

THE KINGS DECISION AND EXECUTIVE POWER IN UGARIT  
AND IN CANAAN IN THE XIV-XIII CENT. B.C.E.

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Recently, F.M. Fales published a new documentary text from Ugarit<sup>1</sup>. This Akkadian tablet comes from an occasional acquisition. The tablet contains a letter, and is of itself of no special interest. It would only add a formerly unknown small text to the existing collection, were it not for an important fact. The text is strikingly similar to the letter PRU IV, 17.152, published by J. Nougayrol in 1956.

We will present here both texts in a slightly different way from that of Fales in his publication. We will present the different wording of the two texts separately and point out where they deviate one from the other.

PRU IV, 17.152

1. *un-ma* [šá]<sub>r</sub> <sup>KUR</sup>*A-mur-ri*
2. *a-na* LUGAL <sup>KUR</sup>*ú-ga-ri-it*
3. DUMU-*ia qí-bi-ma*

1. Thus (speaks) the king of Amurru
2. to the king of Ugarit
3. my son, say:

Fales, OA 1984

1. *un-ma* <sup>LÚ</sup>*šá-kín* <sup>KUR</sup>*A-mur-ri*
2. *a-na* <sup>LÚ</sup>*šá-kín*
3. <sup>KUR</sup>*ú-ga-ri-it*
4. DUMU-*ia qí-bi-ma*

1. Thus (speaks) the *sākinu*<sup>2</sup> of Amurru<sup>3</sup>
2. to the *sākinu*
3. of Ugarit
4. my son, say:

The text of both tablets is almost identical. We follow here the text of PRU IV, 17.152, showing in the notes the differences between both texts.

4. *lu-ú šul-mu a-na mu[h-bi-k]a* "May it be well as it concerns you"<sup>4</sup>.  
 5. *li-im DINGIR<sup>MES</sup> PAP<sup>ru</sup>-[ka]* May the thousand gods protect you<sup>5</sup>.

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6. *a-nu-ma Ad-da[r-ya]* Now, Addarya  
 7. *a-na muh-bi-k[a-a<sup>?</sup>]-š*i** to you  
 8. *a-na pā-ri-iš-b*i** for *parišb*i**  
 9. *ał-ta-par: pa-ru-uš-b*a** I have sent<sup>6</sup> the<sup>7</sup> *parušb*a**  
 10. *[ki-]i ma-si-me-e* as much as  
 11. *[i-b]a-aš-š*i* šu[-bi-la<sup>?</sup>]* there is. Bring (to me)<sup>8</sup>  
 12. *[mi-n]a me-e [šā<sup>?</sup>]* all that  
 13. *[tu-š]e-bil a-<sup>na</sup> -[ku* you shall have brought<sup>9</sup>.  
     *ŠAM-šu<sup>?</sup>]* I shall give you (= pay)  
 14. *a-na-din* the price.

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15. *ū iš-tu LÚ<sup>I</sup>GA [L DAM.GAR]* And from the chief *tamkār*  
 16. *li-il-qī-šu [a-na-ku]* may he take it<sup>9</sup>: [I]  
 17. *ŠAM-šu a-na-din* shall pay its price"<sup>10</sup>.

Without entering into the question of what kind of article the *parušb*a** was<sup>11</sup>, we shall consider the problem arising from both texts. It is clear that both letters were written at the same time (possibly the royal letter was first, with that of the *sākinu* following almost immediately) and it would seem in the same scribal office, and that the same subject is being considered. The main difference between both texts is that in one the letter is written in the name of the king, and in the other in the name of the *sākinu*. The king addressed his counterpart - the king; and the *sākinu* - the *sākinu*. In this case it is not especially important to pay particular attention to the fact that at the time when the letter was written Amurru stood on a higher position within the Hittite vassallage hierarchy, and that the king and *sākinu* of Amurru address their counterparts of Ugarit by the words "My son".

The question is whether the fact that these two documents coincide in their

contents is an occasional or regular feature in the archives of Ugarit. It would seem that an answer to the question can be found. We even have here three very important documents with coinciding contents: PRU IV, 17.292; III, 15.77 and IV, 17.78.

PRU IV, 17.292

1) *um-ma* LUGAL <sup>KUR</sup> *Gar-ga-mis* 2) *a-na* <sup>I</sup> *I-bi-ra-na* 3) LUGAL <sup>KUR</sup> *Ū-ga-ri-it*

4) *qī-bi-ma*

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5) *lu-u šul-mu a-na muḥ-ḥi-ka*

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6) *aš-šum* ZAG <sup>MES</sup> <sup>12</sup> *-ka* 7) *ša tās-pu-ra* 8) *mi-nu-me-e* 9) *ša* <sup>Id</sup> <sup>ARMA</sup> <sup>me</sup> *-zi-ti* <sup>13</sup>

10) *iš-ku-na-ak-ku* 11) *ar-ra-šu-nu-ma* 12) *lu-ū ṣa-ab-tu* 13) [*m*]*a-am-ma* 14) *la-a ū-na-ak-kār-šu-nu-ti* 15) *ū a-nu-ma* 16) <sup>I</sup> <sup>E</sup> *bi-in-na-e-e* 17) *ū Kur-kal-li* 18) *al-tap-ra-aš-[šu]* 19) *ū* ZAG <sup>MES</sup> <sup>12</sup> 20) *ša-a-šu-nu-[ma]* 21) *i-šak-ka-nu-ni-ik-ku*

1) Thus (says) the king of Karkemish: 2) To Ibiranu<sup>14</sup> 3) the king of Ugarit 4) say:

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5) "Hail to you.

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6) "Concerning your frontiers<sup>15</sup>, 7) about which you have written, -8) All that concerns your frontiers, 9) which Armaziti 10) established 11) at their (right) place, - 12) they are fixed. 13) Nobody 14) shall change them. 15-18) And so I am sending Ebina'e and Kurkallu 19-20) and these frontiers 21) they will fix".

So we see according to the text that the king of Karkemish gave an order to the king Ibiranu of Ugarit. He states that Armaziti established the frontiers, and two officials, Ebina'e and Kurkallu, so it seems, must physically fix the frontier line.

PRU III, 15.77

1) *um-ma* *A-li-ḥe-eš-[n]* *i* DUMU LUGAL 2) *a-na* LUGAL <sup>KUR</sup> *Ū-ga-ri-it* 3) *qī-bi-ma*

4) *lu-ú šul-mu a-na muḫ-ḫi-ka*  
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5) DINGIR<sup>MES</sup> 6) *a-na šul-ma-ni PAP<sup>nu</sup>-ka*  
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7) *aš-šum ZAG<sup>MES</sup>-ka* 8) *ša tāš-pu-ra* 9) *a-nu-ma iš-tu É.GAL<sup>lim</sup>* 10) *iš-pu-ra-ni-ik-ka* 11) *ma-a mi-nu-me-e* 12) *ZAG<sup>MES</sup>-ka* 13) *ša Ar-ma-zi-ti* 14) *iš-ku-na-ak-ku* 15) *a-šar-šu-nu-ma-a-mi* 16) *lú-u ṣa-ab-tu* 17) *ma-am-ma lu-ú la-a* 18) *ú-na-kār-šu-nu-ti-mi* 19) *a-nu-ma E-bi-na-’a-e* 20) *it-ti Kur-kal-li* 21) *il-la-ku-ni-ik-ku* 22) *ù ZAG<sup>MES</sup>-ka* 23) *i-šak-kān-nu-ni-ik-ku*

1) Thus (speaks) Aliḫešni, son of the king<sup>16</sup>: 2) "To the king of Ugarit 3) say:

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4) "Hail to you. 5) The gods shall protect you 6) for good.

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7) Concerning your frontiers 8) about which you have written. 9) So from the Palace 10) it is written to you<sup>17</sup> 11) that these 12) your frontiers, 13) which Armaziti 14) established, 15-16) shall remain in their places<sup>18</sup>. 17-18) Nobody shall change them. 19-21) And Ebina’e together with Kurkallu will go to you 22-23) and will fix your frontiers"<sup>19</sup>.

In this case the letter is written by Aliḫešni, who was "son of the king". The wording is almost the same as in the previous letter, and Armazati is also mentioned here. But now, after the statement of the order of the king of Karke<sub>mish</sub> to the king of Ugarit, his vassal, his junior in rank, the executive - as in the case of the letter of the *sākinu* - begins to act. The expression "from the Palace" (or "on behalf of the Palace") shows that we are dealing with the preceding royal order.

PRU IV, 17.78

1) *um-ma E-bi-na-’e* 2) *a-na LÚ<sub>v</sub>ša-ak-ki-ni* 3) *DUMU DUG.GA-ya qī-bi-ma*  
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4) *lu-ú šul-mu a-na muḫ-ḫi-ka* 5) DINGIR<sup>MES</sup> *a-na šul-ma-ni PAP<sup>nu</sup>-ka*  
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6) *it-ti-ka mi-nu-um-me-e* 7) [šu]l-ma-ni t<sub>é</sub>-ma-ti šap-pa-ra

8) *e-nu-ma LÚ-ya* 9) *a-na muḫ-ḫi DUMU-ya at-ru-us-s[u]* 10) *mi-nu-um-me-e ba-š*i*-iḫ-ta-šu* 11) *i-na ka-mi i-le-eq-qi* 12) *ma-am-ma i-na pa-ni-šu* 13) *lu-ū la i-pār-r[i]-ik* 14) <sup>LÚ</sup>*ma-ki-su mi-ik-sū-šu* 15) *lu-ū [l]a [i]-ma-ki-is* 16) *a-di [ašramu?]<sup>20</sup>* 17) *a-š*i*-ib [ki-i?]<sup>20</sup>* 18) *du-gul-šu*

1) Thus (says) Ebina'e: 2) "To the *sākinu* 3) my good son<sup>21</sup> say:

4) "Hail to you 5) The gods shall protect you for good.

6) Is it all well with 7) you ? Send the (new) words !<sup>22</sup>

8) So I sent my man 9) to my son<sup>23</sup>. 10) Everything what his wish is 11) he shall obtain. 12-13) Nobody shall put obstacles in his way !<sup>24</sup> 14) The custom official shall not 15) take his customs duties from him<sup>25</sup> 16-17) until he returns [to his place (?)]. [Let him have(?)]<sup>26</sup> a good 18) look at him".

We see that despite the discussion of the frontiers, the same question does not appear here. But we now observe that the king gave the order to Aliḫešni, A liḫešni sent Ebina'e (and Kurkallu), and Ebina'e sent his man to the *sākinu* of Ugarit and orders that the custom official shall not take from him custom duties. So what we have is a hierarchy of at least four degrees which was involved in be half of Karkemish in this matter<sup>27</sup>.

It appears that Aliḫešni had to perform in Karkemish the functions of the *sākinu*.

We have two additional parallel texts, U 5 22 (RS 20.18) and 23 (R-S. L1), published by Nougayrol and given particular consideration by P.R. Berger<sup>28</sup>.

U 5 23

1) *um-ma LUGAL-ma* 2) *a-na* <sup>I</sup>*Am-mu-ra-pi* 3) *LUGAL* <sup>KUR</sup>*U-ga-ri-it* 4) *qī-bi-ma*

5) *lu-u šul-mu a-na muḫ-ḫi-ka* 6) *DINGIR<sup>nu</sup> a-na šul-ma-nu* 7) *PAP<sup>nu</sup>-ka*

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 8) *ša taš-pu-ra-ma-a* <sup>GIŠ<sup>MA</sup>MEŠ</sup> <sup>KUR</sup> 9) *i-na ŠĀ A.AB.BA* 10) *i-ta-am-ru-ma* 11)  
*u šum-ma ki-i-tu* 12) <sup>GIŠ<sup>MA</sup>MEŠ</sup> *i-ta-am-ru* 13) *ù lu du-nu-na-[ta]* 14) *dan-niš*  
*i-na-an-n[a]* 15) *at-tu-ka* 16) *ERIN-ka* <sup>GIŠ<sup>GIGIR</sup>MEŠ</sup> *-ka* 17) *a-ya-ka-ma-a* 18)  
*aš-bu ul it-ta-ka-ma-a* 19) *aš-bu i-ia-nu-un-ma-a* 20) *i-na e-je-re-et* <sup>LÚ</sup> <sup>KUR</sup>  
 21) *URU<sup>DIDLI.ĪI.A</sup>-ka* 22) *BĀD<sup>MEŠ</sup>* 23) *lî-î-mi* 24) *ERIN<sup>MEŠ</sup>* *ù* <sup>GIŠ<sup>GIGIR</sup>MEŠ</sup> 25)  
*i-na ŠĀ šu-ri-ib* 26) *pa-ni* <sup>LÚ</sup> <sup>KUR</sup> *dū-gu<sub>5</sub>-ul* 27) *ù dū-nu-na-ta* 28) *dan-niš*

1) Thus (says) the king: 2) "To Ammurapi, 3) king of Ugarit, 4) say:

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 5) "Hail to you. 6) The gods for good 7) shall protect you.

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 8) Concerning what you wrote, that ships of the enemy 9-10) were seen in the  
 midst of the sea. 11) And if really 12-13) ships were seen, 14) so reinforce  
 yourself strongly. And now, 15) you, 16) your warriors, your chariots, 17)  
 where are they ? 18) Are they not with you 19) at all ? 20) In the West an  
 enemy 21) shall attack you. 22-23) Surround your towns with walls ! 24) War-  
 riors and chariots 25) you must bring in. 26) Wait for the enemy 27) and re-  
 inforce yourself 28) strongly".

This text belongs to the very end of the existence of Ugarit, to the time  
 of the invasions of the "Sea peoples" who destroyed the kingdom. And Ammurapi  
 is known to have been Ugarit's last king<sup>29</sup>. This happened in the early years  
 of XII cent. B.C.E.<sup>30</sup>.

What is important for us is the fact that the king of Alašia (on Cyprus),  
 who seems from the text that follows to stand higher in the system of the hier-  
 archy of rulers, advises the king of Ugarit how to act in the event of an ene-  
 my from the sea.

U 5 22

1) *un-ma* <sup>I</sup> *E-šu-wa-ra* 2) <sup>LÚ</sup> <sup>MAŠKIM.GAL</sup> <sup>31</sup> *ša* <sup>KUR</sup> *A-la-ši-a* 3) *a-na LUGAL* <sup>KUR</sup> *U-ga-*  
*ri-it* 4) *qī-bi-ma*

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 5) *a-na ku-a-ša KUR-ti-ka<sub>4</sub>-ma* 6) *lu-ú šul-mu*  
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7) *aš-šum a-ba-ti MEŠ<sup>32</sup> ša LÚ KÚR<sup>ME</sup>* 8) *al-lu-ti DUMU<sup>ME</sup> KÚR-ti-ka<sub>4</sub>* 9) *GIŠ<sup>ME</sup> MA<sup>ME</sup>-ka<sub>4</sub>-ma* 10) *a-ba-ta an-ni-ta* 11) *i-ti-ep-šu-ni* 12) *ù i-te-ek-ka an-nu-ti* 13) *DUMU<sup>MEŠ</sup> KÚR-ti-ka<sub>4</sub> i-[te]-ep-šu*  
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14) *ù it-ti-ya-ma* 15) *lu la te-ez-em-me*  
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16) *ù i-na-an-na* 17) 20 *GIŠ<sup>ME</sup> MA<sup>ME</sup> ša LÚ KÚR<sup>ME</sup>* 18) *i-na HUR.SAG<sup>ME</sup> la-a-ma* 19) *id-du-u-ni-me* 20) *ù la it-ta-za-za* 21) *ù ha-mut-ta* 22) *it-ta-mu-uš-me* 23) *ù a-šar i-ta-šu-ù<sup>33</sup>* 24) *la ni-i-de-me* 25) *aš-šum ud-dā-i-ka<sub>4</sub>* 26) *aš-šum na-ša-ri-ka<sub>4</sub>* 27) *ù al-tap-ra-ku* 28) *lu<sup>u</sup> ti-i-de<sub>4</sub>-me*

1) Thus (says) Ešuwara the Great *Sākinu* 2) of Alašia: 3) "To the king of Ugarit 4) say:

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 5-6) "Hail to you and your country.  
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7) Concerning the circumstances that the enemies 8) to these sons of your country 9) (and to) your ships 10) these things 11) have done. 12) He make a surprise attack 13) on the sons of your country<sup>34</sup>.  
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14) But you must not 15) scold me<sup>35</sup>.  
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16) And behold, 17) the 20 ships which the enemies did not yet 18-19) land in the mountains<sup>36</sup>, and they have no stand (position). 21) And they departed in a haste. 23) And where they have departed for 24) we do not know<sup>37</sup>. 25) For your knowledge, 26) for your defense, 27) I write to you. 28) You may know it".

Here again we shall not concern ourselves with the historical questions, but we can suppose that the events followed one another quickly. After the letter of the king of Alašia concerning the defense of Ugarit, the Great *Sākinu*,

Ešuwara, wrote almost immediately to the king of Ugarit. The letters differ only in one respect. Ešuwara gives a more detailed picture of the activities of the enemies of Ugarit at the time, when the king of Alašia hands over to the king of Ugarit general information and calls him to strengthen his defenses.

In all of the given cases, we are dealing here with letters written to Ugarit from Amurru, Karkemish and Alašia. In other words, we have here a feature common to these four kingdoms and we can suppose that it was common for the whole region of northern Syria, northern Mesopotamia and Cyprus, at least in the XIII century. We see here a very interesting feature. The king expresses to the neighboring king (sometimes also the vassal king) his will or advice. Subsequently, the vizier - i.e. the *sākīnu*, or "son of the king" - detailizes the will of his monarch and brings it to the state of execution. As we have seen from the Karkemish letters, the stage of execution could also be hierarchic and comprise as many as three ranks.

The possibility is not to be excluded that such features will also emerge from the forthcoming publication of a large number of letters whose photographs are given in U 7<sup>38</sup>.

Certainly we see a certain difference here between the will of the sovereign - i.e. the person invested with royal power - and the executor who is an official, a man of the king. It is also interesting to note that the *sākīnu*, i. e. the *sākīn māti* ("sākīnu of the country"), was the highest official of the kingdom but was never a member of the royal family. At least this was the case in Ugarit<sup>39</sup>.

The archives of Ugarit furnish us for the first time with evidence of how the royal will and the decisions of the king were implemented by executive official. So far as I know, there are no other sources pertaining to the ancient world that provide us with information of this kind.

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- 1) F.M. Fales, *An Akkadian Letter from Ugarit between sākinus*: OA, 23 (1984), 163-166, tav. XVII.
- 2) Concerning *sākinu*, hebr. *sōkēn* and the reading of the akkadogram *šā-kin* as *sākinu*, cf. E. Lipiński, *SKN et SGN dans le sémitique occidental du Nord*: UF, 5 (1973), 191-207; also G. Buccellati, *Due note sui testi accadici di Ugarit: MAŠKIM-sākinu*: OA, 2 (1963), 223-28 and M. Heltzer, *The Internal Organization of the Kingdom of Ugarit*, Wiesbaden 1982, 141-52, which includes the previous literature.
- 3) Amurru and Ugarit both have the preceding determinative KUR "land".
- 4) Fales, 1984: *lū-u šul-mu a-na mu[h-b]i DUMU-ia* "May it be well as concerns my son". All reconstructions of the text follow the edition of Fales, who reached them by a comparison of both tablets.
- 5) Fales, 1984, without *li-im* "thousand".
- 6) Fales, 1984, only a small syntactic difference, but full coincidence in meaning.
- 7) Fales, 1984, line 9: *aššum* "concerning" (the *parušḫa*).
- 8) Fales, 1984, line 12: *a-na ŠU-ka* "at your disposal", lit. "in your hand".
- 9) Fales, 1984 only 13) *šu-bi-la* "brought".
- 10) The last sentence, repeating the information about the payment of the prices lacking in Fales, 1984.
- 11) Fales, 1984, 165.
- 12) = *pātāni-ka*.
- 13) = *È-asū*. We have here a Hittite name.
- 14) Ibiranu reigned in the II half of the XIII cent. B.C.E.
- 15) I.e., the frontiers of the kingdom of Ugarit.
- 16) Concerning the "son of the king", which sometimes appears only as a title of an official, cf. G. Brin, *The Title bn hmlk and its Parallels. The Significance and Evolution of an Official Title*: AION, 19 (1969), 433-465. More recently, with corrections of its incorrect claims, A.F. Rainey, *The Prince and the Pauper*: UF, 7 (1975), 427-432; F. Imparati, "Signori" e "figli di re": Or, 44 (1975), 80-95; F. Pecchioli-Daddi, *Mestieri, professioni e dignità nell'Anatolia hittita*, Roma 1982, 503-513.
- 17) AHw, 192a, 2-3) "Königshof", "Palast als Behörde". Possibly, Aliḫešni is speaking here about the royal letter which was given above.
- 18) Possibly a formula concerning the non-alteration of the borders.
- 19) Concerning the dates, cf. H. Klengel, *Geschichte Syriens im 2. Jahrtausend*

v. u. Z., II, Berlin 1969, 389-396.

- 20) Reconstruction of J. Nougayrol. The remaining space of the line leads us to more signs here.
- 21) A relatively rare form of addressing a more lowly person on behalf of one of higher rank.
- 22) "The news".
- 23) I.e. to the *sākinu* of Ugarit.
- 24) AHW, 829b, 1).
- 25) The *mākisu* "customs official" was an official under the *sākinu*, cf. M. Heltzer, *Internal Organization of Ugarit*, 146 and 152.
- 26) Doubtful, as is the reconstruction.
- 27) We have to correct here our former interpretation of this text (*Internal Organization of Ugarit*, 146, for "son" is the term with which Ebina'e addressed the *sākinu*. At the same time this is also not a simple communication of news by Aliḫešni, as it is supposed by Klengel, *Geschichte Syriens*, II, 394.
- 28) P.R. Berger, *Die Alašia-Briefe, Ugaritica 5, Noug. NRN 22-24: UF*, 1 (1969), 217-221; cf. also A.F. Rainey, *More Gleanings from Ugarit: IOS*, 5 (1975), 22-23.
- 29) H.Klengel, *Geschichte Syriens*, II, 398-407.
- 30) Recently, concerning all of these events, see E.A. Lehmann, *Die ŠIKALĀJŪ, ein neues Zeugnis zu den "Seevölker"-Heerfahrten in späten 13 Jh.v.Chr. (RS.34.129): UF*, 11 (1979), 481-494; E.A. Lehmann, *Zum Auftreten von "Seevölker"-Gruppen in östlichen Mittelmeerraum - eine Zwischenbilanz: Griech enland, die Agäis und die Levante während der "Dark Ages"*, ÖAWPH 418, Wien 1983, 79-92.
- 31) Cf. note 3.
- 32) Here and further in this text, ME instead of MEŠ.
- 33) The correct reading of the word according to Rainey (note 28).
- 34) The translation of the passage according to Berger, *Die Alašia-Briefe*, 217-218.
- 35) P.R.Berger, *op. cit.*, 218: "Aber bei mir jedoch führe keine Klage !"; he also points out: *zēmu* "sich beschweren" Hebr. *z m*; A.F. Rainey, *More Gleanings*, 23: Akk. *zentū* "to be angry". In our opinion we have here a Canaanite word identical with Hebrew *z m* "to scold, to curse".
- 36) P.R.Berger, *op. cit.*, 218; but A.F. Rainey, *Gleanings*, 23: "Now the 20 ships of the enemy have not yet returned from the islands (? ḪUR. ṚSAG<sup>7</sup>MEŠ), and

they have not come to the shore(?)".

37) According to A.F. Rainey, *Gleanings*, 23.

38) C.F.A. Schaeffer-Forrer, *Épaves d'une bibliothèque d'Ugarit*: U 7 (1978), 399-474.

39) M. Heltzer, *Internal Organization*, 149.