

THE TEXTS FROM KĀMID EL-LŌZ AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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I am afraid, that the text-corpus from Kāmid el-Lōz, consisting of nine cuneiform tablets, will not offer a clue for solving problems of absolute chronology. Nevertheless, we are dealing with important texts from an important site in the Southern el-Bekā'a, which should not be dismissed nor neglected when dealing with the Bronze Age in Lebanon.

Since the excavations at Kāmid el-Lōz, the ancient settlement of Kumidi mentioned in the well-known Amarna letters,¹ have been taken up again by Marlies Heinz (Freiburg) in 1997, to everybody's regret no texts have been unearthed so far. Due to the war the last archaeological campaign under the directorship of Rolf Hachmann (Saarbrücken) took place in 1981. Between 1982 and 1985 the site was occupied by Israeli military forces and therefore inaccessible. During these years and afterwards the tell was obviously plundered thoroughly and the 19-years' work by the German excavation team was completely destroyed. It is assumed that during the period between 1986 and 1997 a number of cuneiform tablets and fragments have been found and illegally sold on the flourishing international antiquities market.² Two such cases are known so far (nr. 8 and 9; see list below) and further texts originating from Kāmid el-Lōz are expected to show up. But still, we do hope

to gain additional textual evidence from the present ongoing excavations. Unfortunately, our prospects or hopes to find larger palatial archives are shattered by the fact that a modern cemetery covers the southern part of the Late Bronze Age Palace P4, where the main archive is expected to be located. Palace P4 was built during the reign of Tutmosis III. (1479–1425). It was rebuilt and renovated for several times before being destroyed and plundered during Echnaton's reign (1352–1336).

The earliest known history of the settlement Kāmid el-Lōz date to the Neolithic period and the early Bronze Age.³ The first architectural evidence for a proper settlement stems from living houses on the site, which according to the pottery can be dated to the Middle Bronze Age. So far, not much can be said about the function or character of the town during those periods. It was only during the following period, the Late Bronze Age, that Kāmid el-Lōz became a major city, which has been partly excavated: A temple, a palace, a workshop-area and some graves formed the main architectural structures, of which remains have been discovered.⁴ The most recent traces of settlement date to the Roman and Byzantine times and are subject to current excavations.

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¹ For the most recent reassessment on the textual evidence from Kāmid el-Lōz see HACHMAN 2001, 130–149. On the site see sub HACHMANN in the bibliography. Kumidi is mentioned in following El-Amarna letters (=EA): EA 116, 75, EA 129, 85 (*Rib-Adda* of Amurru), EA 132, 49, EA 197, 38, EA 198, 5 (*Arahattu* of Kumidi).

² SEEDEN 1987, 5–8, EAD. 1991, 144–145 and FISK 1991, 243–252.

³ HACHMANN *et al.* 1983 and *Saarbrücker Beiträge zur Altertumskunde* with reports on the results of the archaeological campaigns under the directorship of R. Hachmann. In the immediate surrounding of the palace a deep trench has been opened during the season 2002 in Kāmid el-Lōz. Underneath the so called “yellow layer” some sherds of a bowl which date back to early Bronze IV turned up. The

base and burnishing of this bowl are typical for this time. Middle bronze age sherds also occurred in the deep trench while massive stone build walls belonging to the top layer of the trench-area date the youngest settlement activities there to the late bronze age, the palace-period (for details and illustrations see home page: www.orient.uni-freiburg.de/archaeologie/archframe.htm).

Early bronze and middle bronze age pottery also comes from a deep trench in the Kāmid el-Lōz temple area opened during the 2002 season, followed by the late-bronze age pottery of the neighbouring living and temple area (Marlies Heinz).

⁴ During the season 2002 excavation, living houses in the immediate neighborhood of the temple with kitchens, ovens and working places as well as a street running between the houses proved for the first time in Kāmid el-Lōz that the temple of the late bronze age had been surrounded by a living area (for further details and illustrations see home page: www.orient.uni-freiburg.de/archaeologie/archframe.htm) (Marlies Heinz).

The text-corpus from the palace of Kumidi, known so far, consists of eight letters belonging to the Amarna period and one incantation (nr. 7), which is not of primary interest in this paper. All tablets were found in the palace area P4 and its surroundings in secondary and tertiary contexts. According to HACHMANN 2001, 131–132 the tablets do not offer any evidence for the exact dating of the four strata of one building-period, namely P4a to P4d, in which most of the tablets were unearthed. However, Palace P3 is definitely younger than the youngest of the tablets (see below for a list of texts and their content as well as the timetable).

The personal names and topographic designations mentioned in the texts from Kumidi are partly known from the Amarna letters, which supply us with a chronological order of the texts and their historical framework.⁵ As the texts from Egypt and Kumidi report, the city served as a main seat of Egyptian administration in the Beqā'a belonging to the province of Canaan. During this period, the Late Bronze Age, Egypt was to be the dominant power in this region, which was strategically as well as commercially of great importance. In the 16th century the Mittanians had taken over the rule in Syria after Iamḥad/Ḥalab was beaten and destroyed by the Hittites. For a short while the Mittanian domination over Syria was threatened by the 18th dynasty of Egypt, when Pharaoh Tutmosis III. reached the Euphrates and the Ḥalab area during his 8th campaign. Mayer most recently associated the destruction of Ekalte and Azû situated along the Euphrates with this Egyptian military campaign. Devastated towns are mentioned on the north-eastern wall of the 7th pylon in Karnak. But, in the late 15th or early 14th cent. during the reign of Tutmosis IV. the two empires agreed on a division of Syria with Qadeš marking the borderline, legitimising Egypt's control of Canaan.

During the Amarna period Egypt's vassals included two powerful little entities or city-states in northern Canaan: 1) Damascus in Upe⁶ (inland southern Syria, south of Qadeš) under Biriawaza, who is frequently mentioned in the Amarna letters and 2) Amurru in the north, situated in the area of

the Nahr el-Kelb between Mittani and Egypt – later on Ḥatti and Egypt – which was ruled by 'Abdi-Aširta and his son Aziru. Especially Amurru was expanding with the help of the *ḥapiru* during that time, as Rīb-Addu, the ruler of Byblos (Gubla) complains to the Egyptians.⁷ *Ḥapiru* mentioned in the letters 2 and 4 from Kumidi, is a collective term referring to warlords and brigands in northern Canaan, who were permanently threatening the Egyptian power.

Finally, after Amurru bypassed Byblos and settled in Beirut, Byblos went over to Amurru's side during the sovereignty of Aziru, who finally controlled the whole coast from Byblos to Ugarit.⁸ He is famous for his so-called "Schaukelpolitik"⁹ acting between the rising Hittite power and Egypt. Obviously the Pharaoh was of no help to Rīb-Addu, who had repeatedly complained about Amurru's expansion. In his reply EA 124 Pharaoh Echnaton even asked him to stop writing so much – which may have been another way to say "shut up!". In EA 129 Rīb-Addu even blamed the Pharaoh for not having ordered the *rābu* of Kumidi to march against the sons of 'Abdi-Aširta. In a later letter Rīb-Addu pointed out that the threat is represented by Aziru and feared that the *rābu* of Kumidi, presumably Puḥuru, would not stand the threat without the intervention of the Pharaoh.

Kumidi also had its local ruler named Araḥattu, who is attested as the sender of the letter EA 198 as "man from Kumidi". The letter was addressed to the Pharaoh (presumably the early reign of Amenhotep IV.) and declared the loyalty of an apparently unimportant ruler. The Egyptian magnate's name (akk. *rābiṣu*), who also resided at Kumidi was Puḥuru, who was responsible for the area between Damascus, the Hauran, Northern Palestine and the Northern Beqā'a. This *rābiṣu* is also mentioned in the letter EA 132.

Two of the letters from Kāmid el-Lōz, namely 2 and 4, were addressed to the Pharaoh, most probably to Amenhotep III. It is assumed that Araḥattu was a contemporary of Amenhotep III., although direct evidence is still missing. Amenhotep III. is also the addressee of the famous Hurrian Amarna letter 24

⁵ On the letters: MORAN 1992. On the newest edition of the translation of the Amarna tablets by LIVERANI 1998. On the personal names from Amarna: HESS 1993.

⁶ GILES 1997, 222 and 244, YOYOTTE 1999, 55–58.

⁷ WARBURTON 1994, 437–438.

⁸ On the *Ḥapiru* see ASTOUR 1999, 31–50.

⁹ See e.g. KLENGEL 1995, 162.

written by Tušratta dealing with the marriage of the latter's daughter Tatu-Ḫepa with the Pharaoh.¹⁰

Texts nr. 6 and 9 were addressed to a *rābu* (LÚ.GAL), who is to be identified with the aforementioned Egyptian commissioner *rābišu*, residing at Kumidi. The Egyptian *rābišu* played an important role in the negotiations with the local rulers; they were also responsible for the transmission of orders and their implementation. Since there is no evidence that the Egyptian and local ruler resided in the city at the same time, it is assumed that Puḫuru was stationed in the town after Araḫattu, the local ruler. The local ruler of Damascus Biriawaza is attested during the reign of Echnaton and came to Kumidi after Puḫuru.

Due to the fact that most texts report on events which cannot be placed within a specific historical context, only references to persons give us a clue on the tablets' provenance and possible chronological placement within the Amarna text-corpus. On the other side, chronological considerations on the Amarna letters are still open to debate.¹¹

The language of these letters belongs to the Middle Babylonian dialect characteristic for the 15th and 14th century, which is attested within the diplomatic correspondence throughout the vast area between Babylon, Ḫattuša and Egypt. Remarkably, only few letters were sent by Pharaohs. In sum only six or seven are known from Tell el-Amarna (e.g. EA 162 and 163); two more were found in Kumidi (nr. 2 and 4).

Most of the letters recording international diplomacy were sent by vassals (akk. *ḫazannu*): "vassal letters", most of them belonging to the group of "Byblos letters" by Rīb-Addu, are characterized by long narrative sections and a very personal tone, whereas the pharaonic letters consist of stereotyped phrases. These letters dealt with the order of preparation of supplies or troops before the arrival of the Egyptian army, preparations for a military campaign, dispatch of a bride with her dowry, the acquisition of female cupbearers and diplomatic pressure of the Egyptians on Aziru of Amurru. It can be noted that Canaanite vassals sent several letters in response to a single royal letter. According to NA'AMAN (2000), who noted the difference in number

of respective letters, routine messages by the Pharaoh were sent through Egyptian officials (*rābišu*). Royal letters are of secondary importance in respect to the administration of Canaan and the verbal orders of the officials have certainly played a major role. These instructions can be deduced from vassal letters, which again marks the indirect approach to the reconstruction of events.

Nr. 1	fragment (certainly not from Egypt!)
Nr. 2	from the Egyptian king (LUGAL)/ pharaoh to a Syrian prince
Nr. 3	fragment (Canaanite-type of letter)
Nr. 4	from the Egyptian king (LUGAL)/ pharaoh to a Syrian prince
Nr. 5	Canaanite-type of letter
Nr. 6	from Byblos (?): compare letter 9
Nr. 8	fragment, from Kumidi (? , duplicate-letter)
Nr. 9	from Byblos

For those letters, which are only fragmentarily preserved and do not bear the sender's name, we rely on paleographical, linguistic or thematic clues for its provenance. Maybe, in the near future, the mineralogical and chemical study of the Amarna tablets, a research project by scholars of the Tel-Aviv University, can tell us more on the origin of the clay on which the letters were inscribed in cuneiform signs.¹²

In the letters 6, 8 and 9 the *rābišu* of Kumidi is mentioned, which indicates that those letters are to be dated to the late phase of the Amarna period, definitely after the rule of the local king Araḫattu. In nr. 6 and 9 the sender is named ʾIlī-rāpiʾ, who presumably is to be identified with the younger brother of Rīb-Addu.

The duplicate-letter nr. 8 sent by the *rābišu*, who is usually identified with Puḫuru, is most probably addressed to Aziru, the ruler of Amurru, and therefore dates to the end of the Amarna period. The office of the *rābišu* was most probably installed in the early reign of Echnaton. Note that the local ruler Araḫattu was still ruling at Kumidi when Echnaton ascended the throne. Another *rābišu* (Paḫanate) was stationed in Ṣumur (Tell Kazel), another town in Syria in the coastal area, which was taken over by Amurru (under Aziru).

¹⁰ See the latest translation by M. GIORGIERI in LIVERANI 1998, 374–391. On a short depiction of the political situation (especially on the role of Mittani) during these times see also WARBURTON 1994, 433–438.

¹¹ Latest reassessment in COHEN and WESTBROOK 2000. See also GILES 1997.

¹² A description of this research project can be found on: <http://www.tau.ac.il/~archpubs/projects/amarna.html>

Letter nr. 1 cannot be integrated chronologically nor historically into the Amarna text-corpus.

Nr. 5 is continuation of a letter and mentions a certain Biridiya, who might be identified with the ruler of Megiddo attested within the first years of Echnaton. Too many uncertainties, such as the paleography, prevent us from drawing any more conclusions.

Summing up: nr. 1 and 5 remain doubtful in respect to their setting; nr. 2 and 4 constitute the earliest tablets from Kumidi mentioning the *ḥapiru* and a warlike situation in the land of *Kaša* (Nubia).¹³ Then follows nr. 3 sent to Araḥattu or Puḥuru, nr. 6, 8 and 9 belong to the latest written testimonies from Kumidi. This means that none of the letters found in Kāmid el-Lōz directly refer to Araḥattu, the local ruler. The oldest texts are therefore still younger than the earliest building phase of the Late Bronze Age palace (P5), which roughly belongs to the 15th or 14th cent. BC and was destroyed by an earthquake and which may have taken place during Araḥattu's or more likely his predecessor's rule.

When the Egyptian power diminished caused by major political changes, Kumidi lost its importance. The palace and temple lost their function. In the layers of Iron Age I no larger or official buildings have been detected so far.

What is to be seen is that the protagonists in these letters and those of the Amarna archive are chronologically tied to the rulers of Egypt, who again can be synchronized with the rulers of Assyria and Babylonia as well as with the rulers of Mittani and Ugarit. Given to the existing data not much can be contributed to absolute chronology, unfortunately. The rulers of Kumidi and Southern Syria can only be dated in a very rough way, since no regnal years nor accession dates are known and because of uncertainties concerning co-regencies for the Pharaohs of the 18th dynasty, namely Amenhotep III. and Echnaton.

Mayer has tried to solve the missing link between the Mesopotamian and Egyptian chronology of the 2nd mill. by placing the texts from Ekalte spanning

over three generations (ca. 60 years) between the campaigns against Ḥalab by Muṣṣili I. and by Tudḥalija I.¹⁴ This would imply a low chronology (LC) for Mesopotamia and its neighbors. Unfortunately, as has been stated by Klinger before,¹⁵ the time-span between those two Hittite rulers exceeds the duration of three generations in Ekalte. Further, the dating attested in Ekalte which was associated with Tudḥalija's I. campaign against Ḥalab as well as the association of the destruction of Ekalte with Tutmosis III. 8th campaign is far from holding good or being secured.¹⁶ It further has to be noted that Ekalte's name is not even mentioned on the 7th pylon in Karnak. As Klinger has convincingly shown the Hittite ruler Tudḥalija I. can be placed via numerous synchronisms shortly after the middle of the 15th cent. BC.¹⁷ This implies that the ten generations between Ḥattušili I. and Tudḥalija I. cannot be placed within one century reckoning ca. 1560 BC for start of the Old Hittite Kingdom according to the LC.¹⁸ Difficulties also arise with the presently known number of generations between Šuppiluliuma I. and Muṣṣili I. when applying the LC. Therefore we have to reconsider new solutions, which may not necessarily be tied with the traditional "Venus chronologies" based on the system of observed Venus cycles during the reign of Ammišaduqa.¹⁹ However, this should certainly be investigated in a broader scope in the near future.²⁰

TEXTS UNDER DISCUSSION

List of texts from the excavation:

Texts 1–4	EDZARD (1970) 55ff.	KL 69: 100 KL 69: 277 KL 69: 278 KL 69: 279
Text 5	WILHELM (1982) 132 ff., <i>id.</i> (1973) 69ff.	KL 72: 600
Text 6	EDZARD (1982) 123ff., <i>id.</i> (1976) 62ff.	KL 74: 300
Text 7 (incantation)	EDZARD (1986) 146ff., <i>id.</i> (1980) 52ff.	KL 78: 200

¹³ Note NA'AMAN's 1988, 191 second proposal: during the reign of Tutanchamon during the post-Amarna period.

¹⁴ See e.g. MAYER 1995, 340–341, *id.* 1998, 131–135, *id.* 2001, 14–19.

¹⁵ KLINGER 1995, 246–247

¹⁶ WILCKE 1992, 124–135 and KLINGER 1995, 245, fn. 31.

¹⁷ BECKMAN 2000, 19–32.

¹⁸ See KLENGEL 2002, 104–105 for an overview.

¹⁹ See GURZADYAN 1998, 71–76, HUBER 1999/2000, 50–79 and ZEEB 2001, 86. Note also WARBURTON's article in *Akkadica*

123, 2002, 108–114, where recent trends in chronological studies based on dendrochronological and astronomical data are elucidated.

²⁰ In respect to this crucial question a workshop under the title "Mesopotamian Dark Age Revisited" was organised by the project "Mesopotamian Chronology" of the research programme SCIEEM 2000, which took place in November 2002 in Vienna. The papers presented were published in: H. HUNGER and R. PRUZSINSKY, *CChEM* 6, Vienna (2004).

Further texts (illegal digs):

Text 8	ARNAUD (1991) 7ff.	private
Text 9	HUEHNERGARD (1996) 97ff.	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Short description:

Text 1: badly broken, only Amqi can be clearly identified, where military actions must have taken place (from P1/2–P4)

Text 2: sender: Pharaoh, addressee: Zalaia, man of Damascus; *ḥapiru* and the land Kaša (=Nubia [Kuš]) are mentioned; the question remains, why this tablet was kept in Kumidi. (from P4a)

Text 3: letter, in which no personal names are mentioned, telling that the sender has arrived in Egypt, it most probably originates from Canaan, but certainly not from Byblos, Amurru or Jerusalem. (from P4a)

Text 4: three fragments; sender: Pharaoh, addressee is ‘Abdi-Milki, man of Šaza’ena, *ḥapiru* (and the land Kaša) are mentioned. ‘Abdi-Milki is mentioned in the Amarna text-corpus as a man from Byblos (EA 203) and local king of Šaḥimi. (from P4a)

Text 5: continuation of a previous letter (*šaprāti*): Biridiya (to be identified with the local ruler of Megiddo mentioned in EA 242–248, EA 365) and Meta (connection with Mittani was considered) are named. (from P4a)

Text 6: sender: ‘Ilī-rāpi’ (maybe to be identified with the local ruler of Gubla known from EA 128, EA 139 and EA 140: younger brother and successor of Rīb-Addu), addressee: *rābišu* (LÚ.GAL, most probably Puḥuru, who is also attested in EA 132, 57, 117, 122, 123, 189, 190, 207, 208); people of Gubla are mentioned. (from P4)

Text 7: incantation: from P4b of the “Schatzhaus”

Text 8: sender: *rābišu*, addressee: sovereign of Amurru (Aziru?); the land of the Hittites and *Šutu*-people (also in EA 81, 122 and 123) are mentioned; duplicate of the original letter

Text 9: sender: ‘Ilī-rāpi’ (from Byblos?), addressee: *rābišu* (LÚ.GAL, Puḥuru?); people of *Aziru* (sovereign of Amurru ?) are mentioned: ‘Ammu-rāpi’ and Ammunira (local ruler of Berytos [Beruta]: EA 137, 138, 141–143), further: Arata (?), Naḥia (PN), Byblos, ‘Ibirta and Artaya (Toponyms), *Šutu*-people (EA 16, 122, 123, 169, 195, 246, 297, 318)

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Egypt*	Kumidi	Byblos	Amurru	Mittani	Bab./Ass.***
Tutmosis III. (1479–1425)	building of P4 4 strata: P4c–P4a			Parrattarna ¹	Kara-indaš/ Aššur-bēl-nišešu ca. 1413 BC/ (1417–1409)
Amenhotep II. (1424–1400) Tutmosis IV. (1400–1390) Amenhotep III. (1390–1352)		Arašattu (local)	Artatama I.	Šuttarna II. Artašumara Tušratta (1365–1335/22)	Kadašman-Enlil (1374–1360) Burna-Buriaš II./ Aššur-uballiṭ I. (1359–1333) (1363–1328)
Echnaton (=Amenhotep IV.) (1352–1336)	Pūpuru (Egypt.) Biriawaza** (Damascus)	Ṛib-Addu Ṛi-rāpṡ	Abdi-Asirta Aziru ^o		

* lowered Egyptian dates for Tutmosis III. (Kitchen): no co-regency of Amenhotep III. and Amenhotep IV. (Krauss); Amenhotep III. years 30–36 are contemporary with Burna-Buriaš's accession year

– Amenhotep III. is contemporary with Šuttarna II. and Tušratta (Mittani), Šuppiluliuma I. (Ḫatti), Kurigalzu I., Kadašman-Enlil I. and Burna-Buriaš II. (Babylonia)

– Amenhotep IV. is contemporary with Šuppiluliuma I. (Ḫatti), Aššur-uballiṭ I. (Assyria) and Tušratta (Mittani)
– Biriawaza is attested since Amenhotep III. and covers the whole reign of Echnaton (NACAMAN, 1988, 179–193); EA 197 reports that he went from Damascus to Kumidi: see GILES 1997, 225 and 244.

*** Dates according to the Mesopotamian Middle Chronology

^o contemporary with Niqmaddu II. of Ugarit (ca. 1350–1315), Šuppiluliuma I. and Mušili II., Aitagma (Qadeš), Akizzi (Qatna) and Ṛib-Addu (Byblos)

[§] contemporary with Idrimi of Alalah

