprehended the events depicted in TT1–5, nor have we been able to locate them within the historical-political framework that the First Syrian War extant documentation (mainly, the El Amarna archive and Hittite chronicles and historical preambles to vassal treaties) allows us to reconstruct. Thus, I intend to focus on the five letters in order to uncover the geopolitical motivations and particular interests of each of the actors in the First Syrian War. The aim is to sharpen the conflict details both chronologically and geographically.

To achieve this, I will first bring in certain passages in the letters—difficult to fathom due to the intricate mixture of Hurrian and Akkadian. Secondly, I will analyse the actors and the geographical names mentioned. Both provide information on the geographic scope of the conflict and the political strategies adopted by each entity, as well as each actor's own motivations. The results will then be compared with the information on the First Syrian War supplied by other sources.

As argued below, the extant evidence shows that the Hittite advance caused a succession of intertwined decisions by different individuals who defended the interests of their realm (kings and officials) or their own (contenders or usurpers). The resulting conflicts of interests, incursions, uprisings, and plots likely remained a constant until the Hittite grip of Syria became firm. Still, it seems that the period covered by TT1–5 and the documentation considered here was relatively short. Idanda himself was accused of double play by Šuppiluliuma and he may have also been pressured by the Qatna *maryannu* regarding his policy.

2. The Letters TT1–TT5

The five letters present an interesting mix of Akkadian and Hurrian languages. The latter represents about 25% of the total vocabulary in the letters; neither Akkadian nor Hurrian are believed to have been the local spoken language in LBA Qatna.⁶ They are addressed to Idanda by three different sources: Takuwa of Niya (TT1, TT2, TT3), an officer of Šuppiluliuma I named Ḫannutti (TT3, TT4), and Šarrupše of Nuḥašše (TT5). Takuwa and Ḫannutti co-authored TT3.

4. Wilhelm 2015: 75–77. Cf. Cordani 2011a: 107–113; 2013: 45.

5. Šuppiluliuma's letters and treaties/edicts, CTH 45 (RS 17.132 = PRU 4, 35 = Beckman 1999, no. 19), CTH 46 (RS 17.340 = PRU 4, 48 = Beckman 1999, no. 4), and CTH 47 (RS 11.772+ = PRU 4, 44 = Beckman 1999, no. 28A). Contrary to the conventional interpretation, Devecchi (2012: 640–644) considers CTH 46 an edict, not a treaty. Ugarit was a vassal of Egypt (Singer 1999: 621–627; Essbach 2021: 27–73), as shown by EA 45 (written by Ammištamru) and EA 49 (by Niqmaddu II), but accepted Hittite overlordship peacefully, probably overwhelmed by Šuppiluliuma's quick advance. CTH 45–47 detail Šuppiluliuma's military help to Niqmaddu II of Ugarit, who remained loyal to Ḫatti when Mukiš, Nuḥašše, and Niya rebelled. See Altman 2001: 36; Bryce 2005: 164–165; cf. Richter & Lange 2012: 156–157; Devecchi 2013: 90–91; Gromova 2013: 99–105 and 111.

6. Richter 2019: 66–67; cf. Richter 2005: 113–115.

Thanks to these letters, the reign of Idanda was chronologically linked to that of Šuppiluliuma I (ca. 1344–1322).⁷

TT1–5 are not dated and cannot be put into sequential order with any certainty. Given the historical developments of the area, one could go as far as dating **TT5** as the earliest.⁸ TT5, the most difficult to interpret, was written by Šarrupše of Nuḥašše, who addressed Idanda as “my lord, my father” (ll. 1–3). This is Šarrupše’s reply to a somewhat accusing letter by Idanda, quoted to have claimed, “Šarrupše does not speak to me truthfully!” (ll. 55–59). The letter mentions the Hittite seizure of Armatte, no doubt the event mentioned by Šuppiluliuma I in TT3 (below). Šarrupše claims loyalty to Idanda, and seemingly tries to convince him not to change sides to Ḫatti—“Now, who took the city of Armatte? What did they do to them?”, Šarrupše asks rhetorically (ll. 67–68).⁹

The remaining four letters, all of them probably drafted by Takuwa’s scribes, show Hittite pressure on Idanda to submit. They reveal that Takuwa and the Hittite Ḫannutti were in close contact; thus, the king of Niya was already subject to Ḫatti. **TT1**, addressed by Takuwa, seems to contain a friendly message to Idanda:¹⁰

⁶ My brother: His Majesty, the King, came to me. ^{7–8} Now, it is your deed which he has examined/bound[?]. ^{9–11} Then, a messenger came to Ḫannutti (and spoke) as follows: ¹² “Thus (speaks) His Majesty, the King: ^{13–15} You have entered[?] the city of Qatna; there is ...[?] ^{15–16} As for you, I do not release (dismiss?) you.” ^{17–19} And now, Ḫannutti passed along with the booty. (...) ^{22–24} And you, do not despair! (lit. do not feed your heart!)

Comments:

8. On the Hurrian term ḫu-šu-qar-a-še (ḫuž=ugar=a=šše) “that which he examined/bound”, cf. Richter 2012: 173 (ḫuš- I); Campbell 2014: 348; Oliva 2015: 301–302 (“alliance”).

13–15. On pa-zu-šu (paz=ož=o) “You have entered”, see Campbell 2014: 348–349; cf. Richter & Lange 2012: 45. Oliva (2015: 318) translates the whole sentence as “You have [in due form] rendered the city of Qatna, may it indeed arrive”.

22–24. See zaz=ul- “feed” (Richter 2012: 360), which here seems to bear an abstract meaning, such as “worry, despair” (cf. TT2: 44). Cf. Oliva 2015: 316–318 (“Do not feed your heart with unwise advice!”).

The message resembles the much longer **TT2**, also by Takuwa. A few expressions are repeated almost exactly; e.g., ll. 33–38, which again mention Ḫannutti having “passed along with the booty” (NAM.RA.MEŠ),¹¹ or ll. 43–44, which encourages Idanda not to despair. The similarities indicate that the two letters were close in time. The first section reads:¹²

7. Richter 2005: 123.

8. The following order has been suggested: TT5–TT4–TT2–TT3–TT1 (Oliva 2021a: 758, n. 15). I refrain from putting TT1–4 into order, since they were likely very close in time.

9. Oliva, forthcoming.

10. Cf. translations by Richter & Lange 2012: 44–46 and Oliva 2015: 317–319.

11. Does this refer to actual booty from campaign lootings or some tribute from Qatna, understood as a set of diplomatic gifts to the Hittites? For instance, the administrative text TT18 has been interpreted as a list of tools and

(...) ⁹⁻¹⁰ And behold, ask your messenger! ¹¹⁻¹² When you supplied the Sutean troops and put them under oath, ¹³⁻¹⁴ I spoke before them as follows: ¹⁴ “I will not (be able to) protect (Idanda)! ¹⁵⁻¹⁷ May (you) protect my brother Idanda until the *hurādu*-troops arrive? ... !”

Thus, Takuwa seemingly refused to give military support to Idanda and sent a Sutean levy back to Qatna before the arrival of a *hurādu*-troops contingent.¹³ However, in the next section Takuwa claimed to have stolen god statues from the enemy and sent them to Idanda for divine protection (ll. 18–32).¹⁴ The unnamed enemy was likely Armatte, given TT5: 12–21—whereby a defeated Armatte returned some god statues to Niya and Qatna.¹⁵ Additionally, Takuwa reported (TT2: 39–42): “I have just been rescued from the hands of the people of Armatte, and hereby, now Nuḫašše comes downwards? before your army”.¹⁶ Finally, after claiming that the king of Ḫatti will conquer “all 100 countries” (ll. 46–48), Takuwa warned Idanda:¹⁷

⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰ As for you, my brother, say (this) before the citizens of Qatna: ⁵¹⁻⁵⁵ “Behold, he will seize whoever resists?, as before, and you will see it for yourselves!”.

In this passage (repeated in ll. 44–46), Takuwa passed on a threat from the Hittites. Besides, the “citizens of Qatna” clearly refer to the *maryannu*, given TT3 and TT4. In **TT3**, addressed to both Idanda and the *maryannu*, Takuwa and Ḫannutti delivered their orders from Šuppiluliuma: “Strengthen Qatna until I arrive!” (ll. 9–12).¹⁸ Still, the Great King threatened Idanda by reminding him of the case of Armatte, which had “changed” and consequently been destroyed (ll. 14–19). In the final section, Takuwa reassured Idanda about the Hittites and about the *hurādu*-troops being underway (ll. 20–29). Takuwa took a stand for Idanda against possible intrigues at Qatna: “Do not despair, I will protect (you)! Show this tablet to the *maryannu*!” (ll. 30–34). However, this contradicts his support refusal in TT2.

TT4, likely also drafted in Niya, is a long warning letter addressed by Ḫannutti in Šuppiluliuma’s name. The Great King accuses Idanda and the *maryannu* of behaving like Šarrupše of Nuḫašše, who allegedly acted duplicitously (ll. 8–17):¹⁹

objects ([ú]-*nu-te*.ME, l. 1) taken by the Hittites as tribute from Qatna (Turri 2015: 327; cf. Richter & Lange 2012: 97). Since the beneficiary is not mentioned and no context is given, I abstain from taking conclusions on TT18.

12. Richter & Lange 2012: 48–49; Baranowski 2018: 31; cf. Oliva 2017: 392–394 and 410.

13. The Hurrian terms *ku-du-ḫa-še-ni-eš* and *am-mi-ša₁₀-an-na* seem to indicate the expected arrival of the *hurādu*-troops (see *amm- II* “ankommen” and *kud-* “fallen” in Richter 2012: 23 and 231–232; Richter & Lange 2012: 50; Campbell 2014: 349; Oliva 2017: 394–400).

14. Oliva 2017: 410; Baranowski 2018: 25; cf. Richter & Lange 2012: 50–51. On god-napping in letters TT1–5, see Torrecilla, forthcoming.

15. Torrecilla, forthcoming.

16. The Hurrian term *du-ra* (l. 42) could be some verbalized form of *turi* “low, inferior” (see *turi II*, Richter 2012: 477), perhaps indicating that the Nuḫašše army was moving south (Sebastian Fischer, on personal communication). Cf. Richter & Lange 2012: 52 (*laufen*); Oliva 2017: 403–404 (*niedergeworfen*).

17. The terms *šu-ta-pu-ul-tu₄* \ *ḫaš-ma-ni* (ll. 45 and 53), still to be fully grasped, seem to refer to some kind of resistance or opposition to Hittite dominion. Cf. Richter & Lange 2012: 52 (“*Diskussion*”); Oliva 2017: 405–411 (“*Aufstand/Ausströmung*”).

18. Richter & Lange 2012: 56; Baranowski 2018: 31. Cf. Oliva 2018: 276–277 (“*Put pressure on Qatna until I arrive!*”).

19. Richter & Lange 2012: 60–61; Campbell 2014: 349–350; Oliva 2019: 297–300 and 310; cf. Gromova 2012: 4–5.

^{8–10} What you do is Šarrupše’s things! Šarrupše came to an agreement with the king of the Land of Hurri. ^{11–12} And (later) he came to me and spoke thus: ‘Save me!’ ^{13–14} I released him from his troubles and Šagappi saved (him). ^{15–17} And now I myself have come and he (i.e., Šarrupše) opened the (city-)gate before me.

The following passage has different interpretations, the most likely having Idanda accused of pillaging cities in Šarrupše’s dominions:²⁰

^{17–20} When Šarrupše took hold of the hem of my robe, who plundered his fields? ^{20–24} Who plundered the fields of Barga and Tunanab and, before, plundered the fields of Yaruqat(ta) and Ugulzat? ^{25–29} And now, (as) Šarrupše went ahead of me, you plundered the fields of Yaruqat(ta) (and) Ugulzat, ^{29–31} and, before, you? (lit. he) plundered Niya (and) Irbid. ^{31–33} Now, you, do not act regarding him (i.e., Šarrupše) for my sake!

Idanda is apparently accused of attacking Šarrupše’s territory, which is remarkable given the alleged alliance between them (TT5). It is also interesting to find Niya among the looted cities, since Niya was supposedly under Hittite control. This may refer to some territorial conflict before the Hittites took over; for all that we know, it could even be a mere exaggeration by a powerful actor playing the victim. Regardless, the most interesting question is, why would Šuppiluliuma not approve of Idanda attacking a king allegedly disloyal to Hatti, such as Šarrupše? The text seems to indicate that, once Šarrupše was subdued (ll. 25–26),²¹ Idanda took the chance to raid Nuḫašše, be it on his own initiative or following Hurrian orders. This angered Šuppiluliuma, who probably assumed that Qatna was acting duplicitously. Perhaps in view of this, Šuppiluliuma looks down on a Hurrian counter-offensive, presuming Mittani dead as a political actor:²²

^{34–35} You (pl.) know that the land of Mittani has been destroyed, ^{36–37} but you are afraid of these 3 chariots! ^{37–39} You will see what they will do!

The next passage is an ultimatum by Šuppiluliuma, who apparently even breaks off negotiations with Qatna. Idanda is notified that, given his actions, Qatna is now on her own:²³

^{40–43} “And now, all the important cities of yours, let the enemies set them free (or: the enemies will set them free), because they demanded them back. ^{43–45} From then on, they

20. Freu 2009: 15; Oliva 2019: 300–301. Richter & Lange (2012: 58–60 and 164–165; also Turri 2016: 154–155; Baranowski 2018: 26) interpret that Barga plundered Tunanab; Yaruqat(ta) plundered Ugulzat, and Niya plundered Irbid. Rendering these cities in pairs seems to support this interpretation; however, why accuse Idanda of lootings perpetrated by others? And concretely, is it not too much a bizarre scenario that Yaruqat(ta) plundered Ugulzat (ll. 22–24) and, afterwards, Idanda pillaged Yaruqat(ta) and an already plundered Ugulzat (ll. 27–28)? In my opinion, Šuppiluliuma mentioned these attacks in TT4 because he blamed the addressee (i.e., Idanda) for them all.

21. The sentence (*ù i-na-an-na mšar-ru-up-še iš-tu ia-ši i-pè-nu*, ll. 25–26) is open to interpretation. Richter & Lange (2012: 60) translate *iš-tu ia-ši i-pè-nu* as “(Šarrupše) went ahead of me” (followed by Baranowski 2018: 26; see *panû* “to move forward, ahead”, CAD P: 98–100), whereas Oliva (2019: 301) translates: “(Šarrupše), unter meinem Befehl, vernichten sie!”. If the former interpretation is correct, it might be a reference to Šarrupše’s escape from Šuppiluliuma (see below).

22. Richter & Lange 2012: 60–63; Baranowski 2018: 25; Oliva 2019: 310; see Bilgin 2018: 207.

23. See Richter & Lange 2012: 63–65; Oliva 2019: 302–307.

will reclaim (the cities); whose (are they)? (Are they) yours? ^{45–46} Then, you, protect your borders! ^{47–49} Indeed, (for) Šarrupše and Takuwa, your brother, I do not provide salvation; ^{49–52} now, (for) you, I will swear: I will abandon you! ^{53–56} And behold, I will not protect (your) gods, like (I protect those of) Niya, like (those of) Ḫalba, like (those of) Mukiš.”

Ḫatti thereby informs Idanda where things stand at. Šuppiluliuma even accuses Idanda of having started giving out the booties (ll. 61–63).²⁴ “Protecting the gods” of a city (ll. 53–56) is to be interpreted as protecting the city itself. Additionally, Šuppiluliuma sends an impressive message of his increasing power by mentioning the vassalage already gained from Niya, Ḫalba, and Mukiš, thereby showing us how the Hittite expansion in Syria developed.²⁵ Finally, Šuppiluliuma threatens Idanda, concerning his southern borders: “And may the gods have mercy when the lands of the king of Qadeš are bordering the capital of your land!” (ll. 64–65).²⁶ Idanda is thus pressured to submit to Ḫatti, lest the king of Qadeš invade Qaṭna.

3. *The Actors*

The actors involved in TT1–5 are as follows. The addressee, **King Idanda of Qaṭna**, was presumed to have ascended the throne or allowed to remain on it thanks to Šuppiluliuma during the First Syrian War.²⁷ However, this is uncertain, and TT1–5 do not inform of Idanda’s accession. It was also proposed that Idanda’s predecessor, Addu-nirari, was the same as Addu-nirari of Nuḫašše (below),²⁸ but, in such case, it would not make sense that Idanda sacked territories of Nuḫašše (so TT4), since they would belong to his own realm. It is likely that Idanda came to terms with Ḫatti once he came to throne.²⁹ Still, the events apparently precipitated after approaching the Hittites and Idanda was overthrown.³⁰ TT1–3 seem to be replies to Idanda’s requests for protection. Idanda’s fate is unknown; his successor, Akizzi, swore loyalty to Egypt but could not avoid the fall of Qaṭna (below).

Takuwa of Niya addresses Idanda as “brother”, confirming that both were ruling their respective cities at that point. Takuwa pledged allegiance to Ḫatti voluntarily, according to CTH 51. While he was submitting to Šuppiluliuma in Mukiš, Takuwa was overruled by his own brother, Aki-Teššup, who confronted the Hittites.³¹ According to CTH 46, Aki-Teššup was the king of Niya

24. Oliva 2019: 307–310; cf. Richter & Lange 2012: 65–66.

25. Oliva 2019: 306–307.

26. Oliva 2019: 309–310; cf. Richter & Lange 2012: 66.

27. See Cordani 2011b: 245 and 250–251. According to Cordani (2013: 55), Idanda’s reign was short, since the Qaṭna inventories testify only to his first regnal year (see Bottéro 1949: 174, inventory I.D, l. 380; Richter 2005: 122). Cf. Fales 2004: 105–110, where a long reign of Idanda is proposed based on the reconstruction of his name in the partially missing colophon of the inventory II. B, l. 46 (MU 18.KAM.MEŠ ša m[x], see Bottéro 1949: 178–179). On Idanda’s reign, cf. Turri 2015: 323–325.

28. Richter 2005: 123–124; see also Gromova 2012: 2; Alexandrov 2014: 257–258; Turri 2015: 320–323.

29. Turri 2016: 154.

30. According to Freu (2009: 21) Idanda’s downfall was caused by Tušratta during Amenophis III’s reign.

31. See Richter & Lange 2012: 156–160; Turri 2015: 261; 2016: 151; Cohen 2017: 304. After detailing his plundering of Waššukanni, Šuppiluliuma I accounts: “[...] Takuwa, king of Niya, came before me for peace terms in the land of Mukiš. But behind the back of Takuwa, his brother Aki-Teššup brought the land of Niya and the city of Niya to hostility. And this Aki-Teššup united the *maryannu*. Hešmiya, Asiri, Zulkiya, Ḫabaḫi, Birriya, and Niruwabi, along with their chariotry and their infantry, made common cause with Akiya, king of Araḫati. They seized the city of Araḫati and

when the anti-Hittite kingdoms attacked Ugarit.³² Aki-Teššup was defeated in Araḫati, probably between Niya and Qatna.³³ Since CTH 51 mentions the taking of Qatna in the days of Aki-Teššup's defeat, it is inferred that Šuppiluliuma reinstated Takuwa in Niya.³⁴ Indeed, the presence of Ḫannutti beside Takuwa (TT1–3) makes it difficult to accept that Aki-Teššup was still planning to rebel. Thus, the Armatte attack reported by Takuwa (TT2) may have belonged to the anti-Hittite uprising.

Šarrupše of Nuḫašše, the author of TT5, is claimed to have submitted to Mittani before moving to the Hittite side (TT4: 8–17). This is no doubt the episode referred to in the Tette Treaty (CTH 53), which also reports that the Hurrian king attempted to murder Šarrupše.³⁵ The latter claimed loyalty and pleaded for Šuppiluliuma's help, using the same expression as in TT4: 12 (*šuzi-pa-an-ni* > *šūzibanni* "Save me!").³⁶ According to CTH 53, Šuppiluliuma was fighting in Išuwa when Šarrupše asked for help,³⁷ hence mentioning that a Hittite official named **Šagappi**—to my knowledge unattested elsewhere—aided Šarrupše before Šuppiluliuma's arrival in Nuḫašše (TT4: 13–17). Thus, both versions of Šarrupše's plea (CTH 53 and TT4) seem to agree. However, the Šattiwaza Treaty (CTH 51) states that Šarrupše escaped or "went into hiding" (*a-ḫi-ti-šu il-ta-ḫi-it*) when Šuppiluliuma arrived in Nuḫašše.³⁸ The CTH 53 section where details on his escape might be given is broken, but there might be a reference to this episode in TT4: 25–26 (see above). Neither CTH 51 nor CTH 53 refer to Šarrupše as 'king', contrary to the usual practice in Hittite vassal treaties; since Šarrupše refers to Idanda as 'lord' and 'father' (TT5: 1), he was probably not the king of Nuḫašše.³⁹

King Addu-nirari of Nuḫašše swore loyalty to Egypt in EA 51, claiming to have rejected Ḫatti's peace proposals (rev., ll. 1–6).⁴⁰ Addu-nirari was also part of the anti-Hittite rebellion; this places his reign very close in time with TT1–5. Šarrupše is not likely to have ruled after fleeing—Šuppiluliuma's harsh remark, "What you do is Šarrupše's doings!" (TT4: 8–9) reveals that he was

began war, thinking: '<Let> us fight with the Great King, King of Ḫatti'. I, Great King, King of Ḫatti, overpowered the city of Araḫati. I captured Akiya, king of Araḫati; Aki-Teššup, brother of Takuwa; and all of their *maryannu*, together with their possessions, and brought them to Ḫatti. I also brought the city of Qatna, together with its belongings and possessions, to Ḫatti." CTH 51 (= KBo 1.1; Beckman 1999, no. 6A §4, A obv. 30–37).

32. Cordani 2011b: 245, n. 31.

33. Klengel 1992: 109; Oliva 2021a: 755. Other than in CTH 51, Araḫati (^{urru}*a-ra-ḫa/aḫ-ti*) is not recorded (see del Monte & Tischler 1978: 28–29). It has been tentatively linked to modern Ariha, between the Rouj Basin and Ebla (Turri 2015: 227).

34. See Hawkins 2013: 418.

35. "When the King of the land of Mittani sought to kill Šarrupše, and the king of the land of Mittani entered the land of Nuḫašše together with his infantry levies and his chariotry, and when he oppressed⁷ him, Šarrupše sent his messenger to the king of Ḫatti, saying: 'I am the subject of the king of Ḫatti. Save me!' And I, My Majesty, sent infantry and chariotry to his aid, and they drove the king of the land of Mittani, together with his troops and his chariotry out of the land of Nuḫašše." CTH 53 = Beckman 1999, no. 7 (§1 A i, ll. 1–11).

36. Weidner 1923: 58; Altman 2001: 28; Freu 2009: 16; Richter & Lange 2012: 161. See AIT 122, below.

37. "(...) And because at that time the land of Išuwa had become hostile to the king of Ḫatti, [I, King] of Ḫatti, [went] to the land of Išuwa. When I had destroyed the land of Išuwa, then [I went] to [the aid] of Šarrupše against the land of Mittani. (...)" CTH 53 = Beckman 1999, no. 7 (§2 A i, ll. 12–22).

38. CTH 51 = Beckman 1999, no. 6A (§5 A, ll. 38–47). Cf. Altman 2004: 258–259; Freu 2009: 12.

39. According to Altman (2001: 37–45; 2004: 261–262), Šarrupše was never a king, but merely a contender to the throne.

40. Moran 1992: 122; Rainey 2015: 401–402. EA 51 is the only letter from Nuḫašše in the Amarna archive since it was a Mittani vassal and was soon conquered by Ḫatti (Cordani 2013: 51). Freu (2009: 17 and 19–20) considers that Addu-nirari of Nuḫašše first swore loyalty to Pharaoh (Smenkhkare, in his opinion) but then switched to Ḫatti before revolting alongside Mukiš and Niya.

not held in high esteem. When the untrusted Šarrupše was removed from the scene, Šuppiluliuma enthroned Tette and made a treaty.⁴¹ Since CTH 53 mentions Šarrupše and not Addu-nirari,⁴² Tette might be a descendant of Šarrupše's, but this is far from certain.⁴³

Ḫannutti, suspected to have been close to the Hittite royal family, participated in military campaigns in Syria and Anatolia during Šuppiluliuma's reign.⁴⁴ Ḫannutti's role in TT1–5 might be the one stipulated later on in CTH 53, whereby Šuppiluliuma pledges to come to the aid of a vassal who asks for military help or send "[...] a prince, or a high-ranking nobleman" in his stead.⁴⁵ In his two missives, Ḫannutti transmitted the words of **Šuppiluliuma**, who was implicated and aware of the chain of events. One wonders whether Šuppiluliuma was campaigning in Išuwa when TT1–5 were drafted.

The *maryannu* of **Qatna** are indirectly involved since Ḫannutti urges Idanda to show them Šuppiluliuma's messages. The *maryannu* were an elite class characterized by their proximity to the local ruler and the possession and use of war chariots. Associated with Mittanian expansion and first appearing in Alalaḫ IV records, the term *maryannu* was adopted by lands interacting with Mittani.⁴⁶ Since the *maryannu* are somehow spoken to in TT3 and TT4, the power of this nobility in Qatna speaks for itself (see below).

Finally, groups of **Suteans** appear, no doubt as mercenaries. They were seemingly led by some Zambuga, mentioned in TT2 and TT5. However, Zambuga could also be an official from Niya.⁴⁷ In TT1–5, the Suteans seem to play a similar part as they (and the *ḫabiru*) did in the Amarna letters.⁴⁸ Zambuga was given the task of escorting the god statues from Niya to Qatna; if he actually was a semi-nomad leader, Takuwa placed a high degree of responsibility and trust in the Suteans. The *ḫurādu-troops* are also mentioned in TT2: 16 and TT3: 25–29, apparently underway to defend Qatna. Definitions for *ḫurādu* vary from elite professional warriors to garrisons or conscripts; wider usages such as 'army' or 'levy' have also been noted in Assyria, Boğazköy, El Amarna, or Ugarit.⁴⁹ The *ḫurādu* in TT1–5 seem to be no ordinary troops or recruits, since they were specifically mentioned to reassure Idanda about the safety of Qatna.

41. According to Freu (2009: 17), Šarrupše was overthrown by Addu-nirari before the latter wrote EA 51. However, this does not seem to agree with an early anti-Hittite attack on Ugarit.

42. Altman 2001: 38–39. The Treaty ignores Addu-nirari unless he was mentioned in the unpreserved last section of the historical preamble (see Beckman 1999, no. 7, §2).

43. According to CTH 63 (= Beckman 1999: 155–158, no. 30), Tette was the grandson of a previous ruler in Nuḫašše (Altman 2004: 257). Tette was thus presumed to be Šarrupše's grandson, but his relation to both Šarrupše and Addu-nirari is unknown (Miller 2013: 615). Later on, Tette revolted against Muršili II with Egypt's help (Bryce 2005: 199–201; Miller 2013: 616).

44. Bilgin 2018: 78 and 206–207; see also Bryce 2005: 151.

45. CTH 53 = Beckman 1996: 50–54, no. 7 (§6 A iii, ll. 1–18).

46. von Dassow 2008: 77 and 96–97; see also 268–314.

47. As suggested by Richter & Lange 2012: 51. This name is found in a few Alalaḫ IV lists and *ḫabiru*-rosters (von Dassow 2008: 497). In AIT 223, a roster believed to record commanders and their troops (von Dassow 2002: 898–900), one Zambuga leads a group of 11 soldiers to the city of Ḫušri (11 *ša* ^m*Za-ʾam*¹-*bu-qa a-na* ^u*Ḫu-uš-ri*, l. 21). However, it would be too much a lucky strike that this Zambuga and that of the Qatna letters were one and the same.

48. See James 2000: 115–116 and 120; Turri 2020: 288.

49. See Postgate 1971: 500–501; Freydanck 1976: 111–115; Stieglitz 1981–1982: 371–372; Vita 1995: 136–144; Jakob 2003: 202–208. See also CAD Ḫ: 244.

4. *Geographical Names (GNs)*

The geographic context of letters TT1–5 covers roughly the territories along the Orontes River course, almost from its very source.⁵⁰ Qaṭna (Tell Mišrife) lies about 50km east of the Orontes, which forms a fertile valley in a narrow land corridor running northwards as far as modern Hatay province (Turkey). Its southern entry was at Qadeš (Tell Nebi Mend), ca. 45km southwest of Qaṭna as the crow flies. Continuing north from Qaṭna, one would reach Tunip and the Ghab marshes, before arriving to Niya and Nuḥašše, situated east of the Orontes.⁵¹ Northward, one could reach Ugarit via the natural path between Jebel Aqra and the Ansariyeh range.⁵² To the east and on the way to Ḥalab lies the fertile Jazr plain (in modern Idlib governorate). The northernmost landmark of the Orontes Valley was Alalaḥ, the capital of Mukiš. Apart from the river, Mukiš was also connected to the Orontes and Idlib through the path nowadays running through Harim and Salqin.⁵³

TT1–5 include fifteen GNs, several of them safely located. **Qaṭna** is, for obvious reasons, the most represented GN (^{uru}*qāt-na*, TT1: 13, 20; TT2: 50; TT3: 9, 27; TT4: 4); together with Niya, it is the only toponym from the letters also found in the rest of the Idanda archive (TT 6–55).⁵⁴ The empires of **Ḥatti** (^{kur}*ḥa-at-te*, TT2: 48, 59; TT5: 37) and **Mittani** (^{kur}*mi-id-da-an-ni*, TT4: 35; ^{kur}*ḥur-ri*^{ki}, TT4: 10; TT5: 63) are recorded. The rest of attested GNs—most of them in TT4 only—are the following:

Armatte (^{uru}*ar-ma-at-te*^{ki}, TT2: 40; TT3: 14; TT5: 9, 12, 67) also appears in several Alalaḥ IV administrative lists. Its location unknown, it is thought to have been a strategically important site in the area between Mukiš, Niya, and Qaṭna.⁵⁵ Armatte is the most recorded GN in TT1–5 after Qaṭna, as the actors discuss its recent fall. According to TT3: 13–16, Armatte was destroyed and looted (likely by the Hittite army) after changing sides, presumably to Mittani or the anti-Hittite rebellion. The fate of Armatte is used as an example to warn Qaṭna of the consequences of not submitting to Ḥatti.⁵⁶ In addition, Takuwa claims to have escaped from an attack of Armatte (TT2: 39–41), whereas Šarrupše states that he was assisted by Armatte before it was taken (TT5: 9–11 and 67–68).

It is debated whether **Nuḥašše** (^{kur}*nu-ḥa-āš-še*, TT2: 42; ^{kur}*nu-ḥa-še*^{ki}, TT5: 16), situated east of the Orontes—between Aleppo and Hama—, was united under a single realm or a complex of different principalities or small kingdoms.⁵⁷ It is also uncertain whether a city called Nuḥašše existed, but TT4: 15–17 seems to confirm it. Tell Khan Sheykhun has been suggested as possible location for Nuḥašše.⁵⁸ Šuppiluliuma's conquest of Nuḥašše may coincide with Aziru's excuses to

50. The Orontes rises in the northern Beqa'a Valley, between East Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon Range, roughly 50km south of ancient Qadeš. See Streck 2005: 131; Turri 2020: 282; map in Turri 2015: 26.

51. Cohen 2017: 304.

52. See map in Yon 2006: 11.

53. Archi & Venturi 2012: 54.

54. Qaṭna also appears in TT6 (a legal deed from the days of Addu-nirari), TT18 (a fragmentary booty inventory), and TT45 (an administrative list). Niya appears in TT33, a grain ration list (PN LÚ ^{uru}*ni-i-ū*^{ki}, l. 10). See Richter 2007: 307–309; Richter & Lange 2012: 173.

55. Turri 2015: 228; see also Belmonte 2001: 33; Oliva 2021b: 394–395. Oliva (2021b) considers the possibility of linking Armatte with Tell Rifa'at, 35 north of Aleppo. Cf. Bryce 2009: 65–66 (Arpad).

56. Oliva 2018: 283.

57. Klengel 1992: 152; Bryce 2005: 166; 2009: 515; Cohen 2017: 304; see also Altman 2004: 258, n. 52; Pfälzner 2012: 780; Turri 2020: 292.

58. Pfälzner 2012: 780. Tell Khan Sheykhun lies ca. 25km east of Qal'at al-Mudiq (Niya?) and 30km northeast of Tell Achareh (Tunip?).

Egypt about remaining in Tunip out of fear of a Hittite attack; according to the king of Amurru, Šuppiluliuma was dwelling in Nuḫašše, “two day-marches to Tunip” (EA 165–167).⁵⁹ Tell Khan Sheykhun is thus a very likely location for Nuḫašše.

In TT2: 41–42, Takuwa tells Idanda, “Now Nuḫašše comes downwards⁹ before your army”. Was he accusing Idanda of cooperating with Šarrupše? Could it be a quote from elsewhere, referring to a Hittite victory over Nuḫašše? Since Takuwa claims to have been saved from the attack of Armatte immediately before (ll. 39–41), one may surmise that he was simply reporting on the movements of the Nuḫašše army, but the contents of TT4 prevents from discarding another accusation on Idanda.

Niya (^{uru}*ni-iki*, TT4: 30, 54; TT5: 15, 17, 41), located between the Orontes and Nuḫašše, was a city-state today identified with Qalat al-Mudīq, next to the Hellenistic city Apamea.⁶⁰ However, because of the proximity to Tell Acharneh, likely ancient Tunip (only 15km south),⁶¹ an alternative location further north has been proposed, namely Tell el-Kerkh in the Rouj Basin (45km north of Qalat al-Mudīq).⁶² The Alalah IV archive indicates that Niya fell under the jurisdiction of Alalah when it was subject to the Hurrian empire.⁶³ The land of Niya is thus presumed to have bordered with Mukiš once independent, extending its dominions through the Middle Orontes course and the Ghab Valley.⁶⁴ In EA 59, the citizens of Tunip express their fear that Aziru of Amurru, a Hittite ally, will do to their city “as he already did to Niya” (ll. 25–28).⁶⁵ Aziru’s presumed aggression to Niya is not recorded elsewhere.⁶⁶

A set of GNs features in TT4: 20–31 (see above). Because the sites are claimed to be looted by a single army in a seemingly short period of time, and because they are referred to as Šarrupše’s dominions, they likely belonged to Nuḫašše.⁶⁷

Barga (^{uru}*bar-ga*, TT4: 20) is usually linked to modern Barqum (ca. 25km southwest of Aleppo), but some situated it closer to the Orontes Valley.⁶⁸ This depends on the location of Yaruqatta (below), since Muršili II conceded Abiradda of Barga the dominion of Yaruqatta—lost decades before to Nuḫašše—after Tette’s suppressed rebellion (CTH 63).⁶⁹ While Barga was connected with Nuḫašše and at times was integrated into its territory, a king of Barga ([...] *-ta LUGAL Bar-ga*) is found in EA 57.⁷⁰

Tunanab (^{uru}*tu-na-na-ab*, TT4: 21) is suspected to be Tell Hana, a surveyed mound with remains of a fortification ca. 3km east of modern Dnebi/Dunaiba, which respectively lies 16km

59. Astour 1977: 56; Moran 1992: 252–255; see Cordani 2013: 49–50.

60. Pfälzner 2012: 778; Turri 2015: 262; Cohen 2017: 304; see Astour 1977: 56, n. 52.

61. Fortin & Cooper 2013: 147; Bonechi 2016: 37 and 71; cf. Astour 1977: 62–63; Pfälzner 2012: 777.

62. This location fits the mention of the “Sea of Nii” in the Gebel Barkal Stela since a large lake probably covered the Rouj Basin in the second millennium BC. Casana 2009: 18, n. 9; see Bonechi 2016: 31 and 71, with map IV (fig. 2).

63. Turri 2015: 259–260.

64. Turri (2015: 262 and map in 303) ventures that the borders of Niya could have lain in the vicinity of Qarqur and Jisr es-Shugur, roughly 35–40 km north of Qal’at al-Mudīq.

65. Moran 1992: 130–131.

66. Gromova 2013: 110.

67. In support of this, Nuḫašše, Barga, and Tunanab are listed together, immediately after Karkemiš and Ḥalab, in the list of GNs in Amenophis III’s mortuary temple (see Edel & Görg 2005: 8–9).

68. See Klengel 1992: 151–152 (Idlib region); Belmonte 2001: 52; Richter 2007: 307–308; Cohen 2017: 304–305; cf. Astour 1988: 154.

69. Klengel 1992: 155; Bryce 2009: 112.

70. Klengel 1992: 152.

northeast of Tell Mišrife.⁷¹ After being pillaged (TT4), Tunanab was claimed to be loyal to Egypt by Akizzi (EA 53: 40–44), alongside Qatna, Niya, Nuḥašše, and Sinzar (the latter identified with Shaizar by the Orontes).⁷² Tunanab, wr. ^{uru}*du-na-na-pa(-az)*, appears in two invocation rituals from Ḥattuša, CTH 483 and CTH 716, which list a series of Syrian GNs including Mittani, Qadeš, Tunip, Ugarit, Yaruqatta, Qatna, Alalaḥ, Amurru, Nuḥašše, and Ugulzat.⁷³ Tunanab is also recorded among other GNs—such as Emar, Mutkinu, Ugarit, Zulutte, etc.—in an Ugaritic ritual (KTU 1.131 = RS 24.285).⁷⁴

Yaruqatta (^{uru}*ia-ru-qāt*, TT4: 23, 27), also in CTH 483 ([KUR ^{uru}*i*]-*ia-ru-qāt-ta*), was equated to the Irqata in the Amarna letters, which is identified with modern Tell ‘Arqa (northern Lebanon).⁷⁵ However, since Barga and Nuḥašše disputed the dominion of Yaruqatta (^{uru}*ia-ru-wa-ta-an/aš*, CTH 63 I, ll. 3–26), a location east of the Orontes, closer to both kingdoms, is likely.⁷⁶ Yaruqatta is no doubt mentioned in AIT 122 ([^{uru}*ia*]-*ru-qāt¹-te^{ki}*, l. 20), a poorly preserved letter requesting troops and also recording Mount Ammarik (KUR *a-m[a]r-gi*, l. 19).⁷⁷ The latter is presumed to be Jebel Sam’an (Semān), ca. 30km northeast of Jebel Barisha, in the area of which Yaruqatta has also been situated.⁷⁸ All these assumptions lead one to conclude that Yaruqatta was roughly located in the area of northern Idlib province, where the Turkish-Syrian border is situated today.

According to CTH 51, **Ugulzat** (^{uru}*u-gul-za-at*, TT4: 23, 28) was the place where Šuppiluliuma enthroned Takip-šarri, a vassal of Šarrupše, after the latter fled from Nuḥašše.⁷⁹ It is thus presumed that Ugulzat was located close to Nuḥašše and that it may actually have been its capital, being tentatively linked to Tell Halawa (ca. 75km northeast of Qatna).⁸⁰ In support of this location, Ugulzat is found in an Alalaḥ IV troops roster (AIT 161, l. 4).⁸¹ On the other hand, it also features in a Tell Sakka text; this led to propose that Ugulzat was the name of this site—that said, textual evidence suggests that Tell Sakka was Dûr-Idda-Addu.⁸²

71. Turri 2015: 93 and 236; 2016: 147, n. 8, following Mesnil du Buisson 1930: 160. Cf. Astour 1977: 59.

72. Freu 2009: 21; see Astour 1977: 56.

73. “Ô dieux masculins du Cèdre, où que vous soyez, soit au ciel, soit sur la terre, (...) soit au pays de Mittani, soit au pays de Kinza, soit au pays de Tunip, soit au pays d’Ugarit, soit au pays de Zinzira, soit au pays de Tunanab, soit au pays de [Ya]ruqat, soit au pays de Qatna, soit au pays d’Alalaḥ, soit au pays de [Kin]aḥḥa, soit au pays d’Amurru, soit au pays de Sidon, soit au pays de Zunzura, soit au pays de [Nuḥaš]še, soit au pays d’Ugulzat, soit au pays d’Arapḥi, soit au pays de Zunzurḥi.” (CTH 483, transl. Alexandrov 2014: 254–255; cf. CTH 716, Collins 2003: 164). See del Monte & Tischler 1978: 439–440.

74. See Dietrich & Loretz 1994: 94–101.

75. Belmonte 2001: 145; Richter 2007: 308; Turri 2015: 293. See also Bryce 2009: 66–67.

76. Bryce 2009: 776; Turri 2016: 154, n. 55. See Klengel 1970: 104, n. 13; del Monte & Tischler 1978: 135–136.

77. Cf. Wiseman 1953: 62 and pl. XXVI; Oliva 2006: 330.

78. On the Jebel Barisha area as possible location for Yaruqatta, see Turri 2015: 293 and 302–303; 2016: 154, n. 55; 2020: 290. Mt Ammarik, by the Afrin River, was used to mark the western border of Karkemiš in CTH 50 (Cohen & Anor 2020: 75–76; see also Haas 1981: 253; Belmonte 2001: 17; Ayali-Darshan 2015: 89).

79. Freu 2009: 20; Richter & Lange 2012: 162.

80. Turri 2015: 288–289, following Astour 1977: 57, n. 56.

81. See Belmonte 2001: 319; von Dassow 2008: 378; Alexandrov 2014: 255. AIT 161 is found in Bottéro 1959: 182 (starting only from line 6). Ugulzat also appears in the abovementioned Hittite rituals, CTH 483 and CTH 716 (Klengel 1969: 26; del Monte & Tischler 1978: 451).

82. Cf. Alexandrov 2014: 254–257; tablet in Abdallah & Durand 2014: 237–244, no. 2. Tell Sakka (17km southeast of Damascus and over 150km south of Qatna) is too far south of Nuḥašše. The other GN in the text, viz. Dûr-Idda-Addu (envelope, l. 6), whose name has in turn been related to Idanda’s (Abdallah & Durand 2014: 246–248), seems more likely to be Tell Sakka.

Irbid (^{uru}*ir-bi-id*, TT4: 30) is presumed to be the Iriba (^{uru}*i-ri-pa/ba*) mentioned in the Hittite treaty with Tunip (CTH 135).⁸³ On the eastern border of Tunip, Iriba is traditionally linked to modern ‘Arfa (15 km southwest of Tell Halawa).⁸⁴

Moving on in TT4, **Ḫalba** (^{uru}*ḫal-bá*, TT4: 54) was presumed to be modern Ḫalba (Lebanon), ca. 40km west of ancient Qadeš and close to the Mediterranean coast.⁸⁵ However, it more likely refers to Ḫalab (Aleppo),⁸⁶ since it is mentioned alongside **Mukiš** (^{kur}*mu-kiš-ḫé*, TT4: 55), a land roughly as far from Qatna as Aleppo and located in the Amuq Valley.⁸⁷ Not long before TT1–5 were drafted, Mukiš took part in the rebellion against the Hittites. TT4: 52–56 provides evidence that Ḫatti already controlled Aleppo, Mukiš, and Niya, which agrees with the CTH 51 narrative.⁸⁸

Qadeš (^{kur}*qí-in-za*, TT4: 65) is modern Tell Nebi Mend. Qadeš became the southernmost border of the Hittite empire after Šuppiluliuma’s conquests; it was also the southern entry point to the Orontes Valley.⁸⁹ Šuppiluliuma names Qadeš to threaten Idanda (TT4: 64–65), which means that it had already submitted to Ḫatti. After being taken prisoner by the Hittites alongside his father the king in the First Syrian War, Aitakkama was enthroned at Qadeš. Later on, no doubt under Hittite auspices, Aitakkama became hostile to his Syrian neighbours, including Qatna.⁹⁰

Finally, TT5 records **Araziqa** (^{uru}*a-ra-zi-qi* or ^{uru}*a-ra-zi-<qi>*^{ki}, l. 29),⁹¹ a problematic GN to locate. A certain Araziqa in MA sources, analyzed elsewhere,⁹² lay in the Middle Euphrates region. However, this location does not fit the context of the Araziqa recorded in both Qatna and Alalaḫ VII (^{uru}*a-ra-zi-iq*^{ki}), also appearing in Thutmose III’s list; this has been explained as a possible case of homonymy.⁹³ There is another Araziqa, by the Orontes, which is likely to be the ^{uru}*ar-zi-ga-na* mentioned in a text from Ugarit (RS 20.22 = *Ugaritica* 5 27) and can tentatively be linked to modern Arzeqān, in the Rouj basin.⁹⁴ Such a location would fit the geographic landscape of TT1–5.

83. KBo 19.59+KUB 3.16+KUB 3.21; Astour 1969: 392; see del Monte & Tischler 1978: 143; Kitchen & Lawrence 2012: 339–346. The text dates to either Tudḫaliya “I/II” or Šuppiluliuma (Kitchen & Lawrence 2012: 339, with literature); Iriba is mentioned in a broken passage including Ilmilimma of Alalaḫ (§3, l. 14), which might mean that Iriba then belonged to Alalaḫ. Iriba indeed appears in a text from Alalaḫ (see Turri 2015: 246). It is also found in a text from Ekalte (Mayer 2001, no. 36; Torrecilla 2014: 18).

84. Astour 1969: 392; 1988: 154; Belmonte 2001: 145; Richter 2007: 308; Turri 2016: 155, n. 56.

85. Richter 2007: 308.

86. Turri 2015: 241; Oliva 2019: 306–307.

87. Cohen 2017: 298.

88. Oliva 2019: 307; see Wilhelm 2015: 73.

89. Cohen 2017: 305.

90. Bryce 2005: 163 and 174–176; Freu 2009: 21; Klengel 2013: 340.

91. Richter 2007: 307.

92. Cohen & Torrecilla 2020: 198–200.

93. Miller 2012: 357, n. 21; Cohen & Torrecilla 2020: 199, n. 17. See also Helck 1971: 141, no. 139; Astour 1963: 223, no. 139; Belmonte 2001: 31. See *contra* Turri 2015: 227–228. However, one should consider that Araziqa is recorded in Alalaḫ VII in a year name, “The year when King Niqmepa (of Yamḫad) conquered Araziq”. An exception is AIT 358, a wool distribution receipt recording individuals from Araziq(a) and Ugarit. See Belmonte 2001: 31; Dietrich & Loretz 2006: 112 (42.14, l. 4).

94. Astour 1977: 62–63 (with map). RS 20.22 is a later letter to Ammištamru II from the king of Karkemiš; Arzigana (ll. 42–53) appears related to the city of Arruwa, presumed to have been southeast of Ugarit (see Belmonte 2001: 36–38 and 40; van Soldt 2005: 11, n. 55).

5. Discussion: *Qatna and the Geopolitical Landscape of the First Syrian War*

A full, coherent interpretation of the geopolitical context of TT1–5 is out of reach, since the information at hand is too scarce when compared to the various situations, actors, and entities involved in the First Syrian War.⁹⁵ Still, the Qatna letters are authoritatively priceless not only because they give testimony of the Hittite takeover of Syria, but also because they provide a rich insight into the hectic chain of events from the perspective of the conquered kingdoms. This adds to the information provided by vassal kingdoms of Egypt in the Amarna letters, supplying more direct evidence than the Hittite conqueror's biased perspective in the later imperial narrative.⁹⁶ While the prologues of later treaties such as CTH 51 or CTH 53 justify the Hittite interference in the affairs of submitted territories (i.e., the vassal's plea for help and his submission declaration),⁹⁷ TT1–5 show the actual context in which such terms were negotiated.

Even after Syrian kingdoms shifted from the Hurrian to the Hittite spheres of influence, Šuppiluliuma's grip over the region had not yet solidified. In the immediate aftermath, Ḫatti had to suppress raising opposition—likely from members of local nobilities, given the radical shift of the status quo—to consolidate power and bring stability back to the area.⁹⁸ Šuppiluliuma first tried to seduce the Syrian kings into vassalage via diplomatic correspondence; his offer was met with both successes and rejections, as CTH 45, a letter to Niqmaddu II, elucidates:⁹⁹

“Now, you, Niqmaddu, observe the peace treaty with Ḫatti. In the future, you will see how the Great King deals with the kings of the land of Nuḫašše and the king of the land of Mukiš, who renounced the peace treaty with Ḫatti and became hostile to the Great King, their lord. In the future, you, Niqmaddu, must trust in the words of the Great King, your lord. And if all of the kings release whatever troops they have for an attack on your land, you, Niqmaddu, shall not fear them. Send your messenger to me immediately. Let him come!”

Only the actors, entities, and traces of their contentious relationships can be securely established. For instance, Takuwa of Niya and Niqmaddu II of Ugarit paid respect to Šuppiluliuma in Mukiš; thus, their visits happened more or less in the same period. Aki-Teššup would have betrayed his brother Takuwa and attacked Ugarit in the meantime, before Niqmaddu II visited Šuppiluliuma, according to CTH 46. This also agrees with the part played by Addu-nirari of Nuḫašše, who claimed to have rejected Ḫatti's offers and was part of the coalition that attacked Ugarit.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the Hittites helped Takuwa defeat his brother and, after returning to his throne, he wrote to Idanda alongside Ḫannutti.

95. Oliva 2021a: 756.

96. Wilhelm 2015: 70; Oliva 2021a: 752–754.

97. Altman 2001: 32.

98. The resulting political instability brings to mind the diverse campaigns that Thutmose III had to accomplish in order to suppress frequent revolts in territories like Qadeš or Tunip after his renowned 1st and 8th campaigns. On these campaigns, see Redford 2003: 213–235; 2006: 332–335; Morris 2005: 115–126.

99. Beckman 1999, no. 19, §3 and 4, ll. 19–34. In the Hittite treaty with Aziru of Amurru (CTH 49 = Beckman 1999, no. 5, §2 i 14–26), Šuppiluliuma remarks that Aziru “came from the gate of Egyptian territory and knelt [down at the feet of My Majesty].”

100. “The king of Ḫatti [wrote] me for [alliance]. My lord, the tablets and the alliance [I have refused]” (EA 51: 4–5). See Turri 2016: 153.

As for Nuḫašše, Šarrupše tried to approach Mittani, whereas Addu-nirari claimed loyalty to Egypt. We cannot specify which strategy preceded the other. Still, Addu-nirari is mentioned by Akizzi in EA 53, likely as king of Nuḫašše.¹⁰¹ Therefore, Addu-nirari was still a king after Idanda's fall, implying that Šarrupše was an official or, perhaps, an usurper. Hence addressing Idanda as his 'lord' and 'father' in TT5.

Like CTH 45, TT1–5 are evidence of the diplomatic contacts that the Hittites made with target kingdoms, this time with Qaṭna. The letters show an emperor who is confident in his military might and able to exert pressure on smaller rulers through rhetorical questions and veiled threats. Ḫannutti's active participation in the letters is an example of how the Hittites had the upper hand. Still, the letters were issued in the wake of the Hittite takeover, when becoming or remaining a Hurrian vassal was still possible. Indeed, Šuppiluliuma needed to assure Idanda and the *maryannu* that Mittani was no more (TT4: 34–35). In TT1–4, the Hittites threatened Idanda and used Takuwa to convince Qaṭna to do 'the right thing'. The Hittites also warned Idanda that any revolts would be suppressed "as before" (*ištu pānānum*, TT2: 52), most likely referring to the anti-Hittite rebellion.

In his own letters (not preserved), Idanda apparently expressed concern about two dangers: an external attack, perhaps of Mittani (or the remainders of the anti-Hittite coalition, if not totally defeated yet), and an internal coup, likely by the *maryannu*. That two letters, TT3 and TT4, advised Idanda to gather the *maryannu* of Qaṭna to read Šuppiluliuma's messages indicates that both Idanda and Šuppiluliuma suspected a possible uprising from the Qaṭna nobility. Addressing the *maryannu* shows not only that they were privy to the talks, but also that they had a say in them, that they had already expressed their conditions, and that Idanda could not leave them aside in the negotiations. It was the entire nobility of Qaṭna, and not just Idanda, who had to be convinced to submit to Ḫatti. Otherwise, Idanda was at risk of being deposed by his own people, just like Takuwa had been deposed by Aki-Teššup and the *maryannu* of Niya (CTH 51).¹⁰²

If this is correct, one wonders whether Akizzi, Idanda's successor, was part of the *maryannu* before ascending the throne. In EA 52, Akizzi wrote to Akhenaton: "For three years, my lord, I wanted to [switch sides to] my lord, but I did not know of a caravan ... or a messenger (going) to my lord."¹⁰³ Do those three years correspond to the reign of Idanda? Was he implying that he did not agree with Idanda's policy and decided to contact Egypt 'under the table'? The most telling report about the end of Idanda may come from EA 55 (ll. 39–52):¹⁰⁴

"(...) The ancestors of [my lord ...], and now the king of the land of Ḫa[tti] has burned them with fire. As for the gods and the soldiers of the c[ity of Qaṭ]na, the king of the land of Ḫatti has taken them away.

My lord, the men of [the city of] Qaṭna are my servants. Aziru is the one who has taken them and transferred them away from the land of my lord. (...) May my lord se[nd the ransom] for the men of Qaṭna [and] may he ransom them."

101. "My lord, look, Addu-nirari, [king of the land of Nuḫašše], is the enemy of those who belong to the land of Ḫ[atti with Aitakkama]. Of my lord [the servant is Addu-nirari] and (so is) the land of Nu[ḫašše, the land of] his fathers." (EA 53: 24–27). Rainey 2015: 393; cf. Moran 1992: 125.

102. See fn. 31.

103. Translation after Liverani 1998: 291–292; cf. Moran 1992: 123 ("... I wanted [to set out] for my lord ..."); Rainey 2015: 389 ("... I have been trying to dispatch to my lord [go]ods and envoys ..."). Cf. Turri 2016: 153.

104. Moran 1992: 127; Freu 2009: 20; Rainey 2015: 402–403. See also Turri 2015: 326.

The passage reports on a fire in Qatna and on the Hittites plundering the city. Akizzi confirms his ruling position at Qatna by describing those men as “my servants”.¹⁰⁵ Since a fire burned down the part of the palace where the tablets were found, it is possibly the conflagration mentioned by Akizzi.¹⁰⁶ However, this does not explain why the Hittites would attack Qatna if Idanda had submitted. It seems that either Šuppiluliuma lost his trust in Idanda and attacked Qatna, or that Idanda suffered an internal coup, likely by the *maryannu*—perhaps including Akizzi himself, who submitted to Akhenaton. Once in power, Akizzi held firm to his allegiance to Egypt, but this came to no avail, and Qatna fell anyway.¹⁰⁷ One wonders whether Akizzi was forced to flee from Qatna and wrote to the Pharaoh from the exile, as happened to Rib-Hadda of Byblos.

What is clear is that deep insecurities around the borders of the Levantine kingdoms heavily influenced vassalage strategies as their loyalty grew increasingly unstable until the Hittite grip on the territory was firm. Meanwhile, some Syrian rulers saw an opportunity to extend their dominions. Aitakkama and Aziru are examples of this, but their expansive policies were welcomed by Ḫatti. Conversely, Idanda was scolded for pillaging Šarrupše’s territories.¹⁰⁸ Idanda seems to have tried to take advantage from Nuḫašše, the latter perhaps decimated because of the anti-Hittite rebellion. If the presumed locations for the TT4 GNs are correct, Idanda’s *razzia* penetrated deep into the core of Nuḫašše. Idanda himself may have acted duplicitously with Ḫatti and Mittani, just like Šarrupše. That he raided territories of Nuḫašše without Hittite consent may have been seen as an act of disloyalty. Remarkably, some of the looted territories in TT4 are among those which Akizzi subsequently claimed to be loyal to Akhenaton (EA 53: 40–44):¹⁰⁹

“My lord, just as I am devoted to the king, my lord, so the king of the land of Nuḫašše, the king of the land of Niya, the king of the land of Sinzar, and the king of the land of Tunanab, all of these kings are my lord’s servants.”

Moreover, Akizzi declared that “Aitakkama, [with] the king of the land of Ḫatti, is going forth [again]st me and seeks my head” (EA 53: 8–10). This agrees with the Hittite threat to Idanda (TT4).¹¹⁰ Is there any connection between the events related in both letters? Was Akizzi perhaps the mastermind of the incursions in Nuḫašše? And if so, did he follow orders from Idanda or did he act on his own command? There is not enough information to address these questions; suffice it to say that TT4 and EA 53 seem to be close in time. The former was written before Idanda’s removal; the latter, after it.

Aitakkama would also seize a number of towns in the Qatna realm, according to EA 56+361.¹¹¹ Interestingly, Aziru of Amurru participated in the taking of Qatna (EA 55: 44), which

105. Akizzi is specified as king of Qatna in EA 57: 2 (^ma¹-ki-iz-^rzi¹ LUGAL ^rqà¹[-na^{ki}]; Rainey 2015: 408–409; see also Moran 1992: 129).

106. Turri (2016: 157) dates the fire to the beginning of Akizzi’s reign, and not to the days of Idanda. Cf. Cordani 2013: 56–60.

107. Bryce (2005: 176) blames Aitakkama for the taking of Qatna, which EA 56 + EA 361 seems to confirm (Rainey 2015: 406–407). EA 55 only mentions Šuppiluliuma himself and Aziru.

108. Differently, Freu (2009: 16–17) blames Tušratta’s troops for these attacks.

109. Moran 1992: 125; Rainey 2015: 392–393. See also Gromova 2013: 105; Turri 2016: 157.

110. Oliva 2019: 309. This implies that Aitakkama had already been installed in the throne of Qadeš after his days of prisoner in Ḫattuša.

111. “[Look, the en]emy has come up against me (...) [And] my [lo]rd did not c[ome] forth. I am your servant, so may my lord not relea[se me from] his hand. [And] I will not [depart] from my lord. And I trust my lord’s troops [and]

might connect the conquest to Aziru's stay in Tunip. Since he was already a Hittite vassal and posed no threat, Aziru is not mentioned in TT1–5. Thus, Amurru and Qadeš submitted to Ḫatti before TT1–5 were written.

On another note, the GNs recorded in TT1–5 can be narrowed down to the territories east of the Orontes Valley, limited by the lands of Mukiš and Aleppo (to the north) as well as Amurru and Qadeš (south). Such circumscription fits the geopolitical and strategic circumstances of the First Syrian War. It agrees with a military advance of the Hittite army from the north at an initial stage by avoiding the crossing of the Orontes. Such advance profited from the lack of fluvial barriers and big cities in the territory of Nuḫašše; once Mukiš and Ḫalab were conquered, Šuppiluliuma's army quickly progressed as far as the Orontes and the Euphrates.

Meanwhile, the Great King seemingly established headquarters in Alalah, which in those days lay southwest of the Orontes course.¹¹² Crossing the river and camping at Alalah probably worked as a 'storm warning' for the Syrian kingdoms about the Hittite might; still, managing an army's river crossing was no easy task. Thus, west of the Orontes Šuppiluliuma managed to peacefully gain vassalage of Ugarit and Amurru, trusting the latter for conquering coastal territories and turning into a convenient buffer state.¹¹³ Amurru's expansion permitted Šuppiluliuma to boast of his frontiers reaching Mount Lebanon (Niblani, CTH 51), which, by the way, is close to the Orontes spring in the Beqa'a Valley.¹¹⁴ On that side of the river, Šuppiluliuma's contingents were required only to defend Niqmaddu II when the anti-Hittite coalition attacked Ugarit. East of the Orontes, it was easier for Aitakkama to suppress any uprising from Qadeš, the other buffer state. Still, both Aziru and Aitakkama seemingly helped Ḫatti take Qatna.¹¹⁵

Finally, when addressing Šuppiluliuma's motivations for his Syrian conquests, the economically strategic importance of these kingdoms is essential. The region encompassing the GNs in letters TT1–5 was an important hub near or in the fertile Orontes Valley lands, no doubt essential for agricultural production and trade. Ugarit was a hub for interregional trade, as valuable commodities (e.g., tin, textiles, etc.) were sent to Crete, Qatna, and Hazor from there.¹¹⁶ Additional hubs included Karkemiš, conquered in the Second Syrian War, and Emar, in the Middle Euphrates.

his chariotry (...) [Look, Aitak]kama has seiz[ed all our towns] and we are the servan[ts...] (...). Rainey 2015: 406–407; cf. Moran 1992: 128–129.

112. See Casana 2009: 10. Crossing and establishing camp on the other riverbank reminds us of Šuppiluliuma's strategy on the Euphrates, when he camped at Murmuriga, on the east bank, opposite Karkemiš (see Cohen & Torrecilla 2020: 195–197). Tušratta attacked Murmuriga as soon as the Hittite king left, and he also seems to have attempted to regain those lands lost to Ḫatti in the Levant (Turri 2016: 156). The Hurrian attack recorded in the Emar texts E 42, TBR 9, and ASJ 12 7 (all from Pilsu-Dagān's reign), might have taken place during that counter-offensive against the Hittite advance. Pilsu-Dagān was succeeded by his brother Zū-Aštarti, most likely an usurper who, in turn, claimed to have suffered a coup d'état (E 17). See Cohen & d'Alfonso 2008: 7–9 and 19–23.

113. In turn, Aziru and Niqmaddu II established a mutual peace agreement (RS 19.68 = PRU 4, 248; see Singer 2011: 213–214). On supporting Aziru and Aitakkama to expand their kingdoms, Šuppiluliuma applied a geopolitical strategy similar to that used with Šattiwaza of Ḫanigalbat in the Middle Euphrates (see Bryce 2005: 185–186; Cohen & Torrecilla 2020: 201–202). The stronger Amurru became, the better it would serve the empire's purposes in the Levant, not only regarding Egypt, but also to keep small kingdoms at bay. As the Aziru Treaty states (CTH 49 = Beckman 1999, no. 5, §6 ii 47'–iii 3'), "[And if some] other [enemy] rises up against the King of Ḫatti and [attacks Ḫatti], or if someone carries out a revolt [against the King] of Ḫatti, [and you], Aziru, hear of it, [and] do not wholeheartedly come to the aid [of My Majesty with infantry and chariotry], you will have transgressed the oath."

114. See fn. 50.

115. This agrees with the Amarna letters revealing good relations between Aziru and Aitakkama, even jointly attacking Biryawaza of Damascus (EA 140, EA 151, EA 162). See Cordani 2011a: 109–110; Singer 2011: 210.

116. Klengel 2014: 91.

Controlling Ugarit, the Orontes, and the Middle Euphrates meant dominating the most important trading and agricultural nodes in Syria, which also permitted direct trading contact with foreign lands.¹¹⁷ In turn, Nuḥašše provided a connection with the Mittani lands and the Middle Euphrates (Emar and the land of Aštata) via Ḥalab and the Jabbul Lake.¹¹⁸ This can be seen in the easternmost cities, Irbid and Ugulzat—the latter supposedly situated in a two or three-days march from the Jabbul area (ca. 70km) and roughly 40km south of Tell Irjil (perhaps ancient Irgilli, 30km east of Ebla),¹¹⁹ which is halfway through the way to Ḥalab.

6. Conclusion

The more we know about the First Syrian War and its aftermath, the more we learn about a brief, convulsive period in which local rulers shifted alliances and, in doing so, faced inner political intrigues. If it is true that Idanda was pressured by both the Hittites and the *maryannu*, his fate could exemplify the situation lived by each of the small-kingdom rulers under the dilemma of submitting to or resisting Ḥatti. In the wake of the Hittite conquest, the legitimacy of the newly established local rulers in their submissive territories was still weak and bound to face internal uprisings. Despite ceding to Hittite pressure, Idanda was still overthrown. Perhaps it was too late for him to either gain Šuppiluliuma's credit back or to convince the Qaṭna nobility that the Hittite alliance was the best deal. In sum, the letters TT1–5 reflect the political turmoil and conflicts of interests that the rise of Ḥatti brought to Syrian kingdoms. By pursuing a more complete narrative of the events, we may supplement the biased Hittite imperial rhetoric with texts which speak of the many concurrent power clashes during the Late Bronze Age.

117. As Turri (2020: 283) remarks, the Orontes Valley provided “the easiest—and almost the only practicable—land route between Anatolia and the Mediterranean world to the north and Palestine, Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula to the south.”

118. This agrees with the route depicted in the Kassite version of the “Dream-Book”, starting in Sippar and ending with the site sequence Mari-Emar-Ḥalab-Qaṭna-Hazor (see Pruzsinszky & Solans 2015: 326, n. 80, with literature). The Jabbul plain linked Ḥalab with the southeast route to Mesopotamia via Emar; Umm el-Marra, located between both cities, is described as “a ‘gateway’ city, controlling access from the dry steppe and the Euphrates to the western Jabbul and Aleppo” (Curvers & Schwartz 1997: 203–204).

119. Turri 2015: 245–246.



Map: The Orontes River course

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