Egyptian-Fashioned Use of Logograms
in the Canaanite Amarna Letters:
A Case of "The Jerusalem Scribe"

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Abstract: Palaeographic and orthographic peculiarities of various subcorpora of the Amarna letters, as well as the gloss phenomenon, have attracted the interest of numerous scholars. Moreover, in recent decades a number of scholars have contributed considerably to the study of Egyptian linguistic influence on the phraseology (Egyptian calques) and morphosyntax of the Canaanite Amarna letters. Nevertheless, the probable Egyptian background of the logogram use in the Amarna Letters has scarcely been noticed. In my opinion, the logogram use in the Amarna Letters in general, and in the Jerusalem letters in particular, may be paralleled to some typical features of the Egyptian writing system. Three cases of the use of logograms in the Amarna Letters comparable to Egyptian scribal practice are presented here, using the Jerusalem Scribe letters as an example. My observations are based on a number of scholarly works, and most of them are cited throughout the article.

Palaeographic and orthographic peculiarities of various subcorpora of the Amarna letters, as well as the gloss phenomenon, have attracted the interest of numerous scholars (such as Franz Böhl, William Moran, Anson Rainey, Shlomo Izre'el, Karel van der Toorn, Juan Pablo Vita, Jana Mynářová, Eva von Dassow). Furthermore, in recent decades a number of scholars have contributed considerably to the study of Egyptian linguistic influence on the Canaanite Amarna letters (Zipora Cochavi-Rainey, Matthias Müller; see also CAT 3: 167–174). As regards the use of Sumerograms in the Amarna texts, Rainey noted that "there are still many logograms, the normalizations of which are quite obscure" (CAT 1: 26–27). Though the use of logograms in the Amarna letters may also be paralleled in some Egyptian scribal habits, the probable Egyptian background of this has

scarcely been realized. As far as I know, only Matthias Müller[1] has pointed out that "texts in Akkadian from Egypt display a certain tendency to employ graphemic marking of the plural (by the graphemic plural marker MEŠ added after the noun) as was done in the Egyptian script." He further shrewdly concludes:

> Although not uncommon also in other varieties of Akkadian, Akkadian from Egypt shows an almost complete disregard for the assumed differences in signs representing obstruent phonemes … Fluctuation in use can be observed for the representation of the Akkadian alveolar fricative between signs with <š> and those with <s>. Akkadian from Egypt also ignores a couple of assimilation rules … The just-mentioned features concerning obstruent signs have been explained as acquired rules (Cochavi-Rainey 2011) … or as the result of using the writing system against the backdrop of the Egyptian phoneme system (Müller 2010).

As is well known, the Canaanite cuneiform orthography shares a number of common features with Syrian/Khurro-Hittite cuneiform conventions.[2] In his review of the probable origins of "a number of logographic writings in Hittite cuneiform that were sufficiently peculiar from the point of view of standards of Mesopotamian cuneiform", Mark Weeden is laconic: "The Corpus investigated in this work was not designed to find traces of Egyptian influence on the use of Hittite cuneiform logograms."[3] Nevertheless, one may still suggest that the scribal peculiarities in question could have been influenced to some extent by Egyptian scribal practice of the epoch, bearing in mind that "Canaano-Akkadian served as a written medium of diplomacy with Egypt" and that ultimately "the letters were deciphered and translated into Egyptian by either Canaanites working in Egypt, or by Egyptian officials familiar with this writing system."[4] Similarly, van der Toorn remarks:

> Letters from allies and vassals of the Pharaoh would eventually reach their destinary in an Egyptian version spoken by one of the scribes of the Foreign Office at the palace in Amarna. Several letters show that the senders were aware of this fact. Much depended on the good graces of the

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[1]   Müller, 2015, 2–3.
[2]   CAT 1:36; Mynářová 2015, 98–99.
[3]   Weeden 2011, 374.
[4]   Mandell 2015, 433.

receiving scribe in question. The unknown bureaucrats are addressed in a number of postscripta that seek to ensure a favourable rendering of the message.[5]

Likewise, of special importance for our subject is the following archaeological and textual evidence:

The small building "No. 19," which housed the great majority of the Amarna tablets … was intentionally adjoined to the compound of the general State Chancellery, near the King's House. Thus, a day-to-day meeting ground, between two cultures was created: between Egyptian literacy, on the one hand, and Mesopotamian-oriented cuneiform literacy, on the other. This meant an experiment in coexistence, because within "House No. 19" and even elsewhere … there was a staff of expert cuneiform scribes and scholars at work. The expertise of these scribes varied according to the nature of the correspondence on which they worked, that of the multidialectal districts under imperial administration, or that with the foreign nations of the entire Near East.

That this cuneiform staff had day-to-day contact with the Egyptian staff, may be deduced from certain formulas in the cuneiform letters, which indicate either team-work between cuneiform and Egyptian secretary staff, or bilingualism on the part of the cuneiform scribe himself. Tangible signs of this official cooperation are also visible in the hieratic archival notations attested on some EA cuneiform documents. Furthermore, there is some evidence of *direct* cooperation between Egyptian and cuneiform scribes in the inverted Egyptian-Sumerogrammic vocabulary.[6]

With respect to the scribes of Amarna, the Amarna letters provide us even with the title used for these scribes, *ša-aḫ-ši-ḫa*, preserved in a postscript of EA 316 and traditionally linked to the Egyptian title of "letter-writer" or "epistolary secretary" (Egyptian *sš šꜥ.t*). The employment of this title during the 18th Dynasty is very limited and until present we do not yet have any attestation of this title neither from the city of Amarna itself nor from the Amarna period. Another identification of a scribe responsible for the manipulation of the royal correspondence can be recognized in the postscripts of four letters from Jerusalem (cf. EA 286:61; EA 287:64; EA

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5   Van der Toorn 2002, 100.
6   Artzi 1990, 140.

288:62, EA 289:47), i.e., *tupšar* [sic] *šarri* "king's" or "royal scribe", which might either simply refer to the function of the scribe at the royal court or be a translation of an existing Egyptian title with possible parallels *sš nswt* "royal scribe" or *sš nswt m3ꜥ.t* "true royal scribe" or "royal secretary". The prosopography of the Amarna officials reveals that the employment of both these titles is not rare and its holders – fifteen or fourteen examples of the title of "royal scribe" and eight examples of the title of "royal secretary" are attested – and the respective individuals are otherwise well established in the structure of the Amarna society. Additionally, all these officials carry Egyptian names and nothing suggests that they might be of a foreign origin.[7]

Although the available data are admittedly limited, it seems that relations between the inner Egyptian government and that of the conquered regions were close and could even overlap during the Amarna period. We must not assume that the governmental responsibilities, as described above, were neatly separated from one another. One well-documented case is the already mentioned Tutu, who was one of the highest officials in Akhetaten (Tell el-Amarna) according to the Egyptian evidence, most importantly his tomb in Amarna (no. 8). His manifold titles, as recorded there, include "Chamberlain", "Chief Servant of king Akhenaten in the House of the Aten", "Overseer of all Craftsmen of the Lord of the Two Lands", "Overseer of all the Works of His Majesty," "Overseer of Silver and Gold of the Lord of the Two Lands," "Overseer of the Treasury of the Aten", and "Chief Spokesman of the Entire Land": these titles point chiefly to the sphere of internal government, including the administration of the royal domain as well as religious and civil government. But the evidence of the Amarna letters shows that Tutu was also directly involved with the affairs of at least one the Levantine client kings, Aziru, the ruler of Amurru (in the region of Tripoli in modern-day northern Lebanon), who sends several letters to him, addressing him as "my father and my lord".[8]

At the same time, von Dassow proposed that "the varieties of Peripheral Akkadian existed in writing only."[9] Her considerations as well as the terms she used and discussed in her several articles (such as "litterae francae",

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[7]   Mynářová 2014a, 380 with n. 23.
[8]   Mynářová 2014b, 12–13
[9]   Von Dassow 2010, 918.

"alloglottography", "Akkadography") are of crucial significance for our theme; see the quotations below:

> With regard to the Sumerian lexical lists used at Ebla one millennium earlier, Miguel Civil points out that these lists could have been read either in Sumerian or in Semitic, and concludes: "Thus the lists written in Sumerian did not represent the words of a *lingua franca* used by persons speaking different languages, but rather they were *litterae francae*, so to speak, that could be read in almost any language." His observation can be applied as well to Sumero-Akkadian lexical texts and cuneiform writing in the second-millennium Levant. It was within the framework of learning and using an Akkadographic system of writing cuneiform that Canaanite scribes developed Canaano-Akkadian, during the Late Bronze Age.[10]

> Thus Late Babylonian writing is, in large part, the Akkadography of the Late Babylonian language, just as, I propose, varieties of Peripheral Akkadian writing are largely the Akkadography of local languages. But perhaps yet another approach is needed, besides the alloglottographic model according to which one language is encoded by means of writing another, and the model according to which writing literally embodies language. Each of these two models presupposes that, somehow or other, writing does encode communication in some specifiable language. This need not always be true.[11]

> In the meantime, however, our sources require us to develop a more comprehensive theory of writing, one that can account for the complexity of its actual operation and usage. We are accustomed to assuming that writing represents language; most of us were taught that way when, as children, we learned to read and write, and now we may hardly be able to think of (or in) a language without simultaneously visualizing its written form. But this modern conception of writing and its relation to language is a special case, not the norm on the basis of which writing may be defined. As well as simply encoding (a) language, writing may represent selected elements of language in formulating texts that correspond to no spoken utterance; it may encode forms of language that no one ever spoke;

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[10]   Von Dassow 2004, 670.
[11]   Von Dassow 2010, 916.

and it may encode expression in one language by means of the graphic representation of (elements of) another language.[12]

As for idiosyncrasies of EA 285–290, letters sent by ᵐÌR-ḫe-ba – conventionally normalized as ʿAbdi-Ḫeba – from Jerusalem,[13] including orthographic peculiarities of the subcorpus and postscripts invariably addressed to the pharaonic scribe, they have been exhaustively explored since William Moran's detailed study "The Syrian scribe of the Jerusalem Amarna Letters" that was published more than 40 years ago.[14] Rainey emphasized, for instance, that the Jerusalem scribe used to combine logograms inconsistently. For example, he "writes KUR URU *Ging-ti-ki-ir-mi-il* (EA 289:18) and KUR URU *Ru-bu-te*ᴷᴵ (EA 290:11). Once he reverses the order, URU KUR *U-ru-sa-lim*ᴷᴵ (EA 290:15) in accordance with his tendency to get things backwards" (CAT 1: 29). Therefore, three cases of the use of logograms in the Amarna letters comparable to Egyptian scribal conventions are presented here, using the so-called Jerusalem Scribe letters as a notable example.

I. Egyptian-fashioned use of the logograms LÚ and MUNUS alongside kinship terms "father", "mother" (Fig. 1)

EA 286:9, 10, 13   ᴸᵁ*a-bi-ia* "my father" / ᴹᵁᴺᵁˢ*ú-mi-ia* "my mother"
EA 287:26   LÚ.AD.DA.A.NI / *ú-mi-ia* (no logogram here)
EA 288:1314:   LÚ.AD.DA.A.NI / ˹ᴹᵁᴺᵁˢ˺*um-mi-ia*

See also ᴸᵁ*ḫa-at-nu* "son-in-law" (EA 162:72, from the pharaoh to the ruler of the city of Amurru).

Comment

In EA 288 *um-mi-ia* is written with the initial UM in accordance with the common cuneiform convention, while *ú-mi-ia* (EA 286; 287) with the initial Ú looks like a "consonantal" spelling of the laryngeal (ˀ), cf. Ú as the counterpart of Ugaritic *h* in the Ugaritic-Akkadian abecedary.[15]

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[12] Von Dassow 2010, 920–921.
[13]   EA 291 also belongs to the subcorpus, but it is too damaged to be discussed here.
[14] Moran 1975; CAT 1:26–36; van der Toorn 2000, 100–102; Mandell 2015, 365–385; Vita 2015, 90–91.
[15] Tropper 2012, 29–30.

The determinatives before kinship terms occur, for example, in Ugarit Akkadian, see ˡᵘ*a-bi* (also written syllabically), whereas *ḫatanu* is attested in Ugarit Akkadian without any determinative; as for the term "mother" preceded by the appropriate determinative, it is attested there, in comparison, in its logographic spelling ˊᵐⁱˋAMA.[16]

In EA 288:20 the logogram 21 MUNUS.DUMU.MUNUS.MEŠ[17], also transliterated as MUNUS.TUR.MUNUS.MEŠ (EAC 1116) and interpreted as *ṣuḫartu(?)* "girls" (both Moran and EAC) or "maidens" (ANET 488b), should probably be transliterated as 21 ᴹᵁᴺᵁˢ/ᶠDUMU.MUNUS.MEŠ, where the first MUNUS/F is to be taken as a determinative in the same way as LÚ in 10 ᴸᵁ́ÌR.ME[Š] "ten slaves" (EA 288:18); cf. ᶠDUMU. MUNUS.MEŠ (*mārātu*) "daughters" in EA 74:38 (Byblos) and ᶠANŠE. KUR.RA(*sīsītī*)-*ia* "my mare" in EA 245:9, Megiddo.[18]

As was first noted by Böhl (1909: 911), some titles are preceded by m/I-determinative, including ˡLUGAL "the king" – especially in the letter's heading[19] – and even once ˡÌR-*k*[*a*] "yo[ur] servant" (EA 289:2). Some Egyptian titles mentioned elsewhere in the Amarna letters have the same predeterminative, e.g., ˡ*ša-aḫ-ši-ḫa-ši-*ˊ*ḫa*ˋ "epistolary secretary"[20] (EA 316:16, Yurza), though its supposed Mesopotamian equivalent *ṭupšar šarri* is written either with LÚ (LÚ *ṭup-šar šàr-r*[*i*] in EA 289:47) or without any determinative (ˊ*ṭup*ˋ-*šar* ˊLUGALˋ EN-*ia* in EA 286:61).

II. (LÚ.)ÉRIN(.MEŠ)/*ṣābu* of the Amarna Letters is comparable to Egyptian *mš*ˁ "troop(s), army" (Fig. 2)

EA 286:53	LÚ.MEŠ *pi-ṭa-ti*
EA 286:54	LÚ.MEŠ ÉRIN *pi-ṭa-ti*

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[16] Huehnergard 1989, 84–85, 408.

[17] See Moran 1992, 332.

[18] Tropper, Vita 2010, 141, 135.

[19] See Mynářová 2007, 165; within the Jerusalem subcorpus, see EA 286:1, 25; 288:1; 290:1.

[20] "The Egyptianism *ša-aḫ-ši-ḫa-ši-ḫa* was connected by Albright with an Egyptian title *sš š*ˁ.*t* "letter-writer" or "epistolary secretary" and created a redundant title *sš š*ˁ.*t š*ˁ.*wt* "letter-writer of letters". With reference to *Wb* III, 480 and *Wb* IV, 419, Albright further stated that the title *sš š*ˁ.*t* was attested from this period onwards and the fact that the title was also known in the Near East was illustrated by him through the reference to the Kadesh inscription, as well as to the later "Story of Wenamun" (Mynářová 2007, 94 with n. 475–479).

EA 286:57	LÚ ÉRIN.MEŠ *pi-ṭa-ti*
EA 286:59	LÚ ÉRIN *pi-ṭa-ti*
EA 287:17, 18	ÉRIN.MEŠ *pi-ṭa-ti*
EA 287:21, 23; 288:51, 57	ÉRIN.MEŠ *pi-ṭa-ti*
EA 288:50	[LÚ.MEŠ] ÉRIN.MEŠ *pi-ṭa-ti*

Comment

Rainey (CAT 1: 30–31) described the matter as follows:

> A special problem is the understanding of the logogram ERÍN.MEŠ,
> which is glossed once in an Amurru text: *iš-tu* ERÍN.MEŠ *ṣa-bi pí-ṭá-*
> *te* / *ša* LUGAL EN-*ia* "from the regular troops of the king, my lord"
> (EA 166:45). Moran … had noted the fluctuations in the number and gender
> of verbs and adjectives used with ERÍN.MEŠ. Sometimes it seems to be
> in apposition to a substantive which carries the case ending commensurate
> with the syntactic position of the phrase as a whole … On the other hand,
> a Jerusalem letter has nominative LÚ.MEŠ.ERÍN *pi-ṭa-ti* (EA 286:54),
> LÚ.ERÍN.MEŠ *pi-ṭa-ti* (EA 286:57) and LÚ.ERÍN *pi-ṭa-ti* (EA 286:59);
> in that text, one must assume that the predeterminative is in construct with
> *piṭāti*.

The use of four divergent combinations accompanying one and the same
Egyptian term and occurring one by one in the same document (EA 286:53–
59), which seems rather odd if not quite impossible with regard to normal
cuneiform conventions, was probably due to the Egyptian writing system
that, by contrast, commonly allowed a remarkable variability of glyph
combinations for recording one and the same term, sometimes even within
the same manuscript. Likewise, the appellation "the king, my lord" is
recorded variously in EA 286 as:

LUGAL EN-*ia* (15× in lines 1, 5, 16, 21, 24, 25, 26, 41, 43, 47, 55, 60,
   61, 63, 64);
LUGAL EN-*ri* (3× in lines 7, 15, 32) commented by Moran as the
   case where "the logogram EN(*bēlu*) seems to have a phonetic
   complement –*ri*, which is still without a convincing explanation."[21]
EN-*ia šàr*(LUGAL)-*ri* (1× in line 3);

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[21] Moran 1975, 163 n.52.

> *šàr*(LUGAL)-*ri* EN-*ia* (1× in line 40); cf. *šàr*(LUGAL)-*ri* EN-*šu* (1× in line 8) "the king, his lord" where the 3 sg suff still implies the same sender;

> LUGAL EN (2× in lines 36, 38) without any phonetic complement, and therefore with the 1 sg suff. omitted, which closely resembles the Egyptian scribal habit of omitting the 1 sg suff.[22]

Such variables in the Amarna letters might have been affected by the fact that Egyptian characters were typically arranged in non-linear sequences – one under another; two under one – versus the strict linearity of cuneiform writing. Thus, Egyptian *mšꜥ* "Heer; Truppe(n); Menge; Volk; Feldzug; Expedition" (*Wb.* II, 155–156), which is likely to be the semantic equivalent of (LÚ)ÉRIN(.MEŠ)/*ṣābu*, could be written down through several glyph combinations. See, in addition, the glyph combination denoting the term *rmṯ mšꜥ* "der gemeine Soldat" (*Wb.* II, 155:11) that is graphemically identical to the cuneiform sequence LÚ.MEŠ ÉRIN.MEŠ (Fig. 2). Cochavi-Rainey makes the following comment on the use of the Egyptian loan word in question:[23]

> *piṭātu*: "archers"="regular troops." This word was recognized very early as the Egyptian term for a type of troops … it seems likely that it was really not the nisbe form *pḏty* but rather *pḏt* "troop of soldiers" (collective).

> The usual form in the Amarna texts is ÉRIN.MEŠ *pi-ṭa-ti* apart from the Jerusalem letters which usually use an orthography like LÚ.MEŠ ÉRIN *pi-ṭa-ti* (EA 286:54). The variation between the TA sign (=*ṭá*) in most texts and the DA sign (=*ṭa*) in the Jerusalem texts certainly suggests that the second consonant was /ṭa/ and Albright and Moran … noted that the Egyptian *ḏ* which became *d* in the second millenium [sic] appears in Semitic. The plene spelling *pí-ṭá-a-ta* (EA 363:18) shows that the penultimate vowel is long *ā*.

III. Egyptian-fashioned use of the plural markers (Fig. 3)

Huehnergard makes the following observations concerning the specific use of the plural markers in Ugarit Akkadian in those cases when, as

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[22] Borghouts 2010, 82–83 § 17.j.
[23] Cochavi-Rainey 2011, 260.

defined by Moran, "the determinative is to be disregarded, as is often true in WPA[Western Peripheral Akkadian]."[24]

> The determinatives ᴹᴱˢ and ᴴᴵ.ᴬ often occur on plural forms throughout the Ugarit texts … There is abundant evidence, however, that they did not necessarily indicate plurality: In a few examples, ᴹᴱˢ represents the abstract ending -*ūt*, undoubtedly because the latter is homophonous with the masc. plural ending -*ūt*, which is relatively more common in this dialect than in Mesopotamian texts: ŠEŠᴹᴱˢ for *aḫḫūtu* "status of brother"; É.GI.Aᴹᴱˢ for *kallūtu* "status of daughter-in-law"; DUMUᴹᴱˢ for *mārūtu* "sonship" … In many instances ᴹᴱˢ and ᴴᴵ.ᴬ seem to serve no other purpose than to mark the forms they follow as logograms.[25]

Remarkably, Müller describes the matter as follows:[26]

> Neben HÁ gibt es noch einen weiteren Pluralindikator: MEŠ Verteilungs-muster, wie sie sich für das mesopotamische Akkadisch nachweisen lassen (MEŠ für belebten, HÁ für unbelebten Entitäten), lassen sich für das ägyptische Akkadisch nicht feststellen. Beide können nicht nur bei Logogrammen vorkommen, sondern auch bei syllabisch geschriebenen akkadischen Worten: *ša-am-mi*ᴹᴱˢ „Kräuter"; ˢᴬᴸ*a-mi-la-du*ᴹᴱˢ „Frauen.

> Derartige Phänomene sind auch aus akkadischen Texten mesopotamischer Provenienz belegt, sie werden aber möglicherweise durch ein paralleles Verfahren innerhalb des hieroglyphischen Schriftsystems beeinflusst. In diesem wird der Plural eines Wortes ebenfalls graphisch durch einen Pluralindikator vom Singular abgesetzt.

Comment

As to Ugarit Akkadian, "logograms for metals are probably always sg., even though often followed by MEŠ: AN.NA⁽ᴹᴱˢ⁾; KÙ.BABBAR⁽ᴹᴱˢ⁾, rarely KÙ.BABBARᴴᴵ.ᴬ; URUDU⁽ᴹᴱˢ⁾; ZABAR⁽ᴹᴱˢ⁾",[27] i.e. "tin"; "silver"; "copper"; "bronze", respectively.

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[24]   Moran 1973, 53.
[25]   Huehnergard 1989, 88–89.
[26]   Müller 2010, 45.
[27]   Huehnergard 1989, 89–90.

Noticeably, the spelling URUDU[ḪI.A] for "bronze" is attested in the text of Sargon II's Eighth Campaign three times (lines 399, 402, 403), very possibly in the case where either technology or weight is specified: 4 d. *ṣa-lam* URUDU NI.GAB.GAL-*li* … KI.TUŠ.MEŠ-*šú-nu* URUDU.ḪI.A *šap-ku* "4 Figuren von (göttlichen) Obertorhütern aus Bronze … nebst ihren aus Bronze gegossenen Sokeln"; *adi* É-*šú* 60 GUN URUDU.ḪI.A KI.LÁ "mit ihrem Gehäuse, mit einem Gewicht von 60 Talenten".[28] A similar observation on the use of plural determinatives in the Amarna texts was made by Cochavi-Rainey: "The substantive appears without a plural marker when it does not represent a quantity but rather a commodity."[29] There is, however, some disagreement between this observation and the contexts she mentioned, e.g., EA 369 (addressed by Amenhotep IV to Milkilu, the ruler of Gezer): [7]*mi-im-ma a-na la-qé-e* [8]MUNUS.DÉ \ *ša-qí-tu*$_4$ SIG$_5$ [9]KÙ.BABBAR.ḪI.A KÙ.GI.ḪI.A "everything for the acquisition of beautiful female cupbearers, viz. silver, gold", as opposed to: [13]ŠU. NIGIN-*ma* MUNUS.DÉ 40 [14]40 ˹KÙ˺.BABBAR ŠÁM MUNUS.DÉ.MEŠ "[13]Total: 40 female cupbearers. [14]Forty (shekels of) silver is the price of one female cupbearer".

It is quite possible, however, that these graphemical patterns were due to Egyptian writing habits, cf. another attestation of the combination KÙ.BABBAR.ḪI.A KÙ.GI.MEŠ in EA 1:70 (addressed by Amenhotep III to Kadashman-Enlil, the king of Babylon). To compare, the Egyptian group determinative for metals normally comprises a plural marker, e.g., *nbw* (with TLA[30]) / *nb* "Gold"; *ḥmt* "Kupfer, Erz"; *ḥḏ* "Silber" (either with a plural marker or without it; often combined with *nbw* "gold") (*Wb*. II, 237:6–239:13; III, 99; 209:9, see Fig. 3).

One of the Ugarit Akkadian examples, in which singular forms are accompanied by MEŠ, is UZU[MEŠ]-*šú* "his flesh".[31] This may be compared with the traditional orthography of Egyptian *ḥˁ.w* (with TLA[32]) / *ḥˁ* "Körper; Leib; Fleisch; Selbst", which is regularly accompanied by a

[28] Mayer 2013, 136–138.
[29] Cochavi-Rainey 2011, 27.
[30] Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/GetWcnDetails?u=guest &f=0&l=0&wn=81680&db=0 (accessed 26.06.2019).
[31] Huehnergard 1989, 89
[32] Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/GetWcnDetails?u=guest &f=0&l=0&wn=101950&db=0 (accessed 26.06.2019).

plural marker (*Wb*. III, 37:5–39:13, see Fig. 3). It is worth noting that the spelling UZU^MEŠ for Akkadian *šīru(m)* "flesh; body; entrails (omen)" is quite broadly attested in Mesopotamian cuneiform, especially in Assyrian sources of the 1st millennium BCE, concerning omens or contexts regarding meat (as food) or someone's corpse (AHw 1248–1249; CAD Š₃ 113–122, note 121:4.b.). As for literary texts, the spelling occurs, e.g., in *Gilg*. XI, 252 (*du-muq šīrī*(uzu)^MEŠ-*šú* "the beauty of whose flesh the hides have ruined"[33]) as well as, presumably, at the broken beginning of *Gilg*. XI, 244 (George 2003: 718, 894). Whether or not the use of MEŠ in Assyrian and Babylonian cuneiform of the 1st millennium BCE could be somehow affected by the peripheral cuneiform conventions, is open to question.

The use of the plural marker MEŠ with *nu-kúr-tu*^MEŠ, "enmity, hostility, war", in EA 286:41 (without the determinative in EA 287:12; also attested as *nu-kùr-ti*^MEŠ in EA 69:14, Byblos) might be paralleled by the spelling of its supposed Egyptian semantic equivalent *ẖrw.yw* (with TLA[34]) / *ẖrwjw*, "Streit; Krieg; Feindseligkeit" (*Wb*. III, 326:1–3, see Fig. 3); cf. its occurrence in a Ramesside letter: *jẖ ḏd=k n Ptḥ jnj wj jw=j ʿnẖ.kw p3wn jw=j dy mẖnw p3 ẖrw.yw*, "(3r.) please, pray to Ptah to bring me back alive for I am here in the middle of enmity." The publishers emphasize that "the word *ẖrw.yw* has a masc. sing. article *p3* and a plural marker. That implies an abstract noun."[35] Interestingly, the Egyptian context mentioned above resembles that of EA 286:41–42, cf.: *ù nu-kúr-tu*^MEŠ KAL.GA *a-na mu-ḫi-ia* ⸢*ù*⸣ *la a-la-*⸢*á*⸣⸢-*e e-ra-ba iš-tu* LUGAL EN-*ia*, "But the hostility against me is strong and I am unable to go in to the king, my lord"; see also a Byblos letter: *a-mur a-na-ku nu-kúr-tu₄* UGU-*ia* 5 MU.MEŠ *ù ki-na-an-na* ⸢*iš*⸣-[*tap*]-*ru-a-na* BAD-*ia*, "Look, as for me, there has been hostility against me for five years so thus I keep writing to my lord" (EA 106:16–18).

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[33] George's translation as "flesh" appears to have been influenced by the contexts the logographic spelling UZU^MEŠ was typical of, while another interpretation, maybe more suitable for the content, was proposed elsewhere: *maškū uqtattû dumuq* UZU.MEŠ-*šú* "the skins (he was wearing) had hidden the beauty of his body" (CAD Š₃ 115, 1.b. with the reference to Gilg. XI 238).

[34] Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/GetWcnDetails?u=guest &f=0&l=0&wn=120090&db=0 (accessed 26.06.2019).

[35] Makeeva, Nikolaev 2015, 372. On false/pseudo plurals denoting collective or abstract nouns in Egyptian, see, e.g., Borghouts 2010, 74 §14.c.1., 77 §15.b.
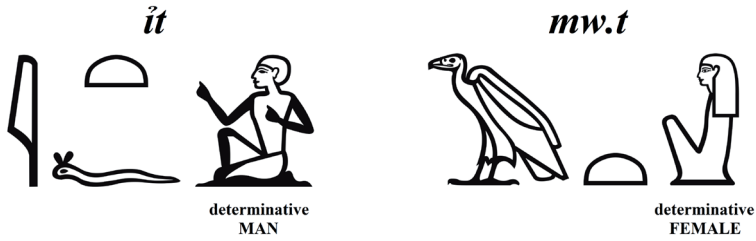
Figures

ỉt   *mw.t*

determinative
MAN

determinative
FEMALE

Figure 1. Normal Egyptian recording of *ỉt* "father" (Wb. I, 141:10–13),
mw.t "mother" (Wb. II, 54).

mšꜥ   *rmṯ mšꜥ*
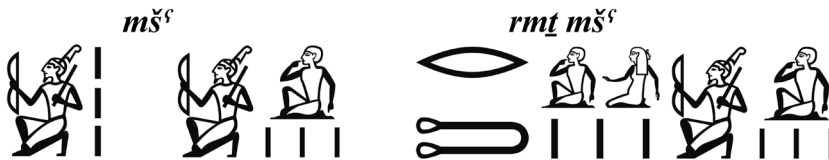
Figure 2. Normal Egyptian recording of *mšꜥ* "troop(s); army".

ḥmt   *nbw*   *ḥḏ*   *ḥꜥ.w*   *ḫrw.yw*
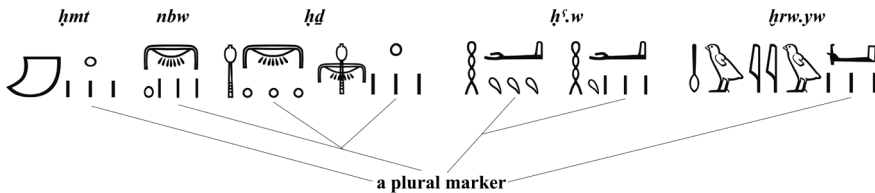
a plural marker

Figure 3. Normal Egyptian use of plural markers: *ḥmt* "copper"; *nbw* "gold"; *ḥḏ* "silver";
ḥꜥ.w "flesh; limbs; body; self"; *ḫrw.yw* "hostility; war".

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