Who is a Canaanite? A Review of the Textual Evidence

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In view of recent attempts to vaporize the Canaanites and to erase the land of Canaan from the map—principally in N. P. Lemche's 1991 volume, The Canaanites and their Land: The Traditions of the Canaanites—a review of the crucial evidence is in order. The present study will concentrate on documents from the Late Bronze Age in particular, with some allusions to evidence from other periods, to provide an understanding of the texts within the semantic framework in which they were composed—the simple, straightforward meaning of the passages as intended by the ancient scribes.

THE PHANTOM CANAANITES

Lemche (1991: 50) contends that the ancient Egyptian and Levantine scribes of the second millennium B.C.E. used the terms “Canaan” and “Canaanite” in “imprecise ways.” He believes that they have no understanding of any clear-cut social, political, or geographical meaning for such terms. On the other hand, those of us who do see definite significance to such terms are accused of reading our own understanding of nationalism and ethnicity into the ancient documents (Lemche 1991: 50–51). Instead, Lemche himself cites anthropological studies pertaining to an African group that modern ethnographers had denoted by a term current not among the members of the group, but rather among their neighboring groups (Lemche 1991: 51 with references). One could compare this with the use of the term “Indians” applied by the first Europeans to the natives they encountered in the Western Hemisphere. But in fact, his entire argument is irrelevant to the interpretation of the ancient documents. Elsewhere, Lemche says “all Egyptian references to ‘the Canaan’ are rather imprecise and leave many problems to be solved” (Lemche 1991: 48–49). What he might have said was that the sporadic references to Canaan in Egyptian documents do not provide sufficient information to define the exact geographical limits of Canaan. The haphazard nature of the materials available in no way prejudices the assumption that the Egyptians did have a good grasp of their geography. A glance at the famous “poetical Stela” of Thutmose III (Sethe 1909: 611; Wilson 1955: 373–75) should convince any objective reader that the scribes knew their world and had it organized. The same is true of that Pharaoh’s long topographical lists (Sethe 1909: 779–94). The Onomasticon of Amenemope has many geographical entities (Gardiner 1947) and there can be no doubt that their inclusion in that “encyclopedic” list reflects a knowledge of geography. It should be obvious that the everyday administration of the Egyptian-controlled territories, with its profound concern with revenues, would have required an intimate knowledge of the social and geopolitical entities. It is purely a matter of chance that many inscriptive contexts simply take for granted that the writer and the recipient or user of the text knew the geographical and “ethnic” entities mentioned. There was no need for them to go into detailed definitions. The route descriptions in Papyrus Anastasi I (I, lines 18, 2–25, 2) demonstrate beyond all possible doubt that geographical knowledge was nurtured in Egyptian scribal (and thus administrative) circles. It is only Lemche’s comprehension of the evidence from the second millennium sources that is imprecise. The following discussion of the specific texts will demonstrate that they do indeed give an accurate picture of a geographical entity known to the ancients as Canaan and a people known to them and to themselves as Canaanites. Lemche’s most
Fig. 1. Canaan in relation to the surrounding areas.
glaring mistake is his misunderstanding of the passage in *EA* 151:49–67 (see discussion below) and that failure has distorted all of his other judgment calls.

**ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL DOCUMENTS**

The linguistic designations for people defined as Canaanites are often *nisbe* forms, i.e., the grammatical constructions utilizing one of the Semitic suffixes to convert a noun into an adjective, used in antiquity mainly to create appellatives pertaining to family, tribal, national, or other social entities. Another method is to designate someone as “man of Canaan,” or “son of Canaan.” The practice is widespread in the Semitic languages and the semantic function was well understood and agreed upon by the ancient scribes. It was their way of defining people and groups in relation to themselves and to one another. Modern anthropological theories of ethnicity are irrelevant to the everyday practice of these scribes.

**Alalakh**

From the Hurro-Akkadian administrative documents found in Stratum IV at Alalakh, there are some people listed with the appellative “man of Canaan” or “son of Canaan.” One of these is

1Bá-a-la-ia  LU3bá-i-ru / LÚ URU Ki-in-a-ni7KI “Baalaya, a bá-iru soldier, a man of the city [sic!] of Canaan” (AT 48:4–5; Wiseman 1953: 46, pl. 13), who, along with his wife and son, took a loan from a local citizen of Alalakh. If Baalaya should fail to repay the interest on time, he would be imprisoned. The use of URU “city” instead of KUR “country” is an unusual error but probably derives from the frequent use of KUR URU for names of countries (Labat 1932: 14–15; Huehnergard 1989: 84). One may compare the use of KUR URU A-mūr-ri in a legal document from Carchemish (e.g., RS 1957.1:9; Fisher 1972: 11–12).

Another Canaanite at Alalakh is:

1Šar-ni-ia DUMU KUR Ki-in4-a-ni7KI “Šarniya, a son of the land of Canaan” (AT 181:9; Wiseman 1953: 71; 1954: 11), who appears on a list of people defined by the first line caption as ERIN.MEŠ LÚ.SA.GAZ EN GIŠ.TUKUL.MEŠ = šābū ʿapīrū bēl kakki “Soldiers, ʿapīrū, owners of weapons,” or “ʿApīru-soldiers, armed” (AT 181:1).

All but two of the men on the list are defined by their town or country of origin. One of the other men happens to be from URU Am-mi-ia, a city located in Canaan by the Idrimi inscription (cf. discussion below). Patronyms, i.e., the name of the father, are not applied to such persons because they do not have standing. Incidentally, Lemche is still laboring under the misapprehension that ʿapīrū can be equated with “Hebrews” (Lemche 1991: 27). There is nothing in the 800 years of documentation (from the Tigris to the Nile) to support such an assumption (Loretz 1984; Rainey 1987; 1995). All the linguistic, historical, geographical, and sociological evidence is against it.

A third reference to a Canaanite, *la(?)-am-bá-li* (AT 154:24), is on a fragment of an unpublished tablet on which 33 names have been preserved. Other people on the same list are designated by their patronyms, e.g., Ḥa-na-ag-gi DUMU A-na-ni “Ianaggi son of Anana” (AT 154:15). On the edge of the tablet, a colophon reads [DUB]? ša EN GIŠ.GIGIR “[tablet] of owners of chariots.”

This is an appropriate place to cite the autobiography of Idrimi. Although it is a “literary” inscription and not an administrative text, it has some crucial geographical and sociological testimony. The passage in question begins with the hero’s leaving his place of exile in Emar:


“I took my horse and my chariot and groom and went away; I crossed over the desert and entered in among the Sutu warriors. I spent the night with them in my covered chariot; the next day I went forth and came to the land of Canaan. The town of Ammiya is located in the land of Canaan. In the town of Ammiya there dwelt people of the city of Ḥalab, people of the land of Mugiš, people of the land of Nīi, and people of the land of Ama’e. They recognized me, that I was the son of their lord and they gathered to me. Thus, I said, ‘I have become chief,
I am appointed'; I dwell seven years among the 'ap-iru warriors.' (Steile of Idrimi, lines 13–28; Smith 1949; pls. 9–10; Greenstein and Marcus 1976: 64, 67, 73–78).

The hero starts out from Emar on the Euphrates (Tell Meskene) and crosses the Syrian desert where he spends a night among the Sutian warriors, pastoralist tribesmen well documented in cuneiform sources. He then leaves them and goes to a geographical entity called "the land of Canaan." That entity enjoys the same status as other countries in the inscription, e.g., "the land of Mugiš", "the land of Niṣî," and "the land of Ama'ê." Instead of the predeterminative KUR, all of them have the term māt "land of . . ." spelled syllabically; but they also have the ideographic post determinative KI. A town, Ammiya, is also mentioned as the venue for seven years of living among the 'apirâ, viz. the political outcasts, like himself, who had fled for refuge from various kingdoms in northern Syria. This happens to be the same Ammiya mentioned in the Rib-Haddî correspondence from el-Amûrâ (e.g., EA 73:27; 74:25). Its location is surely at modern-day Amûn in the hills behind Byblos, although occasionally it seems to be confused with Ambi/Ampi, modern-day Anfeh on the coast. Regardless, Ammiya is located in a country called Canaan.

People from that same country came to Alalah and were registered by the scribes there. Since they were foreigners, they were recorded not according to patrimony but according to nationality. The scribes undoubtedly asked the foreigners where they came from and each one replied that he was from Canaan. Thus we have clear documentary evidence that people called Canaanites knew they were Canaanites and were recognized as such by the scribes of another country. The citizens ('sons' DUMU.MEŠ) of other countries, such as Ḥalab, Mugiš, Niṣî, and Ama'ê, were similarly recognized. It also follows that those northern Syrian countries were not Canaanite, nor were they part of Canaan. The geographical location of Mugiš (the kingdom of which Alalah was the capital on the northern Orontes, i.e., on the border between Cilicia and Syria) is crucial in this discussion (cf. regarding Danuna below).

Ugarit

A Canaanite also appears on an administrative list from Ugarit (Rainey 1963a). The text in question is as follows (KTU 4.96 = RS 11.840):

(01) bdl . gtl . bn . tbsn
Merchants of Gath-Bun-
*Tubbî-senni

(02) bn . mnyy . šrty
Bin *Mînyîyu, from
"Wool Town"

(03) aryn . adddy
šAliyanni, an Ashdodite

(04) agptr
Agaptarri

(05) šbrî . mlky
Šu-Bratu, from Mulukku

(06) n'mn . msry
Na'manu, an Egyptian

(07) y'l . kn'ny
Ya'llû, a Canaanite

(08) gdn . bn . umy
Guddanu son of Ummayu

(09) kn'm . šrty
Kun-ammu, from "Wool
Town"

(10) abrpu . ubr'y
Emma-ru' from Ubûr'a

(11) b . gtl . bn . tît
From Gath-Bin *Taliṭī

Note that several people on the list are designated by gentilics. Some of them are from places in the kingdom of Ugarit, viz. "sons of Wool Town" (lines 2, 9), mlky "of Mulukku" (line 5), ubr'y "of Um-ûr'a" (line 10). One person was of such high rank in Ugarit that he needed no epithet, Agaptarri (cf. Schaeffer 1978: 154). But we also find an Ashdodite and an Egyptian on the same list. There can be no doubt that the national affiliation of each of those people is with a recognized political and geographical entity, one a city-state on the Palestinian coast and the other a major power in the eastern Mediterranean. It is noteworthy that the Egyptian has a Semitic name and the Ashdodite has a name that could be either Hurrian or Semitic. The Canaanite’s name is obviously Semitic (Hurrian does not have ‘ayin). Those personal names are quite likely indicative of the native tongue of the person. Semites living in Egypt and fully participating in its social life are well known; it is also a commonplace that a considerable increment in the population of Canaan during the Late Bronze Age was of Hurrian origin. From lists of jars of wine issued to various people more national or gentilic designations can be cited:

KTU 4.230 = UT 1089 = RS 16.341

(03) ḫd . ẖtr[y]m
A jar for the Assyrians

(07) ḫd . mšrym
A jar for the Egyptians

KTU 4.149 = UT 1090 = RS 15.039

(04) ḫd ẖty
A jar for the Hittite

The most important point here is that, just as in Alalah, a Canaanite is recorded like an Ashdodite, an Assyrian, a Hittite, or an Egyptian.

The Canaanite’s status as a foreigner is further demonstrated by the legal relationship of the “sons of Ugarit” vis-à-vis the “sons of Canaan” in the fol-

Ugaritica V, No. 36 (= RS.20.182 A + B)

A (01) [a-na... LUGAL KUR.KUR.MEŠ mi-š-r[i... ]
(02) [........] ? LUGAL qar-ra-[di... ]
(03) [.....] EN-[i]gab-bi KUR-KUR.MEŠ[EN-ia qibi-ma]
(04) [um-ma... ÎR-[k]a a-na GİR.MEŠ EN-[i]a 2-šá 7-sá am-gur]
(05) [a-na muh-ši-ka lu šu]l-[mu’a]-[na]1 ¡É! ¡HÁ1 [ka... ]

B (01) [........] i[a [........]
(02) [........] is-t]u qa-ti 1A[N... ]
(03) [......] bi-e-li aš-š[u]m-di-ni (?) ša iš-sa-baš[-šu (?)]
(05) [.........] DUMU.MEŠ KUR Ú-ga-ri-it
(06) [.........] a-k][i]-il DUMU.MEŠ
(07) [......] úš][al-li-mu 1 GUN 5 me-at KÚ.BABBAR
(08) [.....] it-tri DUMU.MEŠ
(09) [.....] MEŠ ša DUMU.MEŠ KUR Ú-ga-ri-it
(10) [.........] 1B[l]rš-ša-nu- wa a-kán-na
(11) [.....] i[na na-ha-ši-ia-mi KÚ.BABBAR.MEŠ ri- ša-ti... ]
(12) [.........] ¡i-laq-qè-mi
(13) [.........] ¡a-ma is-ša-bat-an-ni ¡Bu [rs-ša-nu-wa]
(14) [.........] ¡a a-na-ku-ma ú-šal-lim [šu]
(15) [.........] a-n[an]a DUMU.MEŠ KUR Ú-ša-[r]-i[i]
(16) [.........] n[a]-ši[.......... ]
(17) [.........] ¡ša-bat... ]
(18) [.........] x [......... ]

A (01) [To... King of the land]ds of Egyp[t...... ]
(02) [........] the warrior king [..... ]
(03) [.........] lor]d of all the lands, [my lord, speak:]

(04) [thus (said) ...] your [servant:] at the feet of my lord [two times forward and seven times backward, I have fallen.]
(05) [With you may all be w[ell; with] your] palace [...... ]

B (01) [......... ] my [......... ]
(02) [......... ] my [......... ]
(03) [......... fro]m the hand of [......... ]
(04) [.........] my lord con[cerning the litigation] in which he is engaged [...... ]
(05) [.........] the sons of Ugarit
(06) [.........] the overs]eer of the sons of Canaan
(07) [......] has] paid him one talent and 500 (shekels of) silver[... ]
(08) [.........] with the sons of Canaan
(09) [.........] of the sons of Ugarit has pai[d]
(10) [.........] B[urbanuwa. Thus] he said [as follows]
(11) [.........] up]on my return, the rest of the silver [......... ]
(12) [.........] he will take.
(13) [.........] he had seized me, Bu[rbanuwa]
(14) [......... ] and it is I who have paid [it]
(15) [.........] t]o the sons of Ugari[t]
(16) [......... ] lus[......... ]
(17) [.........] has] seized [......... ]
(18) [.........] x [......... ]

As Nougayrol (1968: 111) had deduced, this appears to be a report to the king of Egypt (probably Rames- ses II or Merneptah) about an indemnity payment due to the “sons” (= citizens) of Canaan from the “sons” (citizens) of Ugarit. It is reminiscent of other texts from Ugarit about indemnities paid after foreign merchants were slain in Ugarit (RS 17.42; Nougayrol 1956: 171–72; RS 17.145; Nougayrol 1956: 172–73; Rainey 1962: 185–86; 1963b: 320). The important point for the current discussion is that the “sons of Ugarit” and the “sons of Canaan” are both recognized legal bodies who can be parties to an international lawsuit. There can be no doubt that in the prevailing world of diplomatic relations between nations and societies, the “sons of Canaan” were a real entity and as such, they were thoroughly distinct from the “sons of Ugarit.”
The entire scholarly myth that the people of Ugarit are Canaanites and that the kingdom of Ugarit is a part of a geographical entity known as Canaan is false. Further proofs will be adduced below.

Egypt

Although the lists of prisoners in the inscriptions of Amenhotep II are actually “ornamentation,” they are formulated according to the standard format of such real lists of personnel taken as booty during a military campaign. The list of booty from that Pharaoh’s first campaign as sole ruler (Rainey 1973) contains a reference to 640 Ki-na-4-nu “640 Canaanites” (Helck 1955: 1305, line 7; 1314, line 11) but no other national or ethnic groups are listed with them, only social groups, viz. ma-r-ya-na “chariot warriors (i.e., noblemen),” their wives, children, and concubines. Suggestions that these Canaanites were merchants or the like (Mazar [Maisler] 1946: 9–11; 1986: 220) on the basis of comparison with biblical passages such as Isa 23:8; Ezek 16:29; 17:4 are projections of an Iron Age usage (because the Phoenicians, Canaanites, were masters of the sea trade), which does not fit this 15th-century inscription. Rather, the Ki-na-4-nu are paralleled by the ḫa-rú “Hurrians,” and the Na-ga-su “Nuğassians” (Helck 1955: 1309, line 2) in another booty list. The Hurrians in these texts are residents of the southern Levant, not the Hurrian empire of Mitanni; and the Nuğassians (cuneiform Nuḥaššē; in Egyptian usually Nu-ga-sa; Gardiner 1947: 168*-71*; Ugaritic nṯt, KTU 2.45:21), residents of central Syria. Actually, the Canaanites in the first list correspond to the Hurrians in the second. A further parallel between the land of Canaan and the land of Ḫurru will be discussed below.

EPISTOLARY EVIDENCE

The report of a legal dispute cited above can be supplemented by a number of significant passages from the Amarna letters. The real-life situation of those texts is such that no doubt remains that the correspondents recognized a definite geographical entity and that they knew that there were kings living in Canaan. It was also clear to them that other areas (see below) were not in Canaan.

Mitanni

The “diplomatic passport” sent by the king of Mitanni in the hand of his ambassador (Artzi 1973) is clear proof that the ruler of the Hurrian kingdom in northern Mesopotamia and Syria recognized an entity called “the land of Canaan” as the area occupied by rulers who are subject to the king of Egypt. The entire text is given here to emphasize its official nature:

a-na LUGAL.MEŠ ša KUR Ki-na-4-d' [-? ] / ĪR. MEŠ ŠEŠ-ia um-na ma LUGAL-[ma] / a-na-um-ma 1Ak-ia LU.DUMUKIN-ia / a-na UGU šar KUR Mi-is-ri-i / ŠEŠ-ia / a-na du-ul-lu-ḫi a-na kal-le-e / al-ia-pär-šu ma-am-ma / lu-û la i-na-ah-ḫi-ša-id / na-ah-ri-ši i-na / KUR Mi-is-ri-i / šu-ri-ba ú a-na ŠU / 1\(\frac{1}{2}\)hal-[sp]-uh-li ša KUR Mi-is-ri-i / id-[na]-1ni(-?) ḥa-mut-ta li-il-1ši-ki 1 / û is-sû mi-im-ma / i-na muḫ-ḫi-šu lu-û la ib-bā-aš-ši

“To the kings of the land of Canaan, the servants of my brother, thus [speaks] the king: Now Akiya, my ambassador, have I sent to speed posthaste to the king of Egypt. Let no one detain him. Provide him with safe entry to Egypt and hand him over to the fortress commander of Egypt. Let him go on quickly and may there not be any pitfall in his way” (EA 30; Moran 1992: 100).

Babylon

Two occurrences in the correspondence with Babylon confirm that the rulers there recognized Canaan as a specific geographical entity. Nothing could be more concrete than the following description of the attack suffered by Babylonian business agents in what is later known as the Valley of Beth-netophah:

i-na-an-na DAM.GAR.MEŠ-ia-4-a / ša it-ti ŠEŠ-ia-4-bu / te-ḫa-ak-ša-ša-un-lu / i-na KUR Ki-na-4-d' [-? ] / a-na ši-ma-ti it-ta-ak-lu-ša / ul-tu ŠEŠ-ia-4-bu / a-na mu-ah-ḫi / ĪR. MEŠ-ia-in-ti-qu / i-na URU-KI ḫi-is-na-tu-ša ša KUR KI-na-4-d' [-? ] / 1Šu-um-ad-da DUMU 1Ba-lum-me-e / 1Šu-ta-at-na DUMU 1Ša-ru-ta-ti-ša / ša URU Ak-ka / LÜ-MEŠ-šu-nu ki is-pu-ru LU.DAM.GAR-MEŠ-ia / -id-du-ša / ŠKU,1,1BABBAR,1,1šu-nu it-tab-lu

“Now, my business agents who had departed with Aḫu-ṭabu were detained in Canaan on business; after Aḫu-ṭabu went on to my brother, in the town of Hannathon of Canaan, Šum-ada, the son of Ba’lumme, and Satatna(!) son of Surat[ ] of Acco, having sent their men, attacked my merchants and took away their silver” (EA 8:13–21; cf. Moran 1992: 16).

Further on, the king of Babylon says:

[KUR K]i-na-4-d' [-? ] KUR-ka ú LUGAL,1,MEŠ-ša ĪR-ka] ‘The land of C]anan is your land and
He is not talking in this letter about some vague, undefined political and geographical entity. He is being very concrete!

With reference to his ancestor, Kurigalzu, the king of Babylon, says in another letter:

\[ i-na \text{Ku-ri-gal-zu a-bi-ia ki-na-}^2 a_n y\text{a-a} \text{b-b} \text{a-}\text{s-shu-nu} / \text{a-na mu-wu-hi-}^4 \text{a il}_5 \text{a-pru-}\text{n-um-ma-a} \text{a-na qa-an-}\text{n-i KUR / } r^4 \text{u}^3 \text{-a}\text{-am-ma i na-ba-al-ki-ta-am-ma / [it]-}\text{i-ka i ni-}^2 \text{s-a-ki-in} \]

“\[ \text{In the time of Kurigalzu, my ancestor, all the Canaanites wrote here to him saying: ‘C[om]e to the border of the country so we can revolt and we can become allied [with] you’ (EA 9:19–21; Moran 1992: 18–19, nn. 4–5; CAD Q:81b; N-1:17a).} \]

Although this event is otherwise undocumented, there is no reason to doubt its authenticity. The land from which these Canaanites wrote had a border (\textit{qannu}) which could be reached by the Babylonian king. The latter’s reply to the Canaanites was:

\[ \text{šim-ma it-ti LUGAL ša Mi-\text{i-s-r-i-i a-}^3 \text{hi-ia ta-\text{at-ta-ak-ra-ma / it-ti ša-ni-im-ma ta-\text{at-ta-aš-ka-na / a-na-ku ul al-la-ka-am-ma ul a-}^3 \text{ba-at-ku-nu-}^3 \text{s-hi}} \]

“If you have become hostile with the king of Egypt, my brother, (and) you have become allied with another, will I not come, will I not plunder you?” (EA 9:26–28; cf. Moran 1992: 18).

Obviously, the king of Babylon is concerned with a specific body of political leaders who were recognized on the international scene as subjects of the king of Egypt. They are called “Canaanites.”

\[ \text{Egypt} \]

In the long list of objects provided for a Babylonian princess, some item, the name of which is broken, was defined as \text{ṣa KUR Ki-na-}^2 \text{a-}^2, “of Canaan” (EA 14:II, 26). A messenger sent by Pharaoh to Intaruta, ruler of Achshaph, was \text{Iha-an-ni DUMU 1Ma-i-\text{-re-i-ia / LÚ.PA.TÚR ša LUGAL i-na KUR Ki-na-}^2 \text{a-}^2. “Hanni, the son of Maireya, the stable overseer of the king in Canaan” (EA 367:7–8). His title, \text{akil tarbasi}, corresponds to Egyptian \text{hry lhv} (Helck 1971: 438). Hanni is not assigned to Achshaph (\textit{contra} Redford 1990: 13) but sent there to announce the coming of the king with the army.

He is also known to have been sent to Amurru (EA 161:11, 17, 27, 31; 162:56, 63). His title demonstrates that Egyptians could bear ranks and designations in the administration which have definite associations with Canaan, i.e., Canaan was a valid term used in the bureaucracy.

Finally, there is a statement by Pharaoh to Aziru, ruler of Amurru:


The letter in question includes a demand that Aziru report to Egypt. But it also alludes to Pharaoh’s coming to Canaan. Aziru was in Amurru and it follows that at that time Amurru was still officially part of Canaan (“Canaan in its entirety”). All parties to the correspondence understood these terms; there was nothing vague about the meaning of Canaan. Canaan was still the southern Levant up to at least the plain on both sides of the Nahr el-Kebir, the modern border of Lebanon.

\[ \text{Alashia} \]

There is one passage in a letter from Alashia which seems to contain the expression \text{lpil-ḫa-ša ki-na-}^2 “the province of Canaan” (EA 36:15). Moran (1992: 110, n. 1 from p. 109) questions the validity of this reading on the grounds of syllabary and cites Na’am an (1975: 2*, n. 19) for historical arguments against the use of \text{piḥātu “province”} in this period. The writing with the WA sign for the value /lpil/ is indeed rare in peripheral Akkadian but precisely in a similar Alashia letter one finds the expression: \text{i-na ṭup-ṭi šu-ku-un-} i-na “put in a letter” (EA 37:17). There is no doubt, therefore, that the value /lpil/ was known in Alashia for the WA sign. Furthermore, Moran admits that the reading is admissible and my own collation of the tablet on January 27, 1980, confirmed that it is the most reasonable one. Moran (1992: 110, n. 1) has noted other affinities in the writing of numerals between EA 36 and EA 37. As for “historical” considerations, the use of \text{piḥātu} is not typical of peripheral texts but it is used in Middle Babylonian (see Aro 1957: 77 for references) and the Alashia letters are in many ways
independent of the usual peripheral traditions. Furthermore, the reference to SE.BAR = ṣetetu “grain” in the line above (EA 36:14) is a typical Middle Babylonian ideographic spelling (Aro 1957: 115) although it is absent from all the other EA letters. The spelling ki-na-῾i matches that in the Egyptian list of gifts (EA 14:II, 26); the scribe evidently saw no need to append a predeterminative KUR = māt “land of” because he has written “the [p]rovince of . . . .” In spite of the broken context, the reference may very well be to “grain [. . . from] the [p]rovince of Canaan” in exchange for the copper that is the subject of several of the broken lines in the text. Therefore, the skepticism of Naʿaman (1975: 2*, n. 19), Moran (1992), Redford (1990: 35), and Lemche (1991: 29–30) is unjustified. The Alashian scribe knows of a “province of Canaan.”

Lebanese Coast

The remaining references in the EA texts are from Byblos, Beirut, and Tyre. The first statement by Rib-Haddi of Byblos is:

pa-na-nu da-ga-li-ma / ữu[LÜ] KUR Mi-iṣ-ri ῖ in-ga-
<na-ab-tu / ữuLUGAL1.ΜΕŠ KUR Ki-na-῾a2-ni ῖ-tu
pa-n[i-šu]

“Formerly, seeing a man of Egypt, then the kings of Canaan fled before him” (EA 109:44–46).

The “kings of Canaan” here must be compared with the kings of Canaan in the Mitannian passport discussed above. It is certainly a reference to a specific group of people recognized as having a clearly defined status. They are kings ruling city-states in Canaan. The writer and the recipient of this letter knew the extent of the sphere where kings of Canaan were to be found. This is also corroborated by the reference to “all the Canaanites” mentioned by the king of Babylon in EA 9 (cf. above).

Rib-Haddi’s next reference is to the “lands (states) of Canaan”; the passage is evidently an apodosis for which the protasis is broken:

῾u ia-nu KUR.ΜΕŠ Ki-na-῾a2-ni a-na LUGAL “then the lands of Canaan will not belong to the king” (EA 131:61; cf. Moran 1992: 213).

The last Rib-Haddi passage, in a letter written from Beirut, speaks of the “towns of Canaan” and reminds one of the previous text:

šu-ma qa-al LUGAL a-na URU.KI / gāb-bi
DIDLIURU.KI KUR Ki-na-῾a2-ni ia-nu a-῾a1 ša-῾u

“If the king keeps silent concerning the city, none of the towns of Canaan will be his” (EA 137:75–76).

It was seen with regard to Pharaoh’s statement in EA 162 that Amurrus was at that time reckoned as part of Canaan. The same geographic situation pertains to a fragmentary text dealing with the activities of Aziru, the infamous political leader of Amurrus; allusion is made to the expeditionary fleet, probably that which had been sent to deal with Aziru’s father.

KUR Ki(῾a2-)na1-[῾a2]-ni ]

“A ship of the expeditionary force should n[ot go]
forth from the land of Canaan” (EA 110:48–49;
Naʿaman 1975: 1*, n. 14; Moran 1992: 185, n. 2;
Lambdin 1957: 76, n. 17).

Therefore, Lemche’s attempt to discredit Rib-Haddi’s references to Canaan as “rather diffuse and vague” (Lemche 1991: 39) by citing one of his references to Amurrus (EA 82:47–50) only shows that Lemche is ignorant of the ancient geography and the political situation being described in the Rib-Haddi letters.

The most controversial passages about Canaan are those from Tyre. The contexts are crucial to the understanding of both entries. The first has to do with events taking place in Canaan itself:


“The one who has attacked the king’s territory is the king of Sidon; the king of Hazor has abandoned his house and has taken up a position with the ῾apiru; may the king be apprised concerning those evil ‘trooper(s)’ [since] he has taken over the king’s land for the ῾apiru man; may the king ask his commissioner who knows the land of Canaan” (EA 148:39–47; Greenberg 1955: 41; contrast Moran 1992: 235).

Abimilk, ruler of Tyre, reports that the king of Sidon has acted in a hostile manner towards Tyre (EA 148:23–26) and thus comprises a threat to “the king’s territory.” Likewise, the king of Hazor has abandoned his palace and is consorting with the ῾apiru; evidently he had gone up to the mountains of upper Galilee, south of the Litany, where the ῾apiru renegades comprised a threat to Tyre and where the king of Hazor was helping them to occupy territory (at Tyre’s expense) that was subject to Pharaoh’s con-
trol. The underlying presumption is probably that the king of Hazor is working in collusion with the king of Sidon and also with Aziru of Amurru. For further information and clarification, Abimilki refers Pharaoh to “his commissioner who knows the land of Canaan.” In other words, the commissioner can furnish more details about the actions of the king of Sidon and of Hazor who are in Canaan. The inference is thoroughly concrete and has to do with specific geography, rulers, and population elements.

The second passage has been the kingpin for most arguments on behalf of a “greater Canaan” in the Amarna period, and Lemche’s misinterpretation of it is at the very foundation of his entire argument.

LUGAL be-li-ia iš-ta-pár a-na ia-[iš]-i / ša ta-aš-me iš-tu KUR Ki-na-2-na / a šu-pur a-na ia-ši / šar KUR Da-nu-na BA.UG / ụ ša-ar-ra ŠEŠ-šu ạ-a na EGIR-šu ụ pa-aš-ha-at / KUR-šu ụ E šar URU Uga-ri-ik | i ku-wul i-sa-ṣu mi-ši-1l | ụ ši ụ mi-ši-1l šu ia-nu / ụ LÜ.MEŠ ERIN KUR Ḥa-at-ti ia-nu / I ẹ-ta-ga-ma pa-wu-ri / URU QI-id-ši ụ / 1 A-zi-ra nu-kür-tu₄ / i-ti | ụ Bir₃i₃a-wa-zi / nu-kür-tu₄ / a-ta-mur Ḥa-ula-li / ụ Zi-im-re-da / e-nya-ma iš-hu-ur / GIŠ.MA.MEŠ ERIN iš-tu URUDIDLI. ḤA 1 Ya-zi ra / a-na muh-ḫi-ia

“The king, my lord, has written to me: “That which you have heard from within Canaan, send to me; the king of the land of Danuna is dead and his brother became king afterwards and his land is at peace; fire destroyed the palace of the king of Ugarit; it destroyed half of it and half of it; but the Hittite army is not there; Etakkama, the ruler of Keddesh and Aziru are at war—it is with Biryawaza that they are at war; I have experienced the brutalities of Zimredda when he assembled the ships (and) troops from the cities of Aziru against me” (EA 151:49–58 proved that Danuna and Ugarit were part of Canaan? It was because of the expression istsu Kina’ni “from Canaan” in line 50. They assume that the events reported on by Abimilki all have to be “from Canaan.” Our contention has always been that it was Abimilki who was in Canaan and that his reports came from Canaan to Pharaoh after being received by Abimilki from various places, some of them outside Canaan. The proof for our contention is that the passage in question is an example of a standard stock expression used by the scribes when requesting or demanding information. The stock expression used in Pharaoh’s letters is cited by the local ruler and then the detailed reply is given, e.g.,

LUGAL be-li-ia / i-na ṣup-pi iš-ta-pár a-na ia-ši / mi-nya-um-mi ta-aš-me ụ šu-pur / a-na LUGAL

“The king, my lord, wrote to me in a letter, ‘Whatever you have heard, then write to the king’” (EA 149:54–57).

This is the simplest form. The earliest attested example, which happens to include an adverbial complement, is from a Taanach letter:

ụ a-wa-taṣ 'mi₃i₃+t₄-ma / ša ti-iš-mé / iš-tu aš-ra-nu-um / šu-up-ra-am it-iti-[a]

“and whatever word that you have heard from there, send (in writing) to me” (TT 1:15–18; Rainey 1977: 41, 43–44).

The expression istsu ašrānum “from there” confirms that the inquirer is expecting the recipient to report the information that has come to him there where he is. No outside, specific source of information from some other place is designated. The expression istsu ašrānum certainly pertains to Sidon as the place where the information has been gathered in the following passage from Zimredda, ruler of Sidon (and rival of Abimilki of Tyre):

ụ i-ny-ma taq-bu / a-na KUR ḤA Amur-ri a-wa-at-mi / ti-iš-teg-mé iš-tu aš-ra-nu₄ 'mi₃i₃+t₄ / tü-te-ra-am a-na ia-ati

“And when you say concerning the lands of Amurru, ‘The word that you have been hearing from there, send to me’” (EA 145:23–26; Mangano 1990: 176–77; Moran 1987: 376, n. 6; 1992: 232 n. 6).

The marker of direct speech, enclitic -mi, attached to awāmi, shows that the actual quote from Pharaoh’s letter begins there, the -mi as a marker of direct speech functions in these letters according to the rules of standard Akkadian (though it has other functions, as well). The phrase, istsu ašrānum, refers to
Sidon, not to Amurru. Comparison with the previous passage from Taanach points in the same direction.

The widespread use of the stock expression under discussion is further confirmed by its appearance in Ugaritic garb:

w. mnm / rgm . d. tšm' / ţmt . w. št / b. spr. EMY

"And whatever word that you hear there, then put (it) in a letter to me" (KIU 2:10:16–19; Rainey 1971: 160–61).

The adverb, ţmt "there" is a translation of īštu ašrānum and serves the same function in the Ugaritic passage as the latter in the Akkadian texts.

Therefore, Lemche's contention that the proposition īštu "is not normally used to indicate where something has been heard, or exists" (Lemche 1991: 31, n. 22) is clearly wrong. In view of the parallels cited here, my original rendering of ša tašme īštu mát Kina'na / u šupur ana īšši really is the only one possible. Abimilki at Tyre is in Canaan, and from his listening post there he is commanded to report whatever information has come to him.

Concerning the evidence from Ugarit itself that neither the state nor the people were Canaanite according to their definition and that of their neighbors (and also the king of Egypt), nothing more need be added. EA 151:49–51 in no way contradicts the evidence from Ugarit. But as for Danuna, a further word is in order. Many scholars assumed that even at this early date, Danuna is to be located in Cilicia, mainly because of the eighth century B.C.E. references to the dnnym people in the Karatepe inscription (cf. Bron 1979: 169–72; Astour 1965a: 1–112). The references during the reign of Ramesses III associate the Da-nu-na / Da-nu with the Philistines and other "sea peoples" (Gardiner 1947, I: 125*–27*). Astour felt that the Egyptian evidence pointed to the Aegean region for this "sea people" (Astour 1965a: 7–17). So he posited two countries/people called Danuna.

This was based, first, on his misinterpretation of EA 151:49–51, but reinforced by his equation of KUR Da-nu-na in EA 151:52 with KUR Tu-na-na-at in EA 53:43 and with KUR URU Du-na-na-pa, a town listed in Hittite religious texts among countries in northern Syria (Klengel 1970: 93–94). Since Astour's study, the name has also appeared in hieroglyphic syllabic form in the important inscription from the reign of Amenhotep III, viz. Tu-na-na-pa (AN 12 in Edel 1966: 5). Moran (1992: 125, 392) accepts the correction proposed by Forrer (1938) to read KUR Tu-na-na-ab(!) in EA 53:43. All these contexts point to a site in northern Syria (Klengel 1970: 94).

On the other hand, a confirmation that Danuna is in Cilicia has come from a fragment in the Ramesside correspondence found at Boghaz-köi, ancient Hattusa, the capital of the Hittite empire. The fragmentary epistle is part of the correspondence concerning Urhi-Teshub, the young king whom Hattusilis III had deposed (Text 499/d = Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi XXVIII 25; No. 31 in Edel 1994, vols. 1–2). Edel reconstructs the pertinent lines as follows:

[... il-[te]-mu-ú a-ma-[te]MESH a-n-ni ti ša [tāš-pu-ra a-na ia-ši UGU a-ma-ta ša UR-hi-šIKUR] / [ša šu-ú il-lik]-a a-na KUR Da-nu-ú a-nu um-m[a]-a ša šu-ú i-na KUR Ḥal-ba-a u-KUR Qī-in-sā] / [il-i-ka ia-nu-um-m[a]-a a-na UGU-hi Ḥa-za-an-ri[MESH ša KUR.KUR.MES a-n-ni-ta-an il-qū-ú-šu]

"[they] heard [these] words which you wrote to me concerning the matter of Urhi-Teshub who went himself] to the land of Danuna, not [so?] Who went himself to the land of Aleppo and/or the land of Qedes, not sō? [They brought him] to the city rulers [of these lands]" (No. 31:6–8; Edel 1994, I: 84–85).


If we grant that Abimilki is reporting an event that took place in Danuna in Cilicia, Danuna is north of Mugiš (the kingdom of Alalah) and of Ugarit, both of which are definitely not in Canaan according to the clear testimony of documents discovered at the respective sites. Therefore, it should be obvious to all scholars trained in the philology of ancient texts and the geography of the second millennium B.C.E. that Danuna in Cilicia is also not in Canaan. It also
seems highly questionable that there should be any connection between the Danunians (in any context) and the Hellenic Danaoi.

Unfortunately, the popular theory that the Danunians settled north of the Philistines around the seaport of Joppa does not hold up to scrutiny (Yadin 1968: 17–21; Stager 1989: 63–64). This popular creation is based on the presumed identity of the Danunians with the biblical Danites; after all, both names have \(d\) and \(n\). The “Danite inheritance” (in Josh 19:40–48) is in the vicinity of Joppa. The Danites are said to “abide in ships” in the Song of Deborah (Judg 5:17). Samson, a Danite, figures in adventures that have numerous features resembling Homeric heroic literature (best elucidated by Gordon 1955; 1965). Among the decisive points that refute such a theory one may note the following:

(1) There is not one scrap of evidence to indicate that the Danunians occupied Joppa between the Philistines to the south and the Sekels to the north at Dor; all of Yadin’s examples from Greek mythology about heroes of the Danaoi, such as Perseus (Yadin 1968: 18–20), are irrelevant. (2) Biblical tradition is unanimous that the Danites never occupied their inheritance as described in Joshua (Josh 19:47; Judg 1:34). (3) Joppa was not a part of the Danite inheritance anyway (Josh 19:46 LXX; Rainey 1987–89: 63). (4) All of Samson’s exploits take place along or south of the Sorek Valley. Finally, (5) the reference to Dan’s abiding in ships must be interpreted in the context of the Song of Deborah. Tribes who shrank back from joining the conflict with Sisera were being denounced; Dan is one of them. It only makes sense if Dan is already located at the foot of Mt. Herman, i.e., close enough to the Galilee to have taken sides with the other Israelite tribes. However, when the Danites seized Laish from the unsuspecting Sidonians living there, they inherited the role of those Sidonians who were living in the Valley of Mizpah. As part of the agricultural hinterland that furnished foodstuffs for the industrially engaged population of Phoenicia (maritime industries), the land of Mizpah was doubtless in constant contact with Tyre and Sidon. The ancient route from Banias to Tyre (the real “Way of the Sea” [Isa 8:24 MT = 9:1 Eng; Rainey 1981: 149] doubtless served as a route by which agricultural produce could be delivered to those Phoenician seaports. The Danites who took over this market opportunity were thus exposed to the shipping activities on the coast and some of them may even have “signed on” for a tour of sea duty. In any case, this makes more sense of the scathing allusion in the Song of Deborah. The Danites were too comfortably linked with the Phoenician maritime economy to risk a conflict with a powerful Canaanite ruler!

Therefore, Abimilki is most likely reporting to Pharaoh some news that has reached him from quite far away, from Cilicia! The idea that there was an entity known as “greater Canaan” extending along the entire eastern Mediterranean coast is a scholarly ghost that should be laid to rest.

**SOME LATER SOURCES**

It remains to touch upon certain later references to Canaan, particularly in the Hebrew Bible. Considerable doubt has been cast on the authenticity of the border description for Canaan in Num 34:1–12 (Noth 1968: 248–50). One can readily admit that the duplicate passages in Ezek 47:15–20 and 48:1–2 indicate that this border tradition existed in written form in the early Exilic period and that in the Pentateuch it is part of the Priestly source material. However, this does not mean that it is an invention of the Exilic or even of the late Monarchic period. Geographically, the location of the points along the northern segment of this border as identified by Mazar [Maisler] (1986: 189–202) are still valid (cf. Aharoni 1979: 72–73). Although Mazar noted the border so defined in these passages as reflecting the situation after the treaty between Ramesses II and Hittuis III (Aharoni agrees), he recognized that the geopolitical situation during the Late Iron Age, when Hamath was capital of a territorial state, also conformed to the same tradition. Note for example, that the Bronze Age Labô is called Lebo-Hamath, i.e., Lebo, which is the southern extent of the Hamath kingdom. That reality is recognized in later biblical passages, e.g., 2 Kgs 14:25 concerning the eighth century B.C.E. Therefore, it is highly likely that the border description in question reflects a geopolitical reality that prevailed long after the Egyptian and Hittite rule in the Levant had disappeared. The imprint of events in the Late Bronze Age was still felt in spite of various changes in population and regime. Looking at central Syria and Lebanon in accordance with the long view of things, this is not at all improbable.

What is more interesting for the Late Bronze Age is that the division of the Levant in accordance with the border in Num 34:7–11 happens to correspond to two cultural/political features. One of these is that, with the exception of Qidṣu (Qedes), which led the anti-Egyptian coalition, the towns said to have been
defeated at the battle of Megiddo are all south of that border. Furthermore, in the dialectical division of the Amarna tablets, those towns whose scribes use the West Semitized jargon are from towns south of that border (Rainey 1996, vol. 1). To the north, places like Qatna, Qidšu (Qedesh) and Tunip, and to some degree the letters of Aziru of Amurr, are in the Hurro-Akkadian dialect common to cities within the Mitannian (and Hittite) states of northern Syria (Moran 1992: xix–xxii; Rainey 1982: 336–37; Izre’el 1991; 369–79). Such a cultural distinction indicates separate schools of scribes. The “Canaanite” language of the Amarna period can be studied grammatically and syntactically through the Akkadian of the letters from Canaan (Rainey 1996). West Semitic elements are rare and sporadic at best in the texts to the north. It can hardly be coincidental that this dialectical situation conforms to the division of the Levant into northern and southern areas as divided by the border in Num 34:7–11. That the southern part is designated as Canaan by biblical tradition conforms to the evidence cited from the cuneiform documents discussed above.

This is not to argue that Num 34:7–11 is a late copy of a border document that accompanied the treaty between Ramesses II and Hattusilis III, although it is highly probable that such a document existed as was the case with other Hittite treaties (e.g., pertaining to Ugarit and Mugiš). However, the political and sociological situation that prevailed in the 13th century B.C.E. provided the matrix for subsequent developments in the Iron Age, such as the settling down process of the Arameans; and the memory of Canaan as an entity was transmitted to subsequent generations. The self-consciousness of being Canaanite and of living in Canaan was not lost on some segments of the Iron Age population. It was even kept alive, especially among the residents of the Phoenician cities, down into the Hellenistic period.

Weippert (1980: 354) has assembled the numismatic evidence pertaining to the name of Beirut on its coins, 'l'dkφ 'bskn̄n, “Laodicea which is in Canaan” along with a Greek monogram, either ΛΑΩΩΙΚΕΛΩ (Φ or BH(ΡΟΤΟΣ). Other coins have ΙΒΥΡΤ “of Beirut” also with the monogram ΛΑΦ which Weippert rightly surmises should represent ΛΑΩΩΙΚΕΛΩ ἐν Φοινίκῃ, “Laodicea which is in Phoenicia.” Besides the equation of Phoenicia with Canaan, the most important fact is that the ΛΑΩΩΙΚΕΛΩ, of Beirut, is identified as being in Canaan, thus distinguishing it from ΛΑΩΩΙΚΕΛΩ ἐπὶ τῇ Θαλάττῃ, “Laodicea on the sea” (Strabo XVI, 2:9) which is modern day Latikia just 11 km south of Ras Shamra! This latter is thus not in Canaan! So the Hellenistic geographical concept of Canaan, paralleled by Phoenicia, seems to correspond to the same conception going back to the Late Bronze Age sources. It should not be surprising then, that the concept of Canaan in the 13th century B.C.E. is reflected in a Hebrew source from the late Iron Age. It is even reflected in the coins from Beirut! The Canaan in Num 34:7–11 is a real geographical concept that originally goes back to the Late Bronze Age and probably earlier; it is not the invention of some Judaean scribe, regardless of the date of the passage (on a definition of the northern border of Canaan in biblical passages one may refer to Aha-roni et al. 1993: Maps 51 [p. 47], 165 [p. 126]).

CONCLUSIONS

All the texts discussed above reflect a realistic concept of geography. Canaan as a geographic and social entity was a reality to the various authors. There is nothing “diffuse and vague” (Lemche 1991: 39) about these passages. That a specific Late Bronze Age border description is missing along with detailed bureaucratic references to the province is no proof that such did not exist. The geopolitical and cultural evidence of the Late Bronze epigraphic witnesses strongly supports the assumption that the biblically described border was a reality in the Late Bronze Age. One may quote with profit the truism so aptly cited by Röllig (1983: 82), “the absence of evidence is no evidence of absence.”

Furthermore, there is no attempt here to read modern ideas of ethnicity into the texts. The ancient scribes have been allowed to speak within the context of their own times and their own understanding. On the contrary, Lemche’s appeal to modern anthropological studies of peoples in Africa or Asia is no valid substitute for a truly professional analysis of the original documents under discussion.

NOTE

The contents of this article were first presented in 1993 as one of the English lectures given by the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University, to members of the diplomatic corps and other English speaking constituents. It was later presented at the Midwest ASOR meeting in February, 1996, at Lacrosse, Ill. The positive feedback from
that session is deeply appreciated and hereby acknowledged. Finally, the article was presented at the annual ASOR meeting in New Orleans, November 1996.

Meanwhile, a similar article by N. Na‘aman, “The Canaanites and their Land, a Rejoinder,” Ugarit-Forschungen 26 (1994), 397–418, came to my attention. Na‘aman takes basically the same position as that in my essay here but he ignores EA 136:15 and EA 151:49–67 which are the key passages in demonstrating the case against Lemche.

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