

Diplomacy between Egypt and the Ancient Near East through the Amarna Letters

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1 The Participants of the Amarna Correspondence and their Capitals

- a- Egypt (King Amenophis III, King Amenophis IV = Akhenaton, and King Tutankhamun)
- b- Babylonian (King Kadašman-Enlil - Burna-Buriāš)
- c- Assyria (King Aššur-ubaliṭ)
- d- Mitanni (King Tušratta)
- e- Arzawa (King Tarḥandaradu)
- f- Alašia (King of Alašia)
- g- Hatti (King Šuppiluliuma)

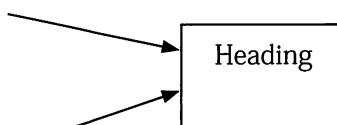
From	To	letter-No.
Memphis or Thebes	Babylon	EA 1
Babylon	Memphis or Thebes	EA 2; 3; 4; 5; 6
Babylon	el-Amarna	EA 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12
el-Amarna (?)	Babylon	EA 14
Assur	el-Amarna	EA 15; 16
Waššukanni	Memphis or Thebes	EA 17; 18 (?); 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25
Waššukanni	el-Amarna	EA 26; 27; 28; 29; 30
Memphis or Thebes	Arzawa	EA 31
Arzawa	Memphis or Thebes	EA 32
Alašia	el-Amarna	EA 33; 34; 35; 36; 37; 38; 39; 40
Ḫattuša	el-Amarna	EA 41; 42 (?); 44

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2 Means of Diplomacy: the Letter

The form of the letters is pretty much the same everywhere. The letter in the Ancient Near East usually consisted of the following parts:

- a- Address
- b- Greetings
- c- Topic of the letter
- d- End form
- e- Date and seal



In all cultures of the world, letters start with phrases, which include at least the name of the receiver, and the name of the sender, as well as a hint about the social position of both the receiver and the sender. In the ancient Near East a greeting form was appended to the address.

In contrast to the address, greetings (headings), and the letter topic, the other parts of the letter (end form and date) were sometimes missing in ancient Near Eastern letters.

2.1 The Address

In el-Amarna letters there are three variable address forms, and these are:

ana R qibīma umma S

“To R speak (say): thus S.”

EA 1: 1-4; EA 7: 1-2; EA 8: 1-3; EA 6: 1-3; EA 9: 1-3; EA 10: 1-2; EA 11: 1-2; EA 15: 1-3; EA 16: 1-3; EA 17: 1-3; EA 18: 1-2; EA 19: 1-3; EA 20: 1-4; EA 21: 1-4; EA 23: 1-5; EA 26: 1-2; EA 27: 1-2; EA 28: 1-4; EA 29: 1-4; EA 35: 1-2; EA 37: 1-2.

umma S ana R qibīma

“Thus S, to R speak.”

EA 5: 1-4; EA 31: 1-2; EA 34: 1-2; EA 41: 1-3.

ana R umma S

“To R speak, thus S.”

EA 33: 1-2.

The address through the following elements can be expanded:

- a- Through a title such as *LUGAL* “king,” *LUGAL GAL* “The great king,” *LUGAL GAL ša māṯ misiri* “The great king of Egypt.”
- b- Through a kinship name such as *ŠEŠ-ia* (aḫija) “my brother” or *ŠEŠ-ka* (aḫika) “your brother.”

c- Through affinity such as *ḥatanīja ša ara`amu ša ira`manni* “My son-in-law, the one whom I love and who loves me” or *emūka ša ira`amūka* “your father-in-law who loves you.” We find this form only in the letters from King Tušratta of Mittanni to the Egyptian King Amenhotep IV.

The name of the recipient and the sender are always mentioned in all the three previous form of address.

2.2 Greeting Form

This form occurs for the first time particularly in the international correspondence of el-Amarna in the late Bronze Age, where was maintained the name of “Amarna greeting form.” The Akkadian basic schema of this form is formed through: *ana maḥarīja / ana iaši šulmu a-na maḥ-ri-ka or a-na ka-ša* “I’m fine or for me all go well, for you may all go well.” This particular greeting form consists of two main parts.

a-na UGU-ia or a-na ia-ši šul-mu a-na É.MEŠ-ia DAM.MEŠ-ja DUMU.MEŠ-ia LU^UGAL.MEŠ-ia ERÍN.MEŠ-ja ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ-ia G^{IS}GIGIR.MEŠ-ia ù i-na ŠĀ^{bi} KUR.MEŠ-ia dan-niš lu-ú šul-mu

“For me all go well, my houses, my wives, my sons, my magnates, my troops, my horses, my chariots, and inside my countries, all goes very well.”

(EA 1: 7-9; EA 5: 9-12; EA 31: 3-5; EA 35: 3-5; EA 7: 4-5)

a-na ia-ši lu šul-mu

“For me all goes well.”

(EA 3: 4; EA 6: 4; EA 10: 3; EA 8: 4; EA 11: 3; EA 9: 4; EA 17: 4; EA 18: 3; EA 19: 5; EA 20: 4; EA 21: 8; EA 23: 6; EA 26: 2-3; EA 27: 3; EA 28: 6; EA 29: 2; EA 33: 3; EA 37: 3; EA 38: 3; EA 39: 3; EA 41: 3)

a-na maḥ-ri-ka or a-na ka-ša lu šul-mu a-na É-ka DAM.MEŠ-ka DUMU.MEŠ-ka LU^UGAL.MEŠ-ka ERÍN.MEŠ-ka ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ-ka G^{IS}GIGIR.MEŠ-ka ù i-na ŠĀ^{bi} KUR.MEŠ-ka dan-niš dan-niš lu šul-mu

“For you may all go well, your house, your wives, your sons, your magnates, your troops, your chariots, and inside your countries, may all go very very well.”

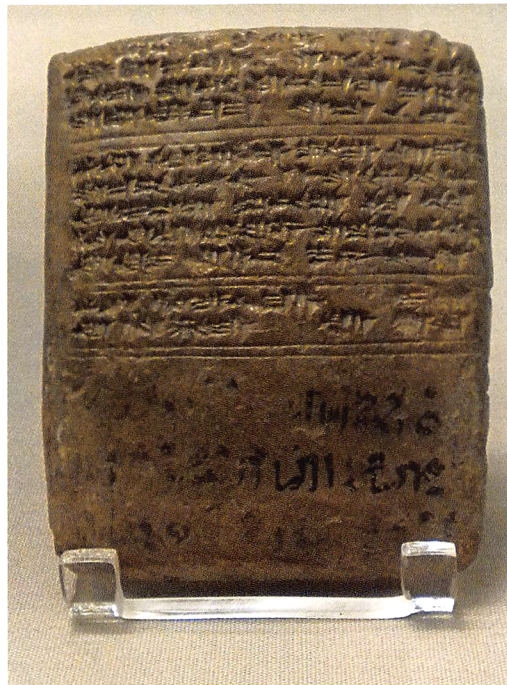
(EA 2: 4-5; EA 3: 4-6; EA 5: 4-8; EA 6: 5-7; EA 7: 6-7; EA 8: 5-7; EA 9: 5-6; EA 10: 4-7; EA 11: 3-4; EA 17: 5-10; EA 19: 5-8; EA 20: 4-7; EA 21: 8-12; EA 23: 6-12; EA 26: 3-6; EA 27: 3-6; EA 28: 6-11; EA 29: 3-5; EA 35: 5-8; EA 37: 4-7; EA 38: 3-6; EA 39: 5-9; EA 41: 3-6; EA 42: 5-7)

2.3 End Formula

In the international correspondence of el-Amarna there is no, as far as I know, end formula. However, in 18 of these letters formula with the expression, *ana šulmāni ŠEŠ-ia* “For the wellness of my brother” or *ana šulmānika* “for your wellness,” then, it followed the appointment of different gifts.

2.4 Date

As far as I know, there is no date indication, and there is no detailed date with a day, month or year. At the end of the EA 23 only, the date is written in Heiratic *rnpt 36 ibd 4 prt*: “year 36, month 4 of the winter,” because this letter is a copy from an original letter, and was prepared for the Bureau of the International Correspondance at el-Amarna.



EA 23

3 The Spectrum of the Royal Letters

The international letters from el-Amarna are concerned mainly with the following themes:

- a- The exchange of high value gifts such as gold, lapis lazuli, horses, chariots, clothes, chairs and beds.
EA 2: Rs. 1-5 (Kadašman-Enlil to Amenhotep III); EA 3: 13-22 and 32-34 (Kadašman-Enlil to Amenhotep III); EA 4: 36-50 (Kadašman-Enlil? to Amenhotep III?); EA 5: 13-33 (Amenhotep III to Kadašman-Enlil); EA 6: 20-22 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep III); EA 7: 53-72 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep IV); EA 8: 43-47 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep IV); EA 9: 7-18 and 38 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep IV); EA 10: 8-24 and 43-49 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep IV); EA 11: 19-34 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep IV); EA 14 (giftlist from Amenhotep IV to Burna-Burrijāš); EA 15: 9-15 (Aššur-ubaliṭ to Amenhotep IV); EA 16: 9-12 (Aššur-ubaliṭ to Amenhotep IV); EA 17: 36-45 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 19: 34-70 and 80-85 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 20: 80-84 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 21: 35-41 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 22 (giftlist from Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 25 (giftlist from Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 27: 104-113 (Tušratta to Amenhotep IV); EA 29: 182-187 (Tušratta to Amenhotep IV); EA 31: 28-38 (Amenhotep III to Tarḥandaradu of Arzawa);

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EA 34: 16-25 (from the King of Alašia to the King of Egypt); EA 35: 10-15, 23-26 and 43-53 (from the King of Alašia to the King of Egypt); EA 37: 9 (from king of Alašia to the king of Egypt); EA 41: 23-43 (Šuppiuliuma to Tutankhamun?).

b- Strengthening of the intergovernmental relationships

EA 1: 62-65 (Amenhotep III to Kadašman-Enlil); EA 6: 8-17 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep III); EA 7: 36-41 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep IV); EA 8: 8-10 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep IV); EA 9: 6-7 and 19-37 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep IV); EA 15: 7-9 (Aššur-uballiṭ to Amenhotep IV); EA 17: 21-29 and 51-54 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 19: 30-33 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 20: 8-13 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 23: 30 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 24 § 35: 111-113 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 28: 42-49 (Tušratta to Amenhotep IV); EA 32: 2-4 (Tarḥandaradu of Arzawa to Amenhotep III); EA 34: 42 (king of Alašia to the king of Egypt); EA 41: 7-13 and 16-22 (Šuppiluliuma to Tutankhamun?).

c- Diplomatic marriages

EA 1: 10-17 and 96-98 (Amenhotep III to Kadašman-Enlil); EA 2: 6-11 (Kadašman-Enlil to Amenhotep III); EA 3: 4-12 (Kadašman-Enlil to Amenhotep III); EA 4: 4-22 (Kadašman-Enlil to Amenhotep III?); EA 5: 16 (Amenhotep III to Kadašman-Enlil); EA 11: 16-22 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep IV); EA 19: 17-24 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 20: 8-9 and 14-32 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 21: 13-23 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 24 § VI: 59-62 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 31: 11-26 (Amenhotep III to Tarḥandaradu of Arzawa); EA 32: 4-13 (Tarḥandaradu of Arzawa to Amenhotep III).

d- Consolation or solace in death

EA 11: 5-15 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep IV); EA 28: 12-19 (Tušratta to Amenhotep IV); EA 29: 55-60 (Tušratta to Amenhotep IV).

e- Congratulations for accession

EA 33: 9-10 (king of Alašia to the king of Egypt); EA 29: 61-64 (Tušratta to Amenhotep IV); EA 41: 16-17 (Šuppiluliuma to Tutanchamun?).

f- Historical events

Such as the conflict between Tušratta and DU-ḥi EA 17: 11-20 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); the conflict between Mitanni and Ḫatti EA 17: 30-35 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); the Pest in Alašia EA 35: 14-15 and 35-39 (King of Alašia to the King of Egypt).

g- Immunity of royal messengers and royal merchants

EA 7: 73-82 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep IV); EA 8: 10-21 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep IV); EA 16: 43-55 (Aššur-uballiṭ to Amenhotep IV); EA 24 § 29: 40-42 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III); EA 28: 12-41 (Tušratta to Amenhotep IV); EA 29: 155-161 (Tušratta to Amenhotep IV); EA 30: 1ff.

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(Tušratta? to the kings of Kanaan); EA 38: 23-25 (King of Alašia to Amenhotep III); EA 39: 10-20 (King of Alašia to the King of Egypt).

h- The journey of a god statue

EA 23: 13-17 (Tušratta to Amenhotep III).

i- Protocol of international communication

EA 3: 19-31 (Kadašman-Enlil to Amenhotep III); EA 7: 8-32 (Burna-Burrijāš to Amenhotep IV); EA 34: 7-15 (king of Alašia to the king of Egypt); EA 42: 15-26 (sender is not known).

4 The Royal Messenger

The Amarna letters provide us with important hints about the diplomatic function of the Amarna messengers inasmuch as they provide important evidence to understand the trade and diplomacy of the period. In looking for the importance of the Amarna messengers, one must first consider who could serve as a messenger (*mār šipri*). EA 149: 83 mentions that a foot soldier filled this position, because generally someone closely associated with the palace was used. One passage (EA 21, III, 22-23) states that a Mitanni princess acted as a royal messenger, while another passage (EA 29: 156-162) indicates that a Mitanni family member was used in the messenger service. In EA 11: 36-37 and EA 39: 10-20 merchants were involved in carrying the royal message.

Additional evidence is given for the importance of the messenger by the fact that there are some twenty-three letters in which messengers are mentioned specifically by name. Some of them are repeated numerous times, especially the Egyptian messenger Mane and the Mitanni messenger, Gillia, but most of them appear only once. As royal representatives, one would expect that the royal messengers would enjoy the some facilities and privileges in their missions. Kadašman-Enlil invites the Egyptian messengers to “eat and drink with him” (EA 3: 23-28). In another case the Babylonian King Burna-buriaš apologized to the Egyptian messenger, because he had been ill and the Egyptian messenger never had the chance to eat or drink wine in his presence (EA 7: 8-10). Some messengers were given gifts by the foreign rulers, for example, the Tušratta King of Mitanni honored the Egyptian messenger Mane and the interpreter, Ḫane in a splendid manner and gave them many presents.

Here I will summarize the functions and tasks of the royal messengers through the following points:

- a- Carrying the clay tablet or the message “*ṭuppu*” from his king to the foreign rulers
- b- Reading the letter to the foreign kings
- c- Interpreting and defending the policy of his country
- d- Establishing or re-establishing diplomatic relations
- e- Viewing, negotiating for and accompanying the prospective bride
- f- Carrying the royal gifts between kings

5 Passport for the Royal Messenger

It was very important for the royal messenger to have a passport during his journey from one country to another. Therefore, some of the royal messengers received a passport from their kings. This passport helped messengers to make their journeys faster and to avoid bureaucratic delays. Such was only valid for one time, one particular place, and for a special task.

Such document mentioned the name of the royal messenger, his job, his sender, his companions, and his destination.

EA No. 30 is a clear example of such a documents. It was given to a royal messenger from Mitanni on his way to Egypt to make his journey faster and to avoid bureaucratic delays in Canann and on the Egyptian boundary, especially across the frontier fortress Sile, where officials inspected the traveling messengers for proper documents.

*a-na LUGAL.MEŠ ša KUR Ki-na-a-ah-[hi] / ÌR.MEŠ ŠEŠ-ia um-ma LUGAL-ma / a-nu-um-ma 'A-ki-ia
^UDUMU.KIN-ia / a-na UGU LUGAL KUR Mi-iš-ri-i ŠEŠ-ia / a-na du-ul-lu-^{hi} a-na kál-le-e / al-ta-pár-šu ma-
 am-ma / lu-ú la i-na-ah-^{hi}-is-sú / na-a-ri-iš i-na KUR Mi-iš-ri-i / šu-ri-pa ù a-na ŠU / ^Uhal-zu-u^{hi}-li ša
 KUR Mi-iš-ri-i / it-t[i] ha-mut-ta li-il-^r li^r-[i]k / ù kat(?)^{-sú} mi-im-ma i-na mu^{hi}-š^u lu-ú la ib-bá-aš-ši*

“To the King of Canaan, servants of my brother: Thus the King says. I herewith send Akiya, my messenger, to speed posthaste to the King of Egypt, my brother. No one is to hold him up. Provide him with safe entry into Egypt and hand him over to the fortress commander of Egypt. Let him go on immediately, and as far as his presents are concerned, he is to owe nothing” (EA 30-13).

6 Royal Messenger Travel Durations

Below is a table with the distances and the travel duration of the royal messenger. C. Kühne suggests the average distance between 50 to 65 km per day with a travel duration from 24 days to 40 days to reach the desired capital.

The distance	Distance in km	Travel duration
Waššukani ↔ Memphis	ca. 1550 km	24 to 31 days
Waššukani ↔ Amarna	ca. 1850 km	29 to 37 days
Waššukani ↔ Thebes	ca. 2250 km	35 to 45 days
Babylon ↔ Memphis	ca. 1500 km	23 to 30 days
Babylon ↔ Amarna	ca. 1800 km	28 to 36 days
Babylon ↔ Thebes	ca. 2200 km	40 to 50 days

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