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The Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies  
La Société canadienne des études mésopotamiennes

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# JOURNAL



Up for Grabs: Babylonian Kingship During the Iron Age

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The Importance of History and Tradition in the Claim to Achaemenid Kingship

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Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

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Volume 8 • Fall / Automne 2013

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Rainey, Anson F. (2015) *The El-Amarna Correspondence: A New Edition of the Cuneiform Letters from the Site of El-Amarna Based on Collations of All Extant Tablets*. Edited by William Schniedewind and Zipora Cochavi-Rainey. 2 vols. Handbook of Oriental Studies. Brill: Leiden. 1648 + XV pp. \$ 293. ISBN: 9789004281455

Rainey's posthumous opus magnum, a commented edition of the Amarna letters (*EA*), is a difficult work to review because its deficiencies would have been surely remedied by the author himself, had it been published in his lifetime. And, his wife and friends who completed and edited his work are certainly to be thanked for sharing with the scholarly community the results of Rainey's life-long research on the Amarna letters.

The book falls into a volume of 1313 pages plus fifteen pages of introduction and a second volume of 335 pages. The first, larger, volume contains a foreword by W. Schniedewind, an introduction by A. Rainey, a narrative on the discovery of the letters by J. Mynářová, and a glossary by A. Mandell, while Rainey's transliterations and translations make up the remaining 1200 pages. The second volume consists of comments on each letter which were culled from Rainey's notes by Cochavi-Rainey. Each volume is provided with its own bibliography. Some planning and editorial aspects call for critical observations addressed to the publisher. While the monumental form of the first volume may give physical expression to Rainey's immense work and dedication, the book is difficult to consult because of its weight. This problem could have been easily alleviated by moving the introductory sections and glossary to the second volume and creating a single integrated bibliography. Further reduction of the weight would have been achieved by improving the graphic layout of the first volume. The decision to treat each letter as a separate chapter, besides unnecessarily adding pages, created other inconveniences: there are many half blank pages, or nearly empty pages; more importantly, the multiplication of short chapters consisting in individual letters created clusters of pages without numbers (e.g. between pp. 839 and 868 or pp. 905 and 980), leaving us with up to 74 pages without numbers at time. But page numbers are indispensable for referencing the content of the book! Unless one wants the reader to count pages back and forth, references to Rainey's transliterations and translations can be made only by using the annotation "ad loc.," not by giving the page number.

Typographical errors and other types of editorial inconsistencies permeate the book. Their examples include: the title of Na'aman 1988 should read "Biryawaza of Damascus and the Date of the Kāmid el-Lōz 'Apiru Letters'" instead of "Biryawaza of Damascus and the Date of the 1977 'Apiru Letters'" (p. 51); the reference to Rainey 1967 is given twice with the misspelled title (p. 1645); "Bezuld" stands erroneously for Bezold (p. 1378); "sensing" instead of "sending" (p. 1329); "Astor" instead of Astour (p. 1407); *i-de<sub>4</sub>* for *i-de<sub>4</sub>* (p. 770); there is an otiose *s* in *kunīs* (p. 1456); the biblio-

graphical entry for Halpern and Huehnergard 1982 quoted on p. 1568 is missing from both bibliographies. Also, the sign "!", used in transliterations, is not defined neither in the "Technical Apparatus" of the first volume, nor in the "Editorial Apparatus" of the second volume.

This book is also a missed opportunity to produce the edition of the entire corpus of the tablets found at Amarna and to provide scholars with a complete bibliography of Rainey's publications on the letters. Such a bibliography would not only constitute a fitting tribute to Rainey's research but also help others to navigate through his scholarly legacy. Also, because editorial enterprises of such magnitude are rarely undertaken, it is hard to understand why the occasion was not seized to invite Shlomo Izre'el, Rainey's pupil, to contribute with the scholarly and literary texts that he edited. However, I gladly note that the updated translation of the Hurrian letter (*EA* 24) by G. Wilhelm and of the Hittite letters (*EA* 31 and 32) by the late I. Singer (p. XIV) were included.

Before proceeding to the main part of the book, the letters and commentary, a few words must be said on its minor sections. Rainey's introduction dwells mainly on rudimentary notions and points dear to him. While I found his editorial history of the letters informative, Rainey's descriptions of the individual corpora struck me as more anecdotal than analytical and contextual. In the last sections of this introduction he criticizes severely the identification of the 'apīru of the Amarna letters with the Hebrews in Egypt (p. 35). His passion for this topic is certainly felt in his characterization of other scholar's work on this issue as "a classic example of unbridled imagination totally lacking in linguistic and semantic acumen" (p. 33).

An interesting essay by J. Mynářová follows. She gives basic information on the archaeological context of the letters, where they are housed, and how they came into museum collections. She also provides an important correction to the timeline of the discovery of the letters. She reasons that the flow of objects coming from Amarna and registered in the *Journal d'entrée* of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo indicates that the tablets were discovered at least several months earlier than the autumn or the end of 1887, as stated by the "official" accounts, and that this discovery was not accidental but done by the peasants who dug for marketable antiquities.

The first volume concludes with a glossary compiled by A. Mandell. In her preface, she raises the problems involved in classifying some verbal forms as Akkadian and others as West Semitic or Canaanite because of the underlying issues with the linguistic nature of the letters. Nevertheless, she follows Rainey in order to guarantee consistency through the entire book and "to honor him as a scholar and his exhaustive writings on the subject" (p. 1273-74). Her glossary is divided into sections which list Akkadian lexemes, Northwest Semitic roots and words, as well as Egyptian terms identified as underlying some words, and Sumerian logograms employed in the letters. Although this glossary may give a first idea of the lexicon of the letters and provide immediate information on the translation of individual words, it cannot serve as a guide to the lexical usages in the letters because it does not

give references to the specific passages where each meaning occurs. Therefore, anybody interested in finding the evidence for Northwest Semitic *gg* “roof” or the Egyptian *nwt* “town” must still resort to the glossary prepared by E. Ebeling in Knudtzon’s edition of the tablets and hope to find them there. Thus, Mandell’s list does not supersede Ebeling’s glossary; it must be used in conjunction with it as a check list to eliminate ghost words from the older glossary and ascertain the meanings currently accepted for individual lexemes.

This question of the nature of the Amarna letters as linguistic evidence brings us to Rainey’s transliterations. Ideally, the edition of cuneiform documents is a relatively straightforward process, as it consists in identifying the signs and providing them with the values that reflect the words they represent. But the words cannot be identified without understanding a larger context; therefore, editing the tablets entails also their translation and a preliminary study. In the case of the Akkadian texts written by the native Mesopotamian scribes, assigning values to individual signs proceeds from the understanding that they represent the phonetic rendering of the words and it is supported by numerous parallel spellings and etymological analyses. Rainey proceeds in the same way with regard to the Amarna letters. He criticizes Knudtzon’s “transcription method” for not being “a reliable representation of the phonetic structure of the words” (p. 7). With this assertion, he discloses his own vision of the Amarna letters from Canaan as representing a spoken language which blends the Canaanite features into the Akkadian matrix. His transcriptions make clear that he conceives this language as a fairly uniform dialect, at least as far as it concerns morphology. Accordingly, he chooses the values of the signs in order to produce this picture of a relatively stable morphology. To achieve this goal, he frequently has recourse to sign values such as  $ti_7$  (for TE),  $te_9$  (for TI),  $il_5$  (for EL),  $še_{20}$  (for ŠI),  $šix$  (for ŠE),  $i_{15}$  (for E),  $šer_9$  and  $šir_9$  (for SAR), or  $ša_{10}$  (for SA). On one hand, these choices reflect Rainey’s understanding of the linguistic system of the letters and constitute a coherent system; from this perspective, they seem legitimate. On the other hand, precisely because they depend on a philological and linguistic analysis, much caution is required in the use of transliteration with such values as linguistic evidence in order to avoid the risk of circular reasoning. Accordingly, it is necessary to collect similar spellings and evaluate them together. For example, Rainey uses several times the values  $šer_9$  and  $šir_9$  for the sign SAR specifically and only in forms of the verb *wuššuru* “to send.” In the letters from Canaan, the value  $šer_9$  appears in EA 129:28, 162:42.51.56, 194:31, and 290:20, and  $šir_9$  in EA 132:32, and 245:31.42.44. The vowel *i* appears in the forms that have the infix *t*. This limited use of the purported value raises doubts as to whether it was created artificially to make some forms comply with a general model. Examination of the forms of *wuššuru* indicates that the signs with the vowel *i* occur most frequently before the consonant *r*, but there are also signs with *e* and *a* in this position. A selection of forms illustrates their variation: *lu-ma-še-ra* (EA 285:28), *lu-wa-šira-ni* (EA 263:23), *li-wa-še-ra* (EA 255:22), *yu-uš-ši-ra*

(EA 270:24), *yu-wa-ši-ra* (EA 64:12), *ú-ta-aš-ša-ru-uš-šu* (EA 245:29), *ut-ta-ši-ir* (EA 83:10), *yu-ša-ru* (EA 362:10), *yu-wa-šar* (EA 362:66). The transcription of the sign SAR as  $šer_9$  and  $šir_9$  in the letters from Canaan is certainly justified by the prevalent vocalic pattern in this verb and the form *ut-ta-šir\_9* in EA 34:14.16.30. In the case of writings of the Precative by the Jerusalem scribe, an additional argument can be made: the word in EA 290:20 should be *lu-ma-šer\_9*, because this scribe uses the sign ŠE in other spellings of the Precative of *wuššuru*. In all such cases, Rainey’s transliteration is a valid option. It must be, however, carefully weighed and the reasons and validity of individual choices must be established, when used as linguistic evidence. This holds true for other signs with “rare” values used by Rainey.

Overall, Rainey’s transliterations are trustworthy. Nevertheless, there are some errors or questionable choices which caught my eye. Some of them are listed forthwith.

- 73:22: On the basis of a comparison with other signs I and NI on the tablet (p. 1415), R. transliterates the verb as *i'-te\_9-pu-uš* with the sign I instead of NI at the beginning, as it is widely accepted. The narration of the letter does not allow us for a reading on stylistic grounds.
- 82:43 and 83:46.49: The transliteration of the same verb is inconsistent: *i-te\_9-zi-ib* in 82:43 and *i-ti-zi-ib* in 83:46.49.
- 83:30: The first sign is very problematic. The published copy (BB no. 14) indicates the sign NA with a question mark. Kn. reads there a partial sign UD which is, in his opinion, more likely than the sign NA. Moran (1992: 154) transliterates the sign as  $[t]a_5$ , qualifies this reading as “very probable,” and rejects [T]A as a possibility. However, R. takes it as a partial TA. In the commentary, Cochavi-Rainey reports that R. wrote in his collation notes that “he could see tiny marks of *ta*, which seems like *ta* in line 6,” and that “it cannot be  $ta_5$  (UD) as Moran thought” (p. 1426). The available photographs do not help to settle the issue. One must decide whether to rely on the expertise of Kn. and Moran or on R.’s ability to see “tiny marks.”
- 83:32: The second part of this line in Kn.’s edition is *a-na a-ka-li ia-ši(!)*. Moran (1992: 154) proposes a convincing interpretation of this sequence of signs: the sign IA is the pronominal suffix to be attached to the preceding word while the sign ŠI is the beginning of a partial *ú*, a conjunction whose use here suits well the syntax of the letters. In support of his interpretation, Moran quotes six passages coming from the same epistolary corpus (Byblos) that use the same prepositional phrase with pronominal suffixes. R. probably omitted the last two signs by inadvertence because he translates the passage as if they were there: “for my sustenance so that.”
- 84:22: R. reconstructs the 3 mp *yaqtul* as  $[il-]te_9-qu$ . It is possible but this form has typically the preformative *t-*. In the absence of a note in his commentary, I assume that the sign TI was not reconstructed because of the insufficient space.
- 86:36: R. reads the last sign as NA instead of a partial PI as

in Kn. Because of this reading, he proposes a restoration which hardly fits the context or the phraseology of the letters. Kn.'s *j[i-ma-la-ku]* seems more likely and was accepted by Moran (1992: 158) and Liverani (1998: 194). Alternatively, the latter proposed that the verb could be a form of *ša'ālu*.

- 88: 36: R. restores the sign *ša* in the last word of the line and reads the last sign as *š'u* rather than the beginning of the sign IQ, as transcribed by Kn. The commentary does not elaborate on these choices. My alternative interpretation of this passage without restoration (Baranowski 2013) went unnoticed by Cochavi-Rainey.

- 89:17 and 113:11: in 89:17 the 1 cs *qatal* of *epēšu* "to do" is transliterated *ep-ša-ti* with the initial *e*, while in 113:11 the same form has the initial vowel *i*. Although R. insists on transliterating certain forms with the vowel *e* and others with the vowel *i*, there is no way of knowing how these forms were uttered by the scribes in Canaan.

- 89:36: R. has *ya-aš-pu-ru*. According to Kn. and Schroeder's copy (VS 11, 43), the first sign is IA. This sign is also clear on the photographs.

- 91:21 and 124:10: The same word is transliterated in two ways: *ir-ti-ḥa-at* and *ir-te<sub>9</sub>-ḥa-at*, respectively.

- 95:59-78: The lines which are transcribed as belonging to letter 95:59-78 and printed on pp. 536 and 538 are actually a part of letter no. 94; they should be placed after the broken section of this letter (94:19-58) and printed on p. 532.

- 103:20: R. reads correctly *yi-iš-<sup>r</sup>ta<sup>r</sup>-pár-ru* against Kn.'s *ji-eš-tap-pa-ru*.

- 105:33: It is possible that the number 9 on the sign TE is missing in R.'s transliteration. Kn. reads the verb in this line *ni-ti-pu[-u]š* but R. has *ni-te-<sup>r</sup>pu<sup>r</sup>-<sup>r</sup>uš<sup>r</sup>*. The available photograph seems to support Kn.'s reading.

- 118:53: R. follows Kn.'s restoration of the first sign as TU. This restoration produces with the following signs a 3mp *yaq-tul* verb, which R. translates as if it was the imperfective *yaq-tulu*. Moran (1992: 196) provides a more plausible restoration of the verb as *[yu]-pa-ri-šu* (3ms *yaqtulu*) and understands it as referring to the past behaviour of the commissioner of Šumur, disregarding the otiose plural marker MEŠ. This solution is followed by Liverani (1998: 224).

- 137:55: R.'s word division and translation offer an example of his tendency to propose alternative but unnecessary interpretations. The sign A in this line can be considered to be a part of either the negation or the verb. Kn. was aware of the ambiguity: he transliterated the words in question *la a na-din-mi* and offered alternative translations. Moran (1992: 218) and Liverani (1998: 235) took the sign A as the preformative of the verb and translated the passage: "I did not give the city." This is the best choice because it follows the style of the letters from Canaan in having short, complete phrases with their own subject. For R., the sign A marks the long vowel in the

negation and the verb is 3 ms active *qatal* with the subject from the previous sentence; hence his translation: "it (my heart) did not give the city." This is possible but not likely. In addition to the awkward style, the 3 ms active *qatal* is *na-da-an*, and I am not aware of another example of 3 ms active *qatal* of *nadānu* with the vowels /a-i/. Of course, one can argue that this is an exceptional case of the use of this vocalism for the active voice, which is indeed attested for other verbs in the letters from Canaan. But obviously, the earlier parsing of the text is superior because it does not require postulating such a unique form. Incidentally, the translation of this passage in Izre'el's edition of this letter (1995:138) is also questionable: "the city was definitely not given." By parsing the verb in the passive voice in accordance with its vocalism, Izre'el creates a gender discrepancy: the verb is masculine, but its subject, "the city," is usually feminine in that corpus. To conclude, the translations of Moran and Liverani are the most likely and the signs in the transliteration should be grouped into words in the following manner: *la a-na-din-mi*.

- 138:95: R.'s reconstruction of the name Beirut shows that he conceived the writing system and language of the letters as following strict rules and patterns. The name of the city is written in this letter A.PÚ.KI.MEŠ in line 11, A.PÚ.MEŠ in lines 51 and 76 and just A.PÚ in line 134. In spite of the last spelling, which attests a writing without the sign MEŠ, R. unnecessarily restores this sign in line 95 and marks it as omitted by the scribe: A.PÚ.<MEŠ>.

- 149:17.76 and 290:20: The same sign ŠAR in the same form of the Precative of *wuššuru* is transliterated as *šër* in 149:17.76 (*li-wa-aš-šër*) and as *šer<sub>9</sub>* in 290:20 (*lu-ma-šer<sub>9</sub>*).

- 185:43: R. does not have the sign MI at the end of *iš-ḥi-tú*. This sign is present in Kn. and clear on Schroeder's copy in VS 11, 106.

- 230:17: R. transliterates the last word as *ḥa<sup>r</sup>-za<sup>r</sup>-nu-te*. Kn. read the last sign as a partial KA and transliterated -k[(a)!]. Accordingly, Moran (1992: 290) has the corresponding pronoun "your" in his translations. Scheil's copy (1892: 309) has no traces of this sign and R.'s commentary does not discuss Kn.'s reading.

- 239:10: R. makes a strange choice in his understanding of the passage. Because he transliterates the sign BA as *ba* and not *pá*, for him the verbal form in this line (*i-ba-aš-ši*) is from the verb *bašû* "to be available," not *epēšu* "to do." By interpreting the word *a-wa-te*.MEŠ in line 8 as "things," a meaning that is attested but rare in Peripheral Akkadian, he obtains the following translation of the passage in EA 239:8-17: "All the things of the king, my lord, are ready until the coming forth of the senior official that he should take everything which the king, my lord, has said." Beyond the question of how it sounds in English, I think it is more probable that Moran (1992: 295-96) and Liverani (1998: 146) were right in considering that the passage refers to the execution of an order, not to things being available.

- 245:1: R. transliterates *du-ub-bu-ba-ku-mi*; for Kn. and BB no. 72 the last sign is ME.
- 245:36: R. has *ep-ša-ku-mi* while in Kn. and BB no. 72 the last sign is ME.
- 250:10: Based on his photograph of the tablet, R. reads *tu-ba'-u<sub>5</sub>'-na*. Kn. transliterated this verb as *tu-b[i]-hu-na* and noted that the sign BI might also be MU (less probable), while the following sign was indeed HU and not RI. Moran (1992: 304) transliterates it in the same manner as Kn. and considers the reading certain. The only published copy of this tablet (WA no. 154) shows a lacuna in the place where the signs should be. This case epitomizes the difficulties with editing the Amarna tablets and using the current editions. Because scholars make their transliteration choices without providing the rationale, and photographs are not always helpful, it is often impossible to judge on the trustworthiness of such choices.
- 252:10: R. reads *ki-it-mi*; Kn. has *ki-it-mi*. The sign MI is clearly visible on the available photographs.
- 254:36: TI probably stands erroneously for TI<sub>7</sub>. This sign is read as TE by Kn., it is copied as such by Schroeder (VS 11, 145) and is clearly visible on the photographs.
- 271:18: R. reads in this line *'ù uš-ši-ra*. For Kn. the first sign is *ju-* and it is also clearly copied as such by Schoeder (VS 11, 154). Cochavi-Rainey notes that the sign is not clear and can be read either way. The available photos do not help to clarify the reading.
- 272:23: In the review of Moran's translation of the Amarna letters, Rainey qualified the verb *yu-la-mi-dá* as "an anomaly" and proposed to emend it to *yu-ḥa!-mi-tá*, in spite of Kn.'s reading (*ju-la-mi-ta*), because the second sign is marked in BB no. 80 as a doubtful AN (Rainey 1989-90: 70). This proposal is now abandoned without any mention of it in the commentary.
- 277:8: R. reads the middle sign in the verb in this line as a partial *ta* while Kn. has *t[a]p*. The available photographs do not help to clarify the reading. The same verb used in the same formula by the same scribe (Vita 2015: 75, 81) is spelled *iš-tap-pár* (EA 276:9).
- 362:27: R. has *dan-na-nu-u<sub>16</sub>*. Thureau-Dangin in the *editio princeps* of this letter read *da-na-nu-um*. In his first edition (1978), Rainey had the sign DA at the beginning. R.'s new choice is not explained in the commentary.
- 363:9: R. emends the sign UK to IK in *a-li-ik!(UK)* in this letter while he leaves the same form in other letters by the same scribe (Vita 2015: 23-24) without emendation: *a-li-uk* (EA 174:11, 175:9, 176:9).

These examples show that Rainey's transliterations may contain errors or choices that are highly interpretative. For all practical purposes, if Rainey and Knudtson's transliterations

are identical, the text can be considered as established with certainty. In the case of a discrepancy between them, the reading must be chosen using the available editions, copies, photographs and comments in the literature.

To substantiate his choices, Rainey projected a volume with commentaries to each letter but, sadly, he was unable to prepare it. This volume was redacted instead by his wife, Cochavi-Rainey, using her husband's notes. Unfortunately, the commentary fails to achieve its main goal: the epigraphic observations are scarce; instead, the volume contains a mix of remarks concerning mostly the readings that differ from the ones adopted by Moran (1992); it also provides some observations on the content, grammar, style, and geography. At the end of the notes to each letter, a list of traces of signs is added. However, these are not additional traces observed by Rainey and left out of transliterations; these signs are already included in them. The purpose of these lists escapes me.

The style of the notes in the second volume is somewhat careless and often requires a considerable effort of the part of the reader to understand them. Additionally, the use of the words "collation," "to read," and "reading" is very confusing. As generally used in ancient Near Eastern studies, a "collation" is the result of validating disputed signs by examining originals. However, in the commentary, the term "collation," often with the qualification "Rainey's collation," seems to refer both to validation process and to Rainey's notes. As a result, it is not always clear if the newly proposed reading was thoroughly checked by Rainey by inspecting visually the tablet or whether it is just a proposal contained in his notes. The imprecise use of "to read" and "reading" adds to this confusion. These two words refer not only to the identification of the signs but also to proposed sign values, restorations and emendations. Therefore, it is not always certain what constitutes Rainey's material reading and what derives from his own interpretative creativity.

What disturbs the most is the conspicuous lack of reasons behind individual choices which are stated *ex cathedra*. Examples of objectionable passages in the commentary include:

- p. 1354: "The notes are by Moran (1992:57-61), except two corrections based on Rainey's collations." This and the three following pages are dedicated to copying notes from Moran's translation.
- p. 1370: "Signs in Schröder are not on the tablet." The imprecise formulation leaves one wondering whether Schröder is accused of mistakenly copying some signs or whether the signs copied by him wore off during the past century.
- p. 1377: Referring to the passage [D]UMU *ši-ip-ri-ka-ma!(IP)*, Cochavi-Rainey writes: "The *-ip* at the end of the line is not followed by anything. It is just Schröder's error for *-ma!* The wedges seen after it in Schröder are part of *-i(a)* of the next line. Schröder wrote *-ip* because he had just written it in *ši-ip-ri*." This is a perfect example of how confusing the

notes in the commentary are. From the first sentence, it seems that the last sign in the line is surely IP but the last sentence seems to suggest that Schröder drew it by inadvertence and thus the sign is not on the tablet. The second sentence of the comment seems to imply that Schröder mistakenly drew the sign IP instead of a clear MA on the tablet. But, most importantly, this comment does not mention that Kn. transcribed the end of the line with the sign IP (*šī-ip-ri-ka ip-p[a-ti]*) and described the traces of the penultimate sign exactly as Schröder drew it. R.'s emendation of IP to MA makes sense but, given Kn.'s testimony, his explanation on the need for this emendation is unacceptable. Overall, it seems that the line ended with a word that cannot be restored.

- p. 1380: The note to line 53 seems to be copied by Cochavi-Rainey from her book on the Alashia texts (2003: 22) with omission of three letters and thus we read that a verb is “an attempt to express the ‘promissory jective’” instead of “subjective.” Because the designation of “the promissory subjective” is somewhat obscure and idiosyncratic, it should have been provided with a definition.
- p. 1394: “Rainey’s reading was based on Moran’s translation (1992:122).” This is another example of a vague statement and imprecise use of the word “reading.” Comparison of R.’s transliteration with Moran’s translation suggests that Cochavi-Rainey meant that R.’s restoration at the end of line 7 (rev.) is a back-translation into Akkadian of Moran’s English translation.
- p. 1396: “Read *ʾú-uš!*(IŠ)-*šī* “Aitukama is going forth,” *contra* Knudtzon’s *y[i]-iš!-šī* or Moran’s *{ú}-š[e]-eš-šī* (1992:126 n. 3).” While an emendation is needed, it is not clear why R.’s proposal is better than others. This note exemplifies how the commentary fails its main goal, that is, to explain and substantiate the choices made in transliteration.
- p. 1400: “According to Rainey’s collation, the red fragment (EA 56) looks strange, but if it is correct, *i[m]-ta-na-ah̄-ha-sú-n[i<sub>7</sub> ...]* (or *i[m]-ta-na-ah̄-ha-sú-n[i<sub>7</sub> ...]*) is followed by a marker of a PN.” I fail to grasp the logic behind this statement.
- p. 1415: “Line rev. 20-At the beginning of the line Rainey saw traces of *ʾú*.” Beside the wrong reference to the line which, according to the R’. transliteration, is on the lower edge of the observe, this sentence epitomizes superfluous notes because the partial sign *ú* is present in the transliteration.
- p. 1419: “From the photograph (see WSR), Jeanette Fincke challenged the reading of the first sign in line 20.” No reference to any work by Fincke is given on this page or in the bibliographies.
- p. 1425: “*na-aq-ša-pu*; actually, the scribe drew the sign A for ŠA (Rainey’s collation).” If so, the transliteration should be *ša!*(A) not *ša*.
- p. 1427: “Moran wants to apply *a-na ša-šu* to the end of line 45, but his argument does not fit the situation (Rainey’s collation).” The comment does not make clear whether Moran’s interpretation is deemed incorrect on epigraphic grounds or because of contextual considerations. Liverani (1998: 190) understands the phrase in question in the same way as Moran (1992: 153-154).
- p. 1428: “*ki-a-ma-am* is written for *ki-a-am-ma*.” This is yet another example of R.’s treatment of the language of the letters in terms of strict rules and paradigms. The word *ki-a-ma-am*, rather than being an error, might be a by-form known to the scribe.
- p. 1429: “The verb [*yu*]-*qa-bu* (built on the Akkadian present-future theme) is most likely passive 3rd m.sg., either [*yu*]-*qa-bu* Gp or [*vi*]-*qa-bu* for N (Rainey 1995–1996:113; CAT 2:78).” Given that in the Amarna letters from Canaan there are no secure examples of the N stem of *qabû* while there are many examples of its Gp stem, R.’s suggestion that this form could stand for the N stem is purely theoretical. Also wrong is his parsing of the form *yu-qa-bu* as built on the Akkadian Durative because of the vowel *a* in the second syllable. The fact that the Gp forms in the Amarna letters have the vocalism /u-a/ indicates that these vowels are transferred from a Canaanite pattern rather than being due to the Durative.
- p. 1443: The references to pages in Cochavi-Rainey 2011 are incorrect. In none of these pages the expression *lu-ú na-ša-ra-ta* is discussed. This expression is mentioned instead in Cochavi-Rainey 2011: 105.
- p. 1450: “Line rev. 32—*i-né-p[u-uš]*; this is the verbal form that Moran (1992:180 n. 8) assumes is correct, but Knudtzon and also Rainey saw traces of the sign—*p[u]*.” Many notes in the commentary are incomprehensible, unless one consults Moran’s translation. This is one of them. In light of the quoted note of Moran’s, what is meant here is that for Kn. and Rainey the sign *pu* was only partially visible, while Moran marked it as fully preserved.
- p. 1458: “The sign *ku* is a small rectangular hole made by two wedges.” This intriguing description of the sign calls into question its identification, even if the *Gestalt* of the sign corresponds to the sign KU.
- p. 1469: “A typical AN = DINGIR looks almost like the value *ni*.” I fail to understand what is meant by this note.
- p. 1476: The reference to the Hebrew M.A. thesis of Zewi should have been updated to its published English version (Zewi 1999).
- p. 1496: “The NU-sign looks more like the NI-sign, but not NI as in line 25. This NU-sign does not look as in Schröder’s facsimile or as in line 10, but does look like in line 13 (Rainey’s collation).” This comment is not helpful in understanding the peculiar shape of the sign.
- p. 1504: Correct *i-d<sub>4</sub>* to *i-de<sub>4</sub>*.
- p. 1523: “The scribe wrote *a-na-an-na* by mistake. Rainey (1975:413) suggested *i<sub>15</sub>!*(A)-*na-an-na*.” This suggestion is

unnecessary and based on a rigid concept of the language of the letters.

- p. 1556: Add *a* after *m* in *mššartu*.

Overall, the second volume would benefit from a rigorous editorial revision. Also, because a great deal of the notes consists in remarks on the disagreements between the text adopted by Moran and Rainey, which can be easily found by comparing R.'s edition with Moran's notes, this volume could be reduced to footnotes to the transliteration and translation by selecting those observations that truly contain new and relevant information.

Many passages in the letters are relatively easy and admit one translation only. In such cases, R.'s translation differs from Moran's only in stylistic details or the choice of words. In cases of significant discrepancies, the reader must judge both translations against the original text. This is necessary because R.'s understanding of the text seems often inferior or too creative. I will illustrate it with several examples.

R. translates *EA* 94:8-9 in the following manner: "May the king, my lord, examine the words and may the words be well pleasing" (p. 533). The same passage is rendered by Moran (1992: 168) as: "The king, my lord, has examined the words and has *heard* the words!" The discrepancy between the translations is partially due to differing approaches to the text: Rainey emends a problematic sequence of signs *iš-mi-iq* to *da-mi-iq*, while Moran interprets them without the emendation and suggest that the sign IQ is an unfinished writing of *iq-bi* or *iq-bu*. In a probable scenario, after the scribe wrote the sign IQ, he remembered that he had still to write the subject (LUGAL *be-li*) and followed with the verb *qabû* in the 1 cs. not in *yaqtul* but in *qatal*. In Moran's understanding, this sentence consists of two coordinated phrases with the same word order (direct object-verb) and the common subject at the end:

*a-wa-te i-d[a-g]al* (lit. words saw)  
 ù *a-wa-[t]e iš-mi-iq LUGAL be-li*  
 (lit. and words heard the king, my lord).

Rainey's translation entails the following analysis of this sentence: an independent clause is embedded between the predicate and the subject of another clause. I am not sure if any language allows such a construction but I am sure that it is impossible in the Amarna letters.

Because Rainey fails to give to the conjunction *u* a disjunctive meaning, the entire passage in *EA* 83:21-27 is given a meaning opposite to what was intended: instead of threatening the pharaoh with making an alliance with his archenemy, 'Abdi-Aširta, in case the pharaoh does not grant troops and horses, R.'s translation conveys the idea that Rib-Hadda is eagerly awaiting the command to join 'Abdi-Aširta. Both Moran (1992: 153) and Liverani (1998: 190) recognize the disjunctive function of the conjunction; the meaningful translation of this passage should use "or" instead of Rainey's "and": "Send me a word or I myself will make a alliance with 'Abdi-Aširta."

The attention to a close rendering of the verbal nuances in the letters from Canaan was one of the striking characteristics of Moran's English translation. R. does not always remain faithful to the verbal semantics, as can be shown in the following instances. The past perfective *yaqtul i-ḫal-li-iq* in *EA* 286:37 is translated in the present continuous tense: "is causing the loss." Similar is the translation of the *yaqtul a-qa-bi* two lines later in *EA* 287:39 as "I keep saying." The continuous or habitual interpretation which would be proper for *yaqtulu* is given to the *yaqtul aš-ta-pār* (*EA* 83:21) rendered with "I have been writing." As for the suffixed forms, Rainey tends to take them as the Akkadian Stative, rather the Canaanite *qatal* forms which favour the past translation in the case of the transitive verbs. Accordingly, we find *ša-ab-tu* in *EA* 126:56 translated as "are seized" instead of "they have seized," or *ša-ar-p[u]* in *EA* 306:29 as "are burnt" rather than "they have burnt." Similarly incomprehensible to me is Rainey's reluctance to recognize some perfective forms as epistolary performative utterances and translate them in the present tense: this possibility is explicitly rejected in the commentary for *EA* 5:14 without any specific arguments but only by asserting that "contrary to general practice, there is no need to render these past tense forms as a sort of 'epistolary perfect'" (p. 1329). Because the category of performative utterances belongs to the pragmatic level of language, their identification and linguistic interpretation in ancient texts is sometimes questionable, but the content of *EA* 5 makes it clear the verbs in line 14 and 18 do not refer to a past shipment of goods but to one that accompanied the letter. Their accurate translation should use the present tense, as in Moran (1992: 11) and Liverani (1999: 350). The same holds true for the verbs in *EA* 137:37, 148:6, 151:47, 187:22, 254:36, 323:15, 266:26. Singular is also R.'s translation of the verbs of homage in the introductory sections of the letters from Canaan as "I have fallen" and "I have prostrated." These verbs are commonly understood as expressing reverence to the pharaoh and translated in the present tense: I do not know how to interpret the choice of the present perfect tense contextually.

In addition, "not" should probably be added after the second "if" in: "If the king would give (it) to his servant, then give. But if, on the other hand, let the king take it all for himse[lf]" (*EA* 116:34-36). Similarly incomprehensible is the translation of *EA* 149:44-48, this time because of the wrong division into sentences adopted by Rainey; for a better rendering of this passage, see Moran 1992: 236 and Liverani 1998: 155. Finally, the request to give heed in *EA* 122:44-45 is entirely left out in the translation.

In short, R.'s translation should be used with prudence and compared with other renderings since it introduces peculiarities which could erroneously be attributed to the originals.

As for the bibliography, it contains all major works on the Amarna letter as well as other publications helpful in their study. However, publications later than 2000 are underrepresented. Also, the absence of Josef Tropper and Juan-Pablo Vita's works from the bibliographies is incomprehensible and inexcusable. They published important studies and Rainey

should have interacted with their views. Only their introduction to “Canaanite-Akkadian” is listed in the bibliography but it is never referred to in the body of the book.

The last great editorial project on the Amarna tablets appeared precisely one hundred years before the present volumes and also suffered from adversities which delayed its completion. Rainey’s work aimed at achieving the same quality of work and ultimately at replacing the highly respected historical edition by Knudtzon. Unfortunately, the mistakes and questionable choices in transliteration and translation expounded above, even if difficult to avoid in a work of that magnitude, are too important to be remedied by an erratum and disqualify this book as an authoritative edition. It is, however, a valuable addition to the Amarna studies.

Thus, the edition of all Amarna tablets still remains a desideratum. Many tablets were never published in hand copies, the photographs available on the internet vary in quality and there is no book that gathers all the texts. Given the long and complicated editorial history of the tablets, I suggest that such a new and definitive edition should have some special features. Alongside high-definition photographs, hand copies should be included: drawings remain an important means for clarifying the interpretative choices of the editors because their hand copies represent graphically what they thought that they saw and thus provide others with a guide to interpreting the signs as they did. In addition, such an edition should be provided with a critical apparatus detailing the main alternative readings, collations, emendations and restorations. Given the tremendous importance of the Amarna tablets in the study of ancient Near Eastern languages and history, I hope that such an edition becomes available soon.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

- BB = Bezold, C., and Wallis Budge E.A. 1892.  
 EA = El-Amarna Tablet  
 Kn. = Knudtzon, J.A. 1915.  
 R. = Rainey. 2015.  
 VS = Schroeder, O. 1915.  
 WA = Winckler, H. ed. 1889.

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