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# Gift-exchange in the Amarna Letters: A Concise Study of the Letters from the Great Kings

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In this article, we will look at the concept of reciprocal gifts and gift-exchanges in the corpus known as the Amarna letters. In order to observe reciprocity in the Amarna letters, we will ascertain the presence of a return gift for every present sent, as well as the idea of reciprocity in the repetition of said structure of gift-exchange. In the Amarna letters, we bear witness to an important network of contacts established between Near Eastern nations of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE. The geographical extent of the Amarna letters leaves no doubt about the central part played by the Egyptian kings of this period within the political, economic and social context of the great powers of the Near East. This study will focus on the gift-exchanges within the Amarna letters, taking into account the contextual differences between Egypt and each of its main partners: Babylonia, Assyria, Mitanni, Hatti, Arzawa and Alashiya. We will also consider diplomatic or interdynastic marriages as occasions for gift-exchange, as well as tools used to establish and maintain political and personal alliances between the kings.

*Intercambio de regalos en las cartas de Amarna: un estudio conciso de las cartas de los grandes reyes*

En este artículo analizaremos el concepto de regalo recíproco e intercambio de regalos en el corpus conocido como las cartas de Amarna. Para observar la reciprocidad en las cartas de Amarna, estudiaremos la presencia de regalos devueltos por cada regalo enviado, así como la idea de reciprocidad en la repetición de dicha estructura de intercambio de regalos. Las cartas de Amarna nos ofrecen testimonio de una importante red de contactos establecidos entre los estados de Próximo Oriente en los siglos XIV y XIII a.C. La extensión geográfica de las cartas de Amarna no deja lugar a dudas sobre el papel central que jugaron los reyes egipcios en este período dentro del contexto político, económico y social de las grandes potencias del Próximo Oriente antiguo. Enfocaremos este estudio sobre los intercambios de regalos dentro de las cartas de Amarna teniendo en cuenta las diferencias contextuales entre Egipto y cada uno de sus principales socios: Babilonia, Asiria, Mitanni, Hatti, Arzawa y Alashiya. También consideraremos los matrimonios diplomáticos o interdinásticos como ocasiones para el intercambio de regalos, así como herramientas utilizadas para establecer y mantener alianzas políticas y personales entre los reyes.

**Keywords:** Reciprocity, interdynastic marriages, diplomacy.

**Palabras clave:** Reciprocidad, matrimonios interdinásticos, diplomacia.

**In** this article, we will look into the concept of reciprocal gifts and gift-exchanges in the corpus known as the Amarna letters. We understand the concept of “gift” as an exchange in which at least two entities are present, which may be two individuals or two social groups organized

around two head figures that carry out the exchange. Exchange is just one element that society uses to outline itself, or to strengthen ties between individuals and to make them last. The anthropologist Marcel Mauss,<sup>1</sup> founder of the Economic Anthropology school of thought with

<sup>1</sup> Mauss 1925: 10–12.

his work *Essai sur le don*, breaks down the reciprocity process in every type of exchange into three distinct stages. First is the obligation to give, followed by the obligation to receive. These first two phases are essential and are observed in all social groups as the beginning of any trade. However, the obligation to return –the third stage of the process– is what makes the reciprocity in this case. In order to observe reciprocity in the Amarna letters, we must ascertain the presence of a return gift for every present sent, as well as the idea of reciprocity in the repetition of the said structure of gift-exchange.

Robert G. Morkot<sup>2</sup> explains that recent discussions on the topic of the Amarna letters have been focused on underlining the economical and social complexity of the gift-exchanges. The levels of reciprocity in every double-sided relationship are measured according to past contacts as well as to frequency, quantity and quality of the gifts themselves. In the Amarna letters we bear witness to an important network of contacts established between Near Eastern nations of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE, which should not be considered a novelty but rather a continuation, or even a strengthening of said contacts, both commercial and geopolitical.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, the Amarna letters bring little to no information about commercial and diplomatic contacts between Egypt and the Aegean, even though textual, artistic and archaeological sources amply demonstrate that these exchanges had their peak in the period in question, as well as in the following dynasties.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Mario Liverani<sup>5</sup> confirms the existence of reciprocity patterns in diplomatic relations between Great Kings of the ancient Near East, as well as the vocabulary associated with said exchanges. Among them, the terms *šulmānu*, translated as “gift”, and *ra’amūtu*, that expresses “love” stand out, and especially the *ahhutu* or “brotherhood” between the kings.<sup>6</sup> The patterns of redistribution and reciprocity that will be put into practice in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Late Bronze Age had a political function, extending the areas of political and military influence of the countries involved towards the peripheries, and economically, imposing exchange rates between kingdoms.<sup>7</sup>

The most noticeable aim of the Amarna letters, and its participants, was the acquisition of goods and gifts by the Asian kings and of women by the Egyptian pharaohs.<sup>8</sup> The geographical extension of the Amarna letters leaves no doubt about the central part played by the Egyptian kings in this period within the political, economical and social context of the great powers of the Near East. This study will focus on the gift-exchanges within the Amarna letters, taking into account the contextual differences between Egypt and each of its main partners: Babylonia, Assyria, Mitanni, Hatti, Arzawa and Alashiya.

It is important to remember that we do not have the entire archive; that is, both the letters grouped in their primary context or the place from which they originated, as well as the Egyptian letters that, for unknown reasons, were not

copied and added to the corpus. We might consider that some letters could have been received by Akhenaten in his palace in Malkata or other royal palaces, and were not subsequently transferred to the central archive of Amarna.<sup>9</sup> Another possibility might be that the Amarna archive was in its entirety relocated and only the letters deemed useless were left behind. In this article, we shall attempt to reflect these gaps in the subsequent analysis of the archive. We shall also study those variables pertaining to gift-exchanges that are possible for us to compare, insofar as not all cases are the same and not all countries had the same resources.

## 1 | Babylonia

The Babylonian corpus within the Amarna Letters has fourteen letters, numbered EA 1 to EA 14.<sup>10</sup> Three letters were sent from Egypt (EA 1, EA 5 and EA 14), while the remaining eleven were sent from the Babylonian court. Three moments can be differentiated, based on the kings mentioned. First, letters EA 1 to EA 5 were exchanged between Kadašman-Enlil I and Amenhotep III. Upon the death of his father, Burna-Buriaš II will send letter EA 6 to his Egyptian acolyte. Finally, Burna-Buriaš II and Akhenaten will continue the diplomatic communication in letters EA 7 to EA 14. The relative chronology of the letters allows for us to establish that, to a certain extent, they were correlative.

The communication is initiated prior to letter EA 1, which references previous communications. A sister of the king of Karduniaš is mentioned (probably sent by her father Kurigalzu) and while she is married to Amenhotep III, her status at the Egyptian court is unknown. The Babylonian king accuses the Egyptian king of covering up her death or disappearance, and of having hidden this fact from the Babylonian emissaries. The Egyptian questions the reliability of the Babylonian messengers and does not send any gift, showing clear signs of anger. Kadašman-Enlil I writes letter EA 2 to Amenhotep III with a bold proposal. He suggests that the pharaoh sends him his own daughter in exchange for the Babylonian's.<sup>11</sup> Letter EA 4 reflects Kadašman-Enlil I's reaction to a letter from the Egyptian, of which there is no written record, where he categorically refuses to send a daughter.<sup>12</sup> In EA 5 the marriage negotiations appear to have been successfully concluded and a large shipment of gold and valuables is sent from Egypt to the Babylonian king as a *brideprice*.<sup>13</sup>

EA 3 mentions the gifts that the Babylonian king has sent “every year,”<sup>14</sup> while a reproach is made clear about the king of Egypt not sending a gift on the occasion of a festival. The intention is clearly to denounce an imbalance in reciprocity that the Babylonian king has shown the Egyptian king on past occasions, and to demand that the latter fulfil his duty. The gifts appear to have had an annual periodicity, or at least be made regularly. Special celebrations, such as religious

2 Morkot 2007: 170–171.

3 Gestoso Singer 2001: 79.

4 Gestoso Singer 2001: 82–100.

5 Liverani 1990: 205–295.

6 More studies on the language of Amarna: Izre'el 2005, 2007; Mynářová 2007; Vita 2015.

7 Liverani 1990: 211.

8 Liverani 1999: 316. More studies on power and relationships between kings: Morris 2006; Mynářová 2012; Cline and Cline 2015.

9 Cline and Cline 2015: 18; Rainey 2015: 5.

10 Moran 1992: 1–37. We will use Moran's translation for the letters from the Great Kings, even though Rainey's 2015 version is the latest and most up to date.

11 EA 2: 12–13: “Your daughters are available. Why have you not given me one?”

12 EA 4: 4–6: “From time immemorial no daughter of the king of Egypt is given to anyone.”

13 Bartfield 2001: 219–220, 474–475. The distinction between the *bridewealth*, also called dowry, and the *brideprice*, is that the family gives the former to their daughter upon marriage, although it can be incorporated as joint property of the couple, while the groom transfers the latter to the bride's family as compensation for their loss.

14 EA 3: 22: “My gift does not amount to what I have given you every year.”

festivals, births of heirs or the construction of a new palace, were often considered good occasions for a diplomatic gift.<sup>15</sup>

EA 6 is Burna-Burīaš II's first letter, just as EA 7 is for Amenhotep IV's. In the latter, problems arise in the relationship between the two kings, due in part to the delay of the Egyptian in allowing the Babylonian messengers to leave. Another cause of the anger of the king of Karduniaš is the loss of wealth and goods in various robberies of the royal caravans.<sup>16</sup> The subsequent communications are scarce up until EA 11, where the question of a marriage is raised again. Burna-Burīaš II emphasizes the shipment of gold as an essential part of the negotiations, as it has been done since the time of Kurigalzu I, his ancestor.<sup>17</sup> Letter EA 12 comes from a Babylonian princess but the identity of the recipient is unknown. Finally, the letters EA 13 and EA 14 are the lists of gifts that make up the dowry (*terhatu*) of the bride (EA 13) as well as the *brideprice* (EA 14).

A recurring theme in the Babylonian corpus is the establishment of the “rules of the (diplomatic) game.” Westbrook<sup>18</sup> and Cohen<sup>19</sup> elucidate the ways in which Kadašman-Enlil I, and Burna-Burīaš II after him, is able to lead the negotiations with the aim of gaining moral superiority over the pharaoh. As Raymond Cohen puts it, two levels of negotiation can be detected in the Amarna

letters: firstly, a political and diplomatic subgame<sup>20</sup> that targets the most common problems, such as debates on protocol, past agreements and new strategic agreements, or simply gift-exchanges and trade agreements; secondly, a metagame that bets on modifying the current social and affective context, as well as the obligations of each one within the subgame in which the kings interact. The Egyptian-Babylonian conversations are a clear example of this metagame, while also not being too far away from a sibling rivalry. From Kadašman-Enlil I's bold proposal to Amenhotep III, and the pharaoh's continued anger towards the attitude of his counterpart, it can be suspected that both are using their opponent's weaknesses to their own advantage.

On the topic of the gifts, their quality and the expectations of the recipients, there is one occurrence in letter EA 7 that merits a special mention. Since it is the first letter of Burna-Burīaš II in the corpus of Amarna, it is not possible for us to know if it is the real beginning of the relations between him and Amenhotep IV. We do know, however, that at least one Egyptian messenger would have reached Babylon in the past.<sup>21</sup> Burna-Burīaš II proceeds with his letter referring to the good relations inherited from their ancestors, and to the gifts he sends with the words “I am not sending many beautiful greeting-gifts.

<sup>15</sup> Zaccagnini 1973: 20.

<sup>16</sup> EA 7: 73–82: “Furthermore, twice has a caravan of Salmu, my messenger whom I sent to you, been robbed [...] His things should be restored to him and he should be compensated for his losses.”

<sup>17</sup> EA 11: r19–23: “After your father sent here to Kurigalzu much gold, what was more lavish than the gift to Kurigalzu, and so in the palace of my ancestor what was missing? That neighbouring kings might hear it said, ‘The gold is much. Among the kings there are brotherhood, amity, peace, and good relations’, he was rich in stones, rich in silver, rich in gold.”

<sup>18</sup> Westbrook 2000: 378.

<sup>19</sup> Cohen 1996: 20–25.

<sup>20</sup> In Game Theory, every game can be divided in subgames that contain a subset of all the options available to the players. On the other hand, a metagame analysis is a way of dissecting an external problem through a strategic game, so that all the possible solutions to the problem can be found. In other words, a subgame develops within the rules of the game in question, while a metagame develops outside of the rules, either by modifying them for its own benefit, or by transgressing them.

<sup>21</sup> EA 7: 8–10: “From the time the messenger of my brother arrived here, I have not been well, and so on no occasion has his messenger eaten food and drunk spirits in my company.”

I send to my brother 4 minas of beautiful lapis lazuli as a routine greeting-gift.”<sup>22</sup> The expression “routine gift” (*šulmānu ša gāti*) shows a difference in meaning from other mentions of *šulmānu*, translated as “greeting-gift” or simply “gift,”<sup>23</sup> in the same paragraph. Thus, we can understand that the diplomatic gift was considered as something necessary and obligatory, something normalized within bilateral relations.

The examination of the letters (table 1 and fig. 1), however, reveals the actual importance of those gifts in the diplomatic correspondence and relationships. Taking into account the difficulties of the analysis of such a damaged archive, it is nonetheless possible to make certain hypotheses that can help us study the remaining letters. Letter EA 2, for example, mentions the delivery of twenty units of a wooden object, though the nature of the object is unknown.<sup>24</sup> If we assume that the gifts always follow a similar pattern, the only possible assumption would be to say that, alongside the horses, there would be a shipment of wooden chariots, as it happens several times.<sup>25</sup>

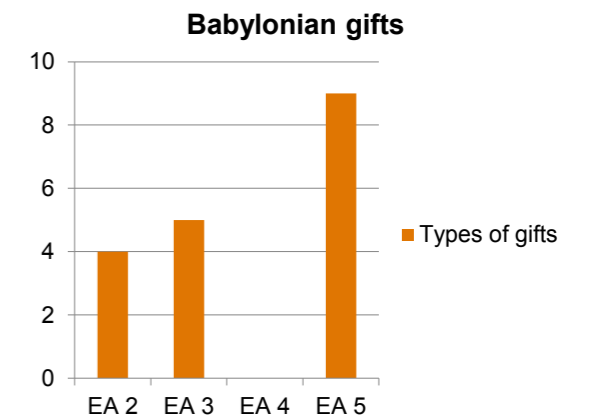


Figure 1. Graphic of gift types in Babylonian letters EA 2 to EA 5. Source: Moran 1992: 1–11.

Without that knowledge, we are only aware of the twenty wooden objects, the unknown number of horses, as well as a quantity of gold, sixty *shekels* of lapis lazuli and another hundred and twenty *shekels* of something else whose name has been destroyed.<sup>26</sup> The same situation is repeated in

Letter #	Horses (teams of)	Chariots	Gold	Lapis lazuli	Ebony	Ivory	Servants (men + women)
EA 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EA 2	x	20 (?)	x	60 (+120 ?)	-	-	-
EA 3	10	10	-	-	-	-	50 (25+25)
EA 4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EA 5	-	-	x	-	10 +15m +x	x	-

Table 1. List of gifts in Babylonian letters EA 1 to EA 5. Source: Moran 1992: 1–11.

Legend: m: mounted/set in gold, ivory etc. x: unknown quantity (destruction, poor preservation of the document).

<sup>22</sup> EA 7: 55–56: “I am not sending many beautiful greeting-gifts. I send to my brother 4 minas of beautiful lapis lazuli as a routine greeting-gift.”

<sup>23</sup> Reiner, Biggs and Roth 1986: 208 ff.

<sup>24</sup> EA 2: r1–5: “[...] fine horses [...] 20 wooden [...] of gold.”

<sup>25</sup> EA 3: 32–34; 9: 38–40 in the Babylonian corpus; also in the Assyrian letters in EA 15: 12–15; 16: 9–12; and the Mitannian letters in EA 17: 36–40; 19: 80–85.

<sup>26</sup> EA 2: r1–9: “[...] fine horses [...] 20 wooden [...] of gold, 120 shekels [...] I send to you as your greeting-gift. 60 shekels of lapis lazuli I send as the greeting-gift of my sister, [...] your wife.”

EA 5<sup>27</sup> and EA 6,<sup>28</sup> where the partial destruction of the clay tablets makes a full understanding of its content impossible.

The comparison of the different categories of gifts sent from Babylonia is more illuminating in this aspect (see fig. 1). We can observe that whereas in EA 2 only four types of gifts are mentioned (horses, gold, lapis lazuli and wooden goods), in EA 3 a fifth type is added (men and women servants).<sup>29</sup> As for EA 5, we find up to eight types of gifts if we differentiate the objects mentioned with the given descriptors. In other words, we distinguish between ebony footrests and those of ebony covered in gold, as well as between the “large” chair and the normal chair, and we count as distinctive types those gifts whose reading is doubtful or incomplete.

There is a clear increase in the number of gift types and the fact that the marriage negotiation begins in EA 3 is also noteworthy in this aspect. It is likely that both events, the increase in gifts and the marriage negotiation, are linked events. If the Egyptian king wished to obtain a daughter from the Babylonian, the demand would be accompanied by an increase in gifts as an incentive, to which the Babylonian king would have responded in a similar manner. Another aspect to remark is the lack of gifts in letters EA 1 and 4. As we have said previously, part of the Egyptian-Babylonian relationship had an agonistic component of confrontation and rivalry as

a bargaining tool. According to Westbrook,<sup>30</sup> Kadašman-Enlil I achieves something unheard of in the international relations of the time. Using marriage as a bargaining chip, he puts the Egyptian king in a hard place in having to agree that reciprocity is not fulfilled if both cannot give a daughter. The Babylonian is about to deny his own daughter to Amenhotep III, but changes tactics and ends up extorting a large amount of gold from his counterpart. The purpose of letter EA 4 is to negotiate the best possible price to give his daughter in marriage to the pharaoh.<sup>31</sup>

The analysis of letters EA 6 to EA 12 (table 2 and fig. 2), from the correspondence of Burna-Buriaš II and Akhenaten, show similar results to those of their ancestors. In this occasion, Burna-Buriaš II explicitly compares the gold received from Egypt to the lapis lazuli he is sending in return. The new Babylonian king is very straightforward about his wishes. If he considers that the amount of gold received is less than promised, he makes sure to forward his complaints to his counterpart,<sup>32</sup> mentioning the exact quantities. We can thus make a direct comparison between gifts sent and received.

We can remark, in the first place, that the quantities of lapis lazuli sent fluctuate in the same manner as the quantities of gold received. The maximum values in both cases are found in EA 7, whereas in EA 8 only one mina of lapis lazuli is mentioned against no gold received, or lack thereof

27 EA 5: 18–33: “I herewith send you, in the charge of Sutti, a greeting-gift of things for the new house: 1 bed of ebony, overlaid with ivory and gold; 3 beds of ebony, overlaid with gold; 1 *urušū* of ebony, overlaid with gold; 1 large chair of ebony, overlaid with gold; 5 chairs of ebony, overlaid with gold; 4 chairs of ebony, overlaid with gold. These things, the weight of all the gold: 7 minas, 9 shekels, of gold. The weight of the silver: 1 mina, 81 shekels, of silver. In addition, 10 footrests of ebony; [...] of ebony, overlaid with gold; [...] footrests of ivory, overlaid with gold; [...] of gold. Total: [...] minas, 10 and 7 shekels, of gold.”

28 EA 6: 20–22: “And as your greeting-gift [...] and 1 [...] I send you.”

29 EA 3: 30–34: “25 men and 25 women, altogether 50 in my service, I send to you in connection with the house-opening. [...] for 10 wooden chariots, and 10 teams of horses I send to you as your greeting-gift.”

30 Westbrook 2000: 380–381.

31 Westbrook 2000: 382.

32 EA 7: 63–72: “May my brother send me much fine gold so I can use it on my work [...]. Certainly my brother did not check the earlier shipment of gold that my brother sent to me [...]. When I put the 40 minas of gold that were brought to me into a kiln, not even 10, I swear, appeared.”

of acknowledgement of any shipment. However, if shipments of lapis lazuli had to be “routine” as Burna-Buriaš II puts it,<sup>33</sup> it is likely that the same thing happened with gold. The correlation between the gifts had to be equivalent and as consistent as possible, in accordance with the rules of reciprocity that the Babylonian king reiterated throughout his letters.

It is worth noting that, in addition to lapis lazuli, letters EA 7, 9, 10 and 11 mention other gifts. In EA 7 five teams of horses are sent,<sup>34</sup> in EA 9 five teams of horses and five wooden chariots,<sup>35</sup> and in EA 10 a necklace of lapis lazuli, the gems cut in the shape of crickets, for the princess Maya-Ati.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, in EA 11 are mentioned ten “lumps” of lapis lazuli for the pharaoh and twenty additional lapis lazuli “crickets” of lapis lazuli for the “lady of the house.”<sup>37</sup> These secondary gifts offer a greater insight into the exchanges that occurred in the wake of the Egyptian-Babylonian correspondence. As a product of the reciprocal relationship, and espe-

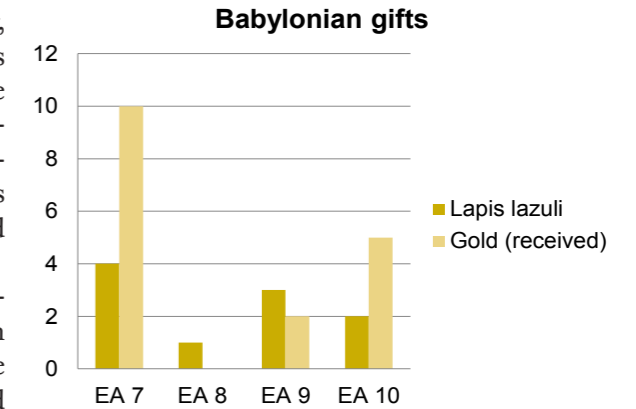


Figure 2. Graphic of gifts, specifically gold and lapis lazuli, in Babylonian letters EA 7 to EA 10. Source: Moran 1992: 12–37.

cially of the marital negotiation in EA 11, exchanges are increasing not only in quantity but also in quality. Carved lapis lazuli was probably considered a better gift than raw “lumps” of the material.

Letter #	Horses (teams of)	Chariots	Gold	Lapis lazuli	Ebony	Ivory	Servants (men + women)
EA 6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EA 7							
EA 8							
EA 9	x	20 (?)	x	60 (+120 ?)	-	-	-
EA 10	10	10	-	-	-	-	50 (25+25)
EA 11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EA 12	-	-	x	-	10 +15m +x	x	-

Table 2. List of gifts in Babylonian letters EA 6 to EA 12. Source: Moran 1992: 12–24. \* In minas. In EA 11 lapis lazuli is counted as “chunks” and not by weight in minas. Legend: c: cricket-shaped gems (usually linked or in a necklace).

33 EA 7: 56. See footnote 22.

34 EA 7: 57–58: “In addition, I send my brother 5 teams of horses.”

35 EA 9: 36–38: “I send to you as your greeting-gift 3 minas of genuine lapis lazuli and 5 teams of horses for 5 wooden chariots.”

36 EA 10: 43–46: “I send as your greeting-gift 2 minas of lapis lazuli, and concerning your daughter Mayati, having heard about her, I send to her as her greeting-gift a necklace of cricket-shaped gems, of lapis lazuli, 1048 their number.”

37 EA 11: 24–25: “I send 10 lumps of genuine lapis lazuli as your greeting-gift, and to the mistress of the house I send 20 ‘crickets’ of genuine lapis lazuli.”

## 2 | Assyria

The Amarna corpus only has two letters from the Assyrian court. These are letters EA 15 and EA 16, sent by Aššur-Uballit I and received by Akhenaten.<sup>38</sup> The main motive expressed in the letters is the establishment of a friendly relationship between the two kingdoms, which materializes in the sending of diplomatic gifts. In fact, the subject of each of the letters is the enumeration of the gifts (*šulmānu*) that are sent on each occasion. Letter EA 15 mentions those with the following words: “I send you a beautiful chariot, 2 horses, and 1 date-stone of genuine lapis lazuli, as your greeting-gift.”<sup>39</sup> This first letter is very straightforward. The Assyrian king demands a shipment of Egyptian gold to establish stable and regular communications to ensure the continuation of the relationship. This demand for gold is supported by his status within the international community.<sup>40</sup> Its function was to maintain the ties of friendship between the kings.

The second letter, EA 16, confirms the message of the first one, renewing the demand for gold. It also gives reasons as to why the Egyptian pharaoh had to fulfil his duties as “brother” and reciprocate the gifts of the Assyrian. He argues that it is a matter of continuing the traditions that his ancestors historically set in motion.<sup>41</sup> In addition, he writes, the Babylonian king has received a greater

quantity of gold and, therefore, the Egyptian pharaoh should match the gold shipments.<sup>42</sup> The reciprocity between the two kings was meant to be equivalent to the relation between the pharaoh and the neighbouring Great Kings, especially since the Babylonians considered Assyria as a vassal state and not as an independent state.<sup>43</sup>

Like his words, the Assyrian king’s gifts are the ones to be expected from anyone in this particular circle of friendships: horses, chariots and gemstones (table 3 and fig. 3). The simplicity of the letters as well as its number enables for a better understanding of the reciprocity mechanisms and the inner workings of the diplomatic system as a gift-exchange based system. While in the first letter the gifts are few, in the second their quantity is slightly increased, as is their theoretical quality. More adjectives are used to describe the gifts,<sup>44</sup> which indicates an improvement in both quality and quantity. In addition, although we do not have the response, we can deduce the nature of the gifts sent by the Egyptian king as well as their quantity.<sup>45</sup>

The sample from the Assyrian kingdom is small, therefore difficult to assess in general terms. We cannot draw conclusions from their analysis but, nonetheless, some elements can be observed. There is an evident increase in the number and in the quality of the gifts mentioned. This may indicate an attempt to demonstrate a growth in the friendship shared by both kings.

<sup>38</sup> Moran 1992: 39–41.

<sup>39</sup> EA 15: 11–15.

<sup>40</sup> Westbrook 2000: 378.

<sup>41</sup> EA 16: 19–21: “When Aššur-nadin-ahhe, my ancestor, wrote to Egypt, 20 talents of gold were sent to him.”

<sup>42</sup> EA 16: 22–29: “When the king of Hanigalbat wrote to your father in Egypt, he sent 20 talents of gold to him. Now I am the equal of the king of Hanigalbat, but you sent me [...] of gold, and it is not enough.”

<sup>43</sup> EA 9: 31–36: “Now, as for my Assyrian vassals, I was not the one who sent them to you. Why on their own authority have they come to your country? If you love me, [...] send them off to me empty-handed.”

<sup>44</sup> Zaccagnini 1973: 78–82. The author considers adjectives as part of the assessment of the gifts mentioned. Among other parameters, the weight, the material from which they are made and the quantity are information that is also provided as a way to determine the value of the goods.

<sup>45</sup> In EA 16, Aššur-Uballit I esteems the 20 talents of gold acquired by his ancestor as the measure with which to compare future gifts. He also states that the gold he obtained from the pharaoh was not enough. Therefore we can assume he received gold as a gift, and at least 20 talents or less. See footnotes 41 and 42.

Letter #	Chariots	Horses	Lapis lazuli
EA 15	1	2	1
EA 16	2	2	1

Table 3. List of gifts in Assyrian letters EA 15 and EA 16. Source: Moran 1992: 37–41.

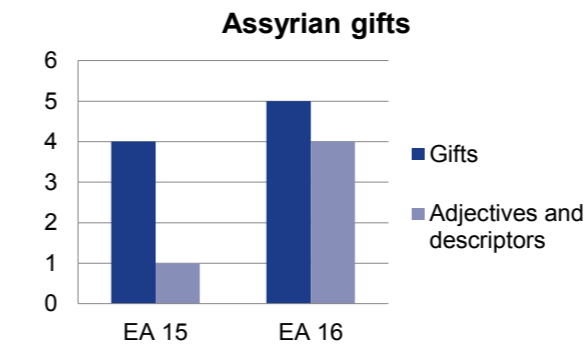


Figure 3. Graphic of gifts, as well as adjectives and descriptors, in Assyrian letters EA 15 and EA 16. Source: Moran 1992: 37–41.

## 3 | Mitanni

The Mitannian corpus of Amarna letters has thirteen letters, from EA 17 to EA 30, all sent from Hanigalbat.<sup>46</sup> Letter EA 18 is too damaged and difficult to read.<sup>47</sup> Letters EA 17 to EA 25 were sent by Mitannian king Tušratta to the Egyptian pharaoh Amenhotep III, while EA 27 to EA 29 were destined for Akhenaten. Letter

EA 26 is addressed to Queen Teye, Great Royal Wife, or *hmt nsw wrt*, of Amenhotep III. Finally, letter EA 30 is a document of safe passage, a sort of passport that would allow the bearer, a messenger named Akiya, to cross the lands of Canaan without being detained on his journey to Egypt.

The conversation begins with letter EA 17, with which Tušratta decides to renew his relations with the Egyptian king, a relationship their common ancestors had previously maintained.<sup>48</sup> Tušratta’s intentions were to consolidate the kingdom of the Hurrians, vulnerable after the death of his father Šuttarna II and the murder of his brother Artašumara.<sup>49</sup> The relations between the Egyptian and Mitannian courts quickly gained importance, with letter EA 19 marking the beginning of the marriage negotiations. These negotiations continue in EA 20 and EA 21, and the list of gifts that make up the dowry in EA 22. EA 24 is a courtesy letter, in which the Egyptian pharaoh is reminded of his obligation to let the Mitanni messengers leave with the gifts that close the marriage negotiation. A second inventory of gifts appears in EA 25, while in letter EA 23 the marriage of the Mitannian princess and the Egyptian pharaoh seems to have already taken place.<sup>50</sup>

The relationship between the Mitannian and Egyptian kings is one of “brotherhood,” a term that is used in this epistolary correspondence as a reflection of the interdynastic marriages between both families. This expression of familiarity, common in Amarna letters, is extended through

<sup>46</sup> Moran 1992: 41–100.

<sup>47</sup> Moran 1992: 43. Some studies of the clay show that the fragments from letter EA 18 do not bear any resemblance to the clay of the rest of letters from Mitanni, which would mean it should be discarded from said corpus.

<sup>48</sup> Bryce 2005: 144–145. This is the Egyptian-Mitannian alliance forged by Tuthmosis IV and Artatama that is also mentioned in EA 29: 16 ff. The terms of the agreement included a marriage between the Egyptian king and a daughter of the Mitannian, as well as the establishment of a common border in Syria, the granting of Kadesh and the control of Amurru and Ugarit to Egypt.

<sup>49</sup> Artzi 2000: 205.

<sup>50</sup> EA 23: 3–9: “Thus Tušratta, the king of Mitanni, who loves you, your father-in-law. For me all goes well. For you may all go well. For your household, for Tadu-Heba, my daughter, your wife, whom you love, may all go well.”

the Mitannian corpus with explicit mentions of the royal family relationships of the kings. Indeed, Amenhotep III's previous marriage to Kelu-Heba, Tušratta's sister, makes them both brothers by correlation. This link will be strengthened with the marriage of Tadu-Heba to the Egyptian pharaoh.<sup>51</sup>

Similarly to the Babylonian corpus, there is a metagame in the Mitannian letters in which love between the kings is mentioned when it is useful to achieve very specific ends.<sup>52</sup> When Tušratta speaks of a relationship between equals, he uses the term “love” (*rāmu/ra'āmu*), as an expression of brotherhood but also as the specific rate or pattern to follow in the gift-exchange system, as Gestoso Singer has established.<sup>53</sup> According to their research, the term “love” appears in some cases when a foreign king affirms his desire to

increase tenfold his love for the pharaoh. The king then says that he will, in return, increase the gifts sent to pharaoh tenfold.<sup>54</sup> The motif of “love” is often repeated throughout the Egyptian-Mitannian communication, becoming a central theme around which the relationship is structured.<sup>55</sup>

Likewise, the numerous gifts that are intended to maintain Mitanni's status within the international political sphere as one of the Great Kings are listed in each letter.<sup>56</sup> Tušratta asks for gold, as much as his ancestors would have received from the pharaoh. In return, he sends valuable goods to increase the Egyptian king's coffers. The most prominent and numerous are detailed in letters EA 17 and EA 19, from the communication of Tušratta and Amenhotep III, as well as EA 27 and EA 29 sent to Akhenaten (table 4 and fig. 4).

Letter #	Horses (teams of)	Chariots	Servants (men + women)	Gold	Oils	Lapis lazuli	Others precious stones	Fabrics	Weapons
EA 17	6	6	2 (1+1)	1 +2s	1	-	-	-	-
EA 18	10	10	30	60	-	20	42	-	-
EA 20	-	-	-	-	-	-	2m	-	-
EA 21	-	-	-	-	-	1m	-	-	-
EA 23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EA 26	-	-	-	-	x	-	1s	-	-
EA 27	-	-	-	-	2	-	1 +3m	3	-
EA 28	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EA 29	-	-	-	2	-	x	8 +2m	15 +x	97 +3m

Table 4. List of gifts in Mitannian letters EA 17, EA 19, EA 27 and EA 29. Source: Moran 1992: 41–99. Legend: s: set (exact quantity is variable). m: mounted/set in gold etc. x: unknown quantity (destruction, poor preservation of the document).

<sup>51</sup> Artzi 2000: 205.

<sup>52</sup> Cohen 1996: 24.

<sup>53</sup> Gestoso Singer 2003: 81–82, 2005: 201.

<sup>54</sup> This is repeated at least in two moments. First between Amenhotep III and Tušratta in EA 19: 15–16: “Now, in keeping with our constant and mutual love, you have made it 10 times greater than the love shown my father,” followed by EA 19: 68–69: “I will give 10 times more than what my brother asks for.” Then between Akhenaten and Tušratta in EA 27: 12: “At this very moment I show you 10 times more love than I did to your father!” followed by EA 27: 18: “then I will send you 10 times more than this.”

<sup>55</sup> Artzi 2000: 206–207.

<sup>56</sup> Westbrook 2000: 378.

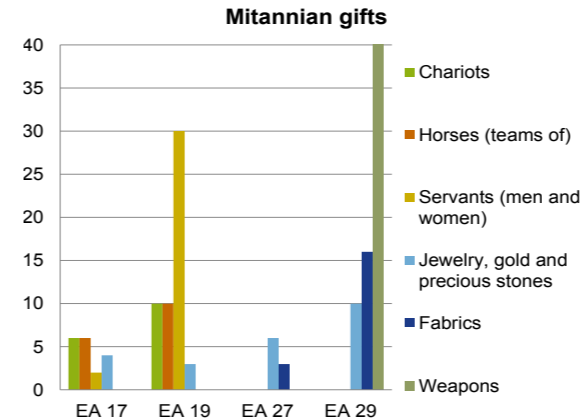


Figure 4. Graphic of gifts in Mitannian letters EA 17, 19, 27 and 29. Source: Moran 1992: 41–99.

Note: Due to scaling reasons, we have reduced the scale of the graph so that the smallest quantities can be seen more clearly, always bearing in mind that the data for the variable of weapons in EA 29 is one hundred, and therefore exceeds the limit of the graph.

In those letters, we find that the gifts sent by the Mitannian are wide-ranging, such as: chariots, horses, usually counted in pairs or as “teams of,” servants, both men and women, jewellery, like pairs of earrings, sets of pins or other types of gold, items inlaid with gold, precious stones, or lapis lazuli, as well as scented oil bottles and similar containers, fabrics, and finally a variety of weapons, including maces, bows, quivers and arrows.

In the Tušratta-Amenhotep III collection, letters EA 17 and EA 19, as well as in the Tušratta-Akhenaten collection, letters EA 27 and EA 29, the amount of gifts sent increases. In EA 17 the gifts are divided into three categories. On the one hand, the spoils of war from skirmishes against the Hittites, from which Tušratta has emerged victorious.<sup>57</sup> Secondly, the actual diplomatic gifts, destined for the pharaoh, followed by those that he sends to his sister Kelu-Heba, wife of Amenhotep III. In total, the gifts amount to six chariots, six teams of horses (that is, a dozen animals), two servants, three golden jewels and a perfume.<sup>58</sup> In contrast, in EA 19 the gifts sent total three jewels and pieces with gold and precious stone appliques, ten chariots, ten teams of horses, and thirty servants.<sup>59</sup> If we take into account the words of Tušratta in this same letter,<sup>60</sup> we observe that the gifts he sends are not multiplied by ten, as he previously announced, but are doubled - at least, those purely diplomatic gifts that are identified as *šulmānu* for the pharaoh.

In EA 27 the gifts are again divided into three groups, this time those for the Egyptian king, Akhenaten, as well as those for his mother, Teye, and those for his wife and daughter of the Mitannian, Tadu-Heba. In total, these gifts include three different articles of clothing, two perfumes and four sets of stones, some set in gold.<sup>61</sup> In EA 29

<sup>57</sup> Artzi 2000: 206.

<sup>58</sup> EA 17: 36–45: “I herewith send you 1 chariot, 2 horses, 1 male attendant, 1 female attendant, from the booty from the land of Hatti. As the greeting-gift of my brother, I send you 5 chariots, 5 teams of horses. And as the greeting-gift of Kelu-Heba, my sister, I send her 1 set of gold toggle-pins, 1 set of gold earrings, 1 gold *mašhu*-ring and a scent container that is full of “sweet oil.”

<sup>59</sup> EA 19: 80–85: “I herewith send as my brother's greeting-gift: 1 gold goblet, with inlays of genuine lapis lazuli in its handle; 1 *maninnu*-necklace, with a counterweight, 20 pieces of genuine lapis lazuli, and 19 pieces of gold, its centrepiece being of genuine lapis lazuli set in gold; 1 *maninnu*-necklace, with a counterweight, genuine *hulalu*-stones, and 40 pieces of gold shaped like *arzallu*-stones, its centrepiece being of genuine *hulalu*-stone set in gold; 10 teams of horses; 10 wooden-chariots along with everything belonging to them; and 30 women and men.”

<sup>60</sup> See footnote 54.

<sup>61</sup> EA 27: 110–113: “Herewith, as your greeting-gift: 1 shirt, Hurrian-style; 1 city-shirt; 1 robe; 1 [...] stone; [...] pair(s?) for the hand; “eye- stones” of genuine *hulalu* -stone, 5 per string, mounted on gold. 1 scent container filled with ‘sweet oil’; 1 set of stones mounted on gold for Teye, your mother. I send 1 scent container filled with ‘sweet oil’; 1 set of stones mounted on gold for Tadu-Heba, my daughter, your wife.”

the recipients of the gifts are the same, Akhenaten, Teye and Tadu-Heba. In this case the total of gifts is a comb, four clubs of different types of stone, some sixteen garments (if not more), three bows with their quivers and ninety arrows, five jewels and other pieces of gold, as well as at least one lapis lazuli object and two gold ones.<sup>62</sup> Again, we see that the number of gifts is much higher in the second letter, although Tušratta's prediction of multiplying the gifts by ten is, yet again, not fulfilled. Nonetheless, Akhenaten and the Egyptian queens do receive almost twice as many gifts than those sent with EA 27.

The nature of the gifts sent varies over time. While in the first letters sent from Mitanni to pharaoh Amenhotep III, chariots and horses prevail over other types of gifts, in the letters from Tušratta to Akhenaten they disappear completely. Luxury objects replace chariots and horses, mainly woodwork, textiles, jewellery and precious gems in EA 27, to which a heterogeneous set of weapons is added in EA 29. The element of warfare in gifts is still present. We see chariots, whose function in combat can only be assumed, horses, and especially maces, bows and arrows. Regardless, perhaps due to personal preference of the recipients, perhaps because Egypt has already started to manufacture its own chariots,<sup>63</sup> or perhaps for other unknown reasons, the nature of the gifts is altered in the course of the negotiations.

#### 4 | Arzawa

The Amarna corpus only has two letters from Arzawa. These are letters EA 31 and EA 32, the first sent by pharaoh Amenhotep III and received by Tarhundaradu of Arzawa, and the second from Tarhundaradu himself to Amenhotep III.<sup>64</sup> According to the most recent studies published by Hawkins,<sup>65</sup> EA 31 would be the answer to EA 32, so that the reverse order in which they were numbered would have to be considered in order to understand the context and the message conveyed by both missives. The communication would presumably begin at a time prior to that in the letters, with a proposal for a marriage alliance that the Egyptian king addressed to the Anatolian king. Tarhundaradu gives preferential treatment to written words over those transmitted orally, and in EA 32 he requires his counterpart to make the marriage proposal again, in the form of an official letter.<sup>66</sup> EA 31 is the answer of Amenhotep III, who shares his intentions to marry a daughter of Tarhundaradu and thus strengthen an alliance,<sup>67</sup> for which he also sends an important consignment of diplomatic gifts.<sup>68</sup>

The purpose behind the letters is the negotiation of a political alliance agreement between the Egyptian and Anatolian kings, which materializes in a marriage between both houses. In EA 31 the

62 EA 29: "As my brother's greeting-gift: 1 gold comb, inlaid with [...], with the head of a yak; 1 huppalu-mace; [...] lapis lazuli [...], 1 pair for the hands, of *šadanu*-stone; 1 [...] overlaid with gold; 3 garments; 3 pairs of [...] -garments; [...] city-shirts; 3 bows; 3 quivers overlaid with gold; 90 arrows of bronze; 50 [...]; [...] fine [...]; 3 maces. I herewith send as my brother's greeting-gift. [...] of gold; 1 pair for the hands, of *šadanu*-stone; 1 pair of earrings of [...] -stone; [...]; 2 garments. I herewith send as the greeting-gift of Teye, your mother. [...] 1 pair for the hands of *šadanu*-stone; 1 pair of earrings of [...] -stone; [...]; 4 garments. I herewith send as the greeting-gift of Tadu-Heba, my daughter."

63 Morkot 2007: 177–179.

64 Moran 1992: 101–103.

65 Hawkins 2009: 78.

66 EA 32: 1–13: "Behold, (concerning the fact) that Kalbaya has spoken this word to me, 'Let us establish a blood-relationship', in this matter I do not trust Kalbaya. He has indeed spoken it as a word, but it was not confirmed on the tablet. If you really desire my daughter, how should I not give her to you? I give her to you! See to it now that Kalbaya returns quickly with my messenger, and write back to me on a tablet concerning this matter."

67 EA 31: 11–14: "Behold, I have sent to you Irsappa, my messenger, (with the instruction): 'Let us see the daughter whom they will offer to my majesty in marriage'. And he will pour oil on her head."

68 Hawkins 2009: 76–78.

Egyptian pharaoh lists the steps to follow in the marriage negotiation process, once the father of the bride gives his approval. First, Amenhotep III says that the princess is to be anointed in oil as a symbol of union, followed by the sending of the *brideprice* by her future husband, and her dowry (*terhatu*) by her father. In this regard, and given the absence of additional messages from Arzawa, we can only establish the relative chronology of the gifts in the process of the marriage negotiation.

The gifts sent from Egypt are detailed in EA 31 (table 5), among which are a bag of gold weighing the equivalent of twenty gold mines, more than three hundred pieces of linen, including six of light linen, ten bottles of "oil sweet," thirteen ebony wood chairs inlaid with different materials, as well as one hundred pieces of ebony wood, which we can only define as beams or posts.<sup>69</sup> These gifts have a diplomatic purpose insofar as they are the materialization of the alliance between the kingdoms of Egypt and Arzawa. The latter was at a disadvantage and under Hittite threat. The alliance between Egypt and Arzawa would have been a major setback for Hatti, although Arzawa's defeat would not occur until the reign of Mursili II.<sup>70</sup>

As they are written in Hittite, the term *šulmānu* for naming diplomatic gifts is not found in the Arzawa letters. However, Moran translates the expression that precedes the gift list as "greeting-gift," alluding to a similar gift list in a letter from Ramses II.<sup>71</sup> After this list of gifts is the marriage negotiation. The *brideprice*, which had the function of consolidating the marriage agreement, is mentioned in EA 31.<sup>72</sup> The king of Arzawa was then expected to send his daughter to Egypt, accompanied by her dowry. These steps would culminate in marriage, where the Anatolian princess was the representation of the political alliance between the kings.

#### 5 | Alashiya

The Alashiya corpus consists of eight letters, numbered EA 33 to EA 40, all of them sent from Alashiya.<sup>73</sup> The recipient of the letters is unknown since he is only identified as "the king of Egypt" or "the governor of Egypt." It is likely that all of Alashiya's correspondence was destined for Akhenaten, although there is no conclusive evidence in this regard.<sup>74</sup>

Letter #	Gold (minas)	Fabrics	Oils	Ebony
EA 31	1 (20)	317	10	100 +13m
EA 32	-	-	-	-

Table 5. List of gifts in Arzawan letters EA 31 and EA 32. Source: Moran 1992: 101–103. Legend: m: mounted/set in gold, ivory etc.

69 EA 31: 28–38: "And behold, I have sent to you as a greeting-gift a consignment in the charge of my messenger, Irsappa: a sack of gold, weighing 20 minas of gold; 3 light linen garments; 3 light linen mantles; linen *huzzi*; 8 linen *kušitti*; 100 linen *šawalga*; 100 linen *happa* [...]; 100 linen *mutalliyaša*; large *kukkubu*-containers of 'sweet oil'; 6 small *kukkubu*-containers of 'sweet oil'; 3 chairs of ebony overlaid with beautiful *šarpa* and gold; 10 chairs of ebony inlaid with ivory; 100 beams of ebony, as a greeting-gift."

70 Hawkins 2009: 80.

71 Edel 1974: 135; Moran 1992: 101–103.

72 EA 31: 22: "Then they will come back to you and bring along the *brideprice* for the daughter."

73 Moran 1992: 104–113.

74 Cline and Cline 2015: 19–20. For information about the identification of the letters: Artzy, Asaro and Perlman 1976. Also for added information about the location of Alashiya and its identification with Cyprus: Goren, Bunimovitz, Finkelstein and Na'Aman 2003.



The communication begins in EA 33, when the king of Alashiya writes to the Egyptian king on the occasion of his recent accession to the throne. A reference is made to a previous communication in which the pharaoh would have proposed to initiate bilateral relations between both countries through the exchange of presents.<sup>75</sup> In EA 34 the accession to the throne of the Egyptian king is mentioned again,<sup>76</sup> which casts certain doubts on his identification, and the possibility that it is a pharaoh other than the one mentioned in EA 33. The Egyptian-Alashiyan dialogue continues its course, with individual exchanges of gifts. In EA 38 no gifts are mentioned and, in exchange, an accusation is made of an attack on Egyptian merchants from Alashiyan assailants.<sup>77</sup> In EA 39 and EA 40 the Alashiyan ruler requests a safe passage document for his ships through Egyptian territory,<sup>78</sup> suggesting that maybe some discomfort between both nations has arisen.

The purpose behind the letters is the establishment of a friendly relationship between both countries, as well as the exploitation of resources and raw materials from Alashiya. The copper production and export industry, whose monopoly in the Mediterranean was exercised by Alashiya in this period,<sup>79</sup> was essential for the manufacture of weapons and other bronze utensils. This would probably have been one of the arguments used by the kings of Alashiya to position

themselves as equals to the pharaohs of Egypt and the Great Kings of the near-eastern world,<sup>80</sup> and therefore to claim their equal role in the international diplomatic system.

Indubitably, on a number of occasions, the king of Alashiya exhibits a perfect understanding of the gift-exchange system that kept the Asian and Egyptian kings in constant contact, in spite of being an outsider. In EA 33 we see how the term “gifts of peace” (*šalam*) is equated with “greeting” (*šulmānu*), in the following sentence: “You said, ‘Let us have transported back and forth gifts of peace’. I have heard the greeting of my brother and [...]”<sup>81</sup> The preservation of peace, of political *status quo*, and above all the establishment of lasting diplomatic alliances is often one of the most repeated motives for the interlocutors of the Amarna letters to send and receive gifts. Later in EA 37 the Alashiyan king writes the following: “I have heard the greeting (*šulmānu*) of my brother. The greeting-gift (*šulmānu*) for my brother is 5 talents of copper, 5 teams of horses.”<sup>82</sup> The description that the king of Alashiya gives of the process is one in which the reception of one *šulmānu* must be answered with another in return.

The gifts mentioned in the Alashiya letters stand out for the large quantities that are handled, but also for being the least consistent, both in nature and in quantity (table 6 and fig. 5). The data

from letters EA 33 to EA 40 show that copper is the most abundant type of gift, among others such as horses, ivory, fabrics, ebony wood or bottles of “sweet oil.” In EA 33, 37 and 40 small amounts of copper are handled,<sup>83</sup> while in EA 34 and 36 it reaches a hundred units, and half a thousand in EA 35.<sup>84</sup> This great variability between the different copper shipments between the Alashiyan and Egyptian courts might suggest an underlying commercial exchange in this context. In fact, it is in this very letter that the king of Alashiya speaks of an unpaid debt from the pharaoh, apparently on a shipment of wood. The mention of a “payment” (*šimātu*)<sup>85</sup> indicates that the Egyptian-Alashiyan diplomatic relationship was based on both commercial and political issues.<sup>86</sup> It is also worth considering that the safe passage documents extended to the Alashiyan merchants in EA 39 and 40 are part of the services

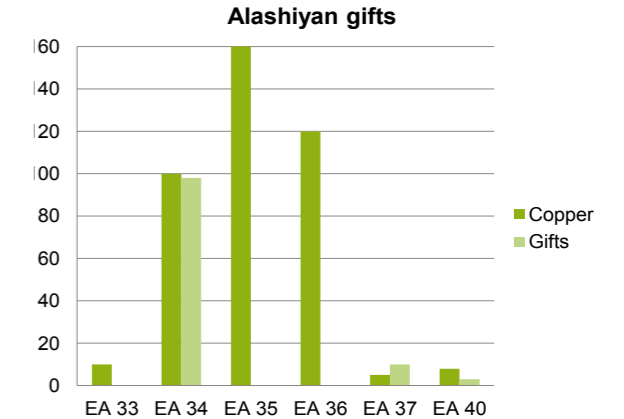


Figure 5. Comparative graph of gifts, specifically copper and gifts of different kinds, mentioned in letters EA 33 to EA 40, originally sent from Alashiya to the King of Egypt. Source: Moran 1992: 104–113. Own elaboration.

Note: Due to scaling reasons, we have reduced the scale of the graph so that the smallest quantities can be seen more clearly, always bearing in mind that the data for the copper variable in EA 35 is five hundred talents, and therefore exceeds the limit of the graph.

Letter #	Copper (talents)	Gold	Horses	Oils	Ebony	Fabrics	Ivory
EA 33	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
EA 34	100	2	2	18	14	68	-
EA 35	500	-	-	-	-	-	-
EA 36	120	-	-	-	-	-	-
EA 37	5	-	10	-	-	-	-
EA 38	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EA 39	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EA 40	8	-	-	-	2	-	1

Table 6. List of gifts in Alashiyan letters EA 33 to EA 40. Source: Moran 1992: 104–113.

75 EA 33: 9–18: “Moreover, I have heard that you are seated on the throne of your father’s house. You said, ‘Let us have transported back and forth gifts of peace’. I have heard the greeting of my brother, and I [...]. You wrote, ‘Have transported to me 200 (talents) of copper’, and I herewith have transported to you [...] 10 talents of fine copper.”

76 EA 34: 50–53: “I herewith send a *habannatu*-jar that is full of “sweet oil” to be poured on your head, seeing that you have sat down on your royal throne.”

77 EA 38: 13–18: “My brother, you say to me, ‘Men from your country were with them’. My brother, I myself do not know that they were with them. If men from my country were with them, send them back and I will act as I see fit.”

78 EA 39: 14–20: “These men are my merchants. My brother, let them go safely and promptly. No one making a claim in your name is to approach my merchants or my ship.” Again in EA 40: 16–20.

79 Knapp 1985: 250.

80 Holmes 1971: 428.

81 EA 33: 11–14.

82 EA 37: 8–10.

83 EA 33: 16–18: You wrote, ‘Have transported to me 200 (talents) of copper’, and I herewith have transported to you [...] 10 talents of fine copper.” EA 37: 9–10: “The greeting-gift for my brother is 5 talents of copper, 5 teams of horses.” EA 40: 12–15: “I herewith send as your greeting-gift 5 talents of copper, 3 talents of fine copper, 1 piece of ivory, 1 beam of boxwood, 1 beam for a ship.”

84 EA 34: 16: “And behold, I also send to you with my messenger 100 talents of copper.” EA 35: 10–11: “I herewith send to you 500 talents of copper. As my brother’s greeting-gift I send it to you.” EA 36 is too fragmentary for a correct translation but several mentions of “copper” appear together with the number “120”. Moran 1992: 109.

85 EA 35: 27–29: “Moreover, my brother, men of my country keep speaking with me about my timber that the king of Egypt receives from me. My brother, give me the payment due.” Gestoso Singer 2010: 261–262.

86 For information on the commercial exchanges between Alashiya and Egypt in this period: Sherratt 2003: 42. For added comparative information about mentions of payment in the Levant: Gestoso Singer 2010.

rendered in exchange for copper. In other words, the gift-exchange system between both nations includes agreements of free trade and extensive exchange of copper, among other raw materials.

On the other hand, only letters EA 34, 37 and 40 present gifts other than the metal. As previously mentioned, horses, ivory, fabrics, ebony wood or bottles of “sweet oil” were some of the main products imported by Alashiya. In EA 34 there are about as many gifts as copper talents. Ivory is a rare item and the reference to it in EA 40<sup>87</sup> has raised suspicions about the identification of the location of the land. Although the fundamental role of Alashiya as a commercial hub for the Levant Mediterranean region and the Aegean Sea increases the possibility that ivory would be available on the island, without the need for the animal of origin.<sup>88</sup> In the period concerning the Amarna letters, Alashiya would have become yet another kingdom within the political, economic and social fabric of the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean, especially given its privileged location, acting as a link between both worlds.<sup>89</sup>

## 6 | Hatti

The Hittite corpus consists of four letters numbered from EA 41 to EA 44.<sup>90</sup> The identification of the participants is problematic due to its fragmented state. Letters EA 42 and 43 are not very

legible and their headings are not preserved. Letter EA 41 was sent by the Hittite king Šuppiluliuma I, the recipient being pharaoh Huriya, which is Smenkhara, or perhaps Akhenaten.<sup>91</sup> EA 44 was sent by the Hittite prince Zita, son or perhaps brother of Šuppiluliuma I,<sup>92</sup> and received by an Egyptian pharaoh who is not identified by name.

The communication is initiated by Šuppiluliuma I, with a wish to continue friendly relations between both courts. The cordial and friendly tone of the correspondence can, however, lead to inaccuracies about the real situation. If we consider that the pharaoh named Huriya is actually Akhenaten, we can be sure that Šuppiluliuma I’s relationship with him was not so warm, and it is possible that the pharaoh was preparing a military campaign against the Hittites at that time.<sup>93</sup> However, Šuppiluliuma I’s insistence on remembering past ties of friendship between the two countries, especially between the rulers, is striking. He cites previous agreements on several occasions, as well as promises that have been left unfulfilled. Šuppiluliuma says: “My brother, do not hold back anything that I asked of your father,”<sup>94</sup> and then asks for gold, as is the convention in this diplomatic relations.

Letters EA 41 and 44 mention gifts that are sent to Egypt in order to comply with the diplomatic tradition (table 7), although their nature varies, as does the sender. In the first letter, the gift consists of several silver *rhytons* and other

87 EA 40: 7–8: “2 pieces of ivory,” then again in EA 40: 11: “and you sent only some ivory,” and EA 40: 14: “1 piece of ivory.”

88 Knapp 1985: 241; Sherratt 2003: 47.

89 Knapp 1985: 250.

90 Moran 1992: 114–117.

91 Arguments for both continue to be debated to date. On the one hand, Liverani (1999: 409–410) and Miller (2007: 279–282) claim that it is Akhenaten. On the other hand, Moran (1992: 115, n.2) and Bryce (1990: 103) tip the balance towards Smenkhara. The text of EA 41 only hints at a relationship of relative peace with the “father” of the king in question, which would rule out Tutankhamun as a recipient in the event that Smenkhara had not survived Akhenaten’s death. In any case, it is fair to consider as Bernabé and Álvarez-Pedrosa (2004: 56) argue that the addressee is probably a successor to Akhenaten.

92 Bernabé and Álvarez-Pedrosa 2004: 81; Hoffner 2009: 280.

93 Izre’el and Singer 1990: 182; Bryce 2003: 181–182, 2005: 159.

94 EA 41: 23

Letter #	Silver (minas)	Servants (men)
EA 41	4 (18)	-
EA 42	-	-
EA 43	-	-
EA 44	-	16

Table 7. List of gifts in Hatti letters EA 41 to EA 44. Source: Moran 1992: 114–117.

silver items, for a total weight of eighteen silver minas;<sup>95</sup> in the second it is sixteen men.<sup>96</sup> Given the disparity in the present, it is difficult to compare their contents in the same way as we have done with previous cases.

Alternatively, it is possible to compare the gifts that Šuppiluliuma requests from the Egyptian, as his father would have promised him, with those that the Hittite king delivers within letter EA 41. Šuppiluliuma sends four pieces of silver, of different weight and value, and asks for a minimum of six pieces of gold, silver and lapis lazuli.<sup>97</sup> The gifts sent are, comparatively, of a lesser value than those asked in return. The Hittite king’s expectations regarding the Egyptian-Hittite diplomatic relationship are optimistic. His demands seek to receive the best part of the reciprocity expected from said bilateral relations. Specifically, it is a claim of past, unfulfilled reciprocity. However, since Egypt is expected to respond to the gift-exchange, a greater, more valuable gift is what Šuppiluliuma anticipates. The norms of reciprocity in the diplomatic exchange dictate that gifts must be satisfactory for both sides and, in this instance, the Hittite ruler enhances this non-written rule as more than a guideline.

## Conclusion

As of this point, the results we have shared of the analysis of the letters from the Great Kings clearly show a correlation between the relationships and the fluctuations in the gift-exchanges between kings. This gift-exchange system appears to be a continuation of previous protocols and arrangements established between the dynastic families in past relations. Babylonia, Mitanni and Hatti talk of these past relations with the Egyptian kings in their respective letters. The terms of these relations are always considered of “brotherhood”, a situation often confirmed by interdynastic marriages. Marriages between members of royal families are not a novelty in the Near East in the Amarna Age.

In the letters studied, at least seven interdynastic marriages are mentioned: a sister of Kadašman-Enlil I with Amenhotep III, as a historical precedent (EA 1); a daughter of Kadašman-Enlil I of Babylon with Amenhotep III (EA 1, 2, 4 and 5); a daughter of Burna-Buriša II of Babylon with Akhenaten (EA 11, 12, 13 and 14); Kelu-Heba, sister of Tušratta of Mitanni, with Amenhotep III, as a historical precedent (EA 17 and 19); Tadu-Heba, daughter of Tušratta of Mitanni, with Amenhotep III (EA 19, 20, 21, 22 and 24) and with Akhenaten, after the death of Amenhotep III (EA 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29); and finally, a daughter of Tarhundaradu of Arzawa with Amenhotep III (EA 32 and 31). Marriages are mainly considered an occasion for gift-exchange. As previously stated, other occasions for gift-exchange were special celebrations, such as religious festivals, the enthronement of a new

95 EA 41: 39–43: “I herewith send you as your greeting-gift: 1 silver *rhyton*, a stag, 5 minas its weight; 1 silver *rhyton*, a young ram, 3 minas its weight; 2 silver disks, 10 minas their weight, as 2 large *nikipu*-trees.”

96 EA 44: 24: “I send as your greeting-gift a present of 16 men.”

97 EA 41: 23–28: “My brother, do not hold back anything that I asked of your father. As to the 2 statues of gold: one should be standing, one should be seated. And, my brother, send me the 2 silver statues of women, and a large piece of lapis lazuli, and a large stand for [...]”

king, the birth of an heir, or the construction of a new palace.

The term *šulmānu*, translated as “diplomatic gift” or simply “gift”, is ever present in these letters, both to indicate the cordiality of the relationship and the diplomatic nature of the gifts attached. The use of *šulmānu* as a term for gifts exchanged in epistolary contexts at an international level is almost exclusive to the Middle Assyrian-Babylonian period.<sup>98</sup> The pharaoh received from the Asian kings various presents as tribute if the kings were vassals of the Egyptian king, or as diplomatic gift if the kings were considered of the same rank.<sup>99</sup> In return, the

Egyptian pharaoh promised his protection and assistance in case of need. In practice, however, the reciprocity and gift-exchange system with the great states of Hatti, Mitanni, Babylonia, and Assyria guaranteed the balance of power in the region.

Ultimately, these gifts concealed a commercial network between the courts. The safe passage documents extended to Arzawan and Alashiyan merchants as well as the clear mentions to “payment” in letter EA 35 attest to economic trades. The gift-exchange system, the reciprocity within that system, is helping to preserve the political and diplomatic balance, but the profit is purely commercial.

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