

Reconsidering the Late Bronze Age Decline of Southern Canaan: A Perspective from the Amarna Letters^{*}

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晚期青铜时代，南迦南的多个遗址都衰落了。那么，谁应该为南迦南的衰落承担责任呢？一些学者认为埃及是导致南迦南衰落甚至毁灭的罪魁祸首，但有些学者对此观点表示怀疑。鉴于埃及在南迦南建立了帝国统治，笔者拟采用沃勒斯坦的核心—边缘理论和韦伯的分层理论中声誉—权力范式来对此进行分析。通过阅读阿马尔那书信发现，在大国之间的书信中，各国国王关注的焦点为礼物交换，而在埃及与附属国的书信中，埃及国王与其附属国的统治者关注的焦点为南迦南的稳定和城市国家的安全。某些学者认为，埃及在南迦南建立起了稳定而系统的税收制度，因此，在书信中没有谈论经济事务（如上贡）必要。笔者对埃及与其南迦南附属国的经济关系进行了研究，对附属国上贡给埃及的各种物品的价值进行了估算，在此基础上，进一步比较了埃及的附属国的经济负担与赫梯的附属国阿穆鲁、乌加里特的经济负担，发现乌加里特一国的经济负担要比南迦南四国的经济负担都重。因此，笔者认为埃及的盘剥导致南迦南衰落的观点是站不住脚的。那么，是什么导致南迦南的衰落呢？笔者认为，在晚期青铜时

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代, 西亚与埃及融合成一个较大的体系, 埃及能够与西亚大国进行直接贸易往来, 南迦南丧失了之前扮演的埃及与西亚的贸易中介的地位, 这最终导致了南迦南的衰落。

1 Introduction

1.1 Problems

In the LB Age, Canaan was brought into the Egyptian Empire. Although challenged by the Hittites, Egypt remained firmly in control of southern Canaan. The decline in southern Canaan was attested at sites during the LB Age by the number and size of cities, by population density, by unfortified cities and a low level of material culture (as shown by buildings, pottery and evidence of art). Many scholars, such as Albright, Gonen, Na'aman and Mazar have asserted that Egypt was responsible for the decline and even devastation in southern Canaan.^① However, there is a dissenting voice against this leading and prevailing view, such as Redford, Shea, Hoffmeier and Ahituv.^②

① Albright said that “the wealth and the culture of southern Canaan decreased rather steadily under foreign misrule, until it reached an extremely low ebb in the thirteenth century,” see Albright (1949), p. 101; Gonen reconsidered the urban situation of Canaan in the LB Period and arrived at a conclusion that Canaan in the LB Period “never recovered from the heavy blow it received from Egypt at the end of the Middle Bronze period...the lack of city walls in the great majority of settlements only corroborates the picture of the break-up of urban life”, see Gonen (1984), p. 70; Na'aman further expressed that “the sums paid by several south Palestine vassals are quite remarkable” and “Egyptian burden was not light at all”, see Na'aman (1981), pp. 183 – 184, (2005), pp. 226 – 27; Mazar considered the Egyptian domination as an element of decline of the Southern Canaan, “The economic exploitation of the country by the Egyptians for over three hundred years.... brought a gradual deterioration in the Canaanite culture,” see Mazar (1992), p. 237.

② Redford has claimed that the early 18th Dynasty expeditions, being limited to only one or two pharaohs, could not have been responsible for so many destructions of MB sites in Palestine, see Redford (1979), p. 23; Shea has asserted that “there is very little inscriptional evidence from Egypt to indicate that the Egyptians had anything to do with these destructions”, see Shea (1979), pp. 3 – 4; Hoffmeier questioned the grounds for connecting all of the MB cities' destructions to the Egyptian military because “the Egyptian textual evidence simply does not account for the widespread destruction of MB IIC Palestine” and the ceramic and stratigraphic evidence could not prove this conclusion, see Hoffmeier (1989), pp. 181 – 193.

These conflicting points of view call for a reconsideration of southern Canaan's position in the Egyptian Empire and rediscussing what caused the decline and downfall of southern Canaan in the LB Age. The Amarna letters represent the most important document to explore political and economic affairs in Canaan in the LB Age. Concentration here will be put on correspondence between the Egyptian court and the city-states in southern Canaan, examining the topics in the letters, investigating the economic aspects reflected in the letters, evaluating the political and economic roles of southern Canaan in the Egyptian Empire, and ultimately discussing the reason for Canaan's decline in the LB Age.

1.2 Methodology

To understand the position of Canaan in the Amarna Age, the Core-Periphery model is very useful. According to Wallerstein's *The Modern World-System*, on the basis of the international division of labor, the world was divided into core countries, semi-periphery countries and periphery countries. Wallerstein's three assumptions—core dominance in the peripheries; inherently asymmetrical exchange between regions; and trade as the prime mover of social development—could not always be proven to take place in pre-modern societies. Chase-Dunn and Hall revised Wallerstein's theory and defined two types of core-periphery relationships: first, core-periphery differentiation “in which societies at different levels of complexity and population density are in interaction with each other within the same world-system,” second, core-periphery hierarchy “which will be understood to mean the existence of political, economic or ideological domination between different societies within the same world-system.”^①

In addition, prestige and power models are also useful for exploring the position of Canaan. According to Weber, property, power and prestige are the three dimensions of social stratification. That is, people who are wealthy tend also to be powerful and appear prestigious to others. Property, especially luxuries and foreign items can enhance the prestige of a given class, and prestige can make the power

^① Chase-Dunn and Hall (1991), p. 19.

of a given class stable and solid. In international society, states in the core region seek the special goods that are not available in domestic territory to improve prestige and further power. Liverani suggests a pair of terms “prestige and interest” to explore the international relations in the LB Age. ^①Here I borrow the terms “prestige and power” from the Weberian Stratification which are different from those of Liverani.

2 Topics in the Letters between Egypt and the Vassal States in Canaan

2.1 Topics

The principal topics of the correspondence between Egypt and the vassal city-states in Western Asia concentrate on four aspects: (1) some princes of city-states accusing other princes of invading their territory; (2) some rulers of city-states exculpating themselves from a charge of invasion by the rulers of other city-states and commissioners residing in Canaan; (3) some lesser kings of city-states expressing their loyalty to their suzerain and observing the various commands of Pharaoh and his deputies overseeing them in Canaan; (4) so called “mayors” of Canaan preparing for the coming of the Egyptian expedition according to the command of Pharaoh.

On the one hand, the local princes, whether the accuser or the accused, complained that their city-states were unjustly treated and even invaded by other city-states; on the other hand, the mayors, whether the accuser or the accused, strove to express their loyalty to Egypt. But, no matter how the local rulers tried to persuade Pharaoh to believe what they said, Pharaoh seldom intervened in the disputes and clashes between the local princes in Canaan. In a letter, the elders of Tunip complained that Pharaoh didn't reply to their request for 20 years. (EA 59: 43 - 46) Since only three letters were sent by Pharaoh to the local princes and Pharaoh seemed not to be concerned with the request from the vassal city-states,

^① Liverani (1990), pp. 24 - 26.

some scholars claimed that Egypt practiced the doctrine of the balance of power and divide-and-rule.

In the letters, one of the orders that Pharaoh gave to the local princes was “guard your city.” However, many rulers in Canaan sent their letters to the Egyptian court saying that they would have enough power unless a large force was dispatched by Pharaoh to their cities. It seems that political affairs were the common concern of the Egyptian Pharaoh and his vassal city-states in Canaan. Some letters are reports per se about political intelligence, and the vassal rulers repeated that “whatever I hear I write to [my] lord” (EA 116: 1 – 16), “whatsoever [I have heard] and I have told (to the king)” (EA 259: 6 – 8), “I am your loyal servant, and whatever I know or have heard I write to the king, my lord” (EA 105: 18 – 25). EA 151 is a typical intelligence report: “The king, my lord, wrote to me, Write to me what you have heard in Canaan. The king of Danuna died; his brother became king after his death, and his land is at peace. Fire destroyed the palace at Ugarit; (rather), it destroyed half of it and so half of it has disappeared. There are not Hittite troops about. Etakkama, the prince of Qidšu, and Aziru are at war; the war is with Biryawaza.” (EA 151: 49 – 63) From this point of view, Egypt was thirsty for knowledge about the political situation in Canaan.

2.2 Comparative Material

In the Amarna letters, there are 44 letters exchange between great powers. As far as the topics are concerned, the correspondence between Egypt and its vassals are different from those between Egypt and foreign powers. “In fact the two topics which chiefly concern the rulers in these letters are marital negotiations and the exchange of presents, mostly reflecting the desire for Egyptian gold.”^①

An excellent relationship of friendship and brotherhood among the great kings

^① Giles (1997), p. 75.

means a flux of “goods” and “raw materials.”^① Tushratta, king of Mitanni, endlessly expressed his love (*rāmu/ra’āmu*) to the Egyptian Pharaoh. Obviously, in the letter sent by Mitanni, more love mean more gifts. Tushratta connected brotherhood and love with gifts. Tushratta expressed that “Now, in keeping with our constant and mutual love, you had made it ten times greater than the love shown my father.” (EA 19: 12 – 13) At the same time he said that “I will give ten times more than what my brother asked for” (EA 19: 69) and “I also asked my brother for much gold.” (EA 19: 34) The king of Assyria frankly said: “If your purpose is graciously of friendship, send me much gold.” (EA 16: 32 – 33) Like Tushratta, the king of Babylonia connected friendship with gifts, “That neighboring kings might hear it said: ‘The gold is much. Among the kings there are brotherhood, amity, peace, and good relations.’” (EA 11: r. 19 – 23)

Of course, some political aspects were mentioned in the letters between great powers. Mitanni tried to establish a military alliance with Egypt against the Hittites. (EA 24, § 26) The Babylonian king persuaded Egypt not to accept Assyria into its great power club. (EA 9: 31 – 35) The intention of intervention was exposed in the Babylonian king’s words: “If you love me, they will conduct no business whatsoever. And send them off to me empty-handed” (EA 9: 32 – 35) To get an equal chance for gift-exchange, Assyria like Mitanni sought the great power’s position, “I am the equal of the king of xanigalbat, but you sent me...of gold, and it is not enough for the pay of my messengers on the journey to and back.” (EA 16: 26 – 31) So, in the diplomacy among great powers, economic matters are in first place and political matters in second place, and the latter served the former.

2.3 Discussion

Why were economic matters neglected in the letters? A leading explanation claimed that it was not necessary to mention taxes in the letters because Canaan

① Singer (2005), p. 200. In the paper, Singer explained the word “love” as a diplomatic term with socio-political and economical connotations: as an expression of brotherhood between great kings, an express of loyalty of a vassal to the king and as rate of gift-exchange between kings of equal rank.

was brought into a tax system transplanted from the Nile. Redford is one of the scholars holding this view. He claimed that the tax system imposed on the Asiatic vassals during the New Kingdom was also transplanted from the Nile, and the rulers of the Asiatic vassals, like their Egyptian counterparts, had to hand in their *inw* (benevolences, literally “that which is brought”) every new year’s day and *b3kw* (the products of their labor), and the corvée was imposed upon the natives. ^①

But, the traditional and universal idea is that the political system in Canaan was not changed greatly in essence; only the kings of city-states were reduced to mayors “*ḥazanuti*”, the equivalent of the Egyptian term *ḥ3ty-c*. To some extent, the complete Canaanite administrative structure of each of its city-states remained intact, and the Canaanite city-states and Canaanite practices were largely left to their own devices and ignored by the Egyptians. Of course, commissioners and soldiers from Egypt were dispatched to reside in strategic cities to oversee the rulers of city-states in Canaan.

It is hard to imagine that political autonomy functioned without economic autonomy. So, the argument that economic topics was rarely mentioned and even neglected in the letters—being attributing to a speculation that the Canaanite economy was brought into Egyptian economic orbit is not an acceptable or adequate explanation, so some other explanation for this question should therefore be sought.

3 Economic Aspects in the Letters between Egypt and the Vassal States in Canaan

Ascompared with political affairs which are frequently mentioned in the letters, economic matters were not dealt with very often. Only 28 letters of Egypt-vassals’ letters (total 305) apparently mentioned economic articles—this is less than 9% of the total letters.

^① Redford (1990), p. 40; (1992), pp. 193, 209.

3.1 Gifts and Tributes

3.1.1 Gifts and Tributes Paid by the Vassals

In some letters, there is mention of some goods paid by the vassal states to Egyptian court. According to Na'aman, *biltu* (“tribute”) and *tāmartu* or *qīštu* (“gift”) occurred in several letters, and “the tribute in the Amarna letters is hopelessly confused with the gifts, and there is no way to distinguish between them.”^① The articles paid by the local rulers in Canaan are listed as follows: silver, copper and bronze, glass, wood, weapon (chariot, ship, bow, quiver, spear and cover), cattle, horse and its harness, food (sheep, goat, bird and other food) and personnel as well as other unknown articles.

Silver (*kaspum*)

EA 99: the ruler of Ammiya was ordered to send 20 shekels;

EA 100: the elders of Irqata sent to the Pharaoh [silver];

EA 270: Milkilu of Gezer was requested to pay 2000 shekels;

EA 287: ‘Abdi-Heba of Jerusalem sent 5000 shekels (silver);

EA 309: a southern Palestine ruler sent 100 shekels;

EA 313: 1400 shekels were paid for compensating the loss of Egyptian merchants and the commissioner of Pharaoh.

In fact, the greatest sum “5000” of silver is still open to debate.^② In EA 270, Milkilu, a prince of Gezer, denounced Egyptian commissioner Yanhamu’s unjust treatment. However, Milkilu, who established an alliance with Lab’ayu in Shechem and Tagi in Carmel and then formed a new coalition of malcontents such as Shuwardat of the Hebron area, Tagi in Carmel, the men of Ashkelon, Gath and Lachish, was an ambitious ruler and anti-Egyptian activist. So, what Milkilu said in the letter sent to Pharaoh is open to doubt. Apparently, he made a false

① Na’aman (1981), p. 174; (2005), p. 218.

② Knutson did not restore the sign after the sign 5000. Albright restored the traces as KÛ. BABBAR sign, but Moran said that “the copy is against K [Û. BABBAR]”. see Moran (1992), p. 330, n. 17.

countercharge to cover his guilt. So, the sum total of silver is $1520 + x$ shekels, of which 1500 is from southern Canaan.

Copper (*siparru*) and bronze (*erê*)

EA 77: Rib-Ḥadda of Byblos was ordered to send copper and *sinnu* of copper;

EA 151: Abi-Milku of Tyre sent 5 talents of copper to Pharaoh.

In the Amarna letters, there are three mentions of copper or bronze paid to Egypt. No copper was delivered from southern Canaan. In EA 77, Rib-Ḥadda, a local prince of Byblos, was requested to send copper or *sinnu* of copper to Egypt, and he refused on the pretext of a lack of copper. Naʿaman thought that the unspecified amount of bronze was taken from Byblos,^① but in the context the bronze was plundered by the enemies rather than taken by Egypt.

Thus, the total of copper is 5 talents. During the Ramesside Period, the silver-copper ratio was about 1: 60 – 100.^② According to Ugarit texts, the price of copper in Ugarit was 200 – 235 shekels of copper (bronze) for one shekel of silver.^③ The value of copper is 77 – 90 shekels of silver at the price in Ugarit.

Glass (*ehlipakku or mekku*)

EA 148: Abi-Milku of Tyre delivered 100 (units or pieces);

EA 235 + 327: Sitatna of Akka sent 50 (units or pieces);

EA 314: Pu-Baʿlu of Yurša sent x (units or pieces);

EA 323: Yidya of Ašqaluna sent 30 (units or pieces);

EA 331: Šipti-Baal of Lakiša sent x (units or pieces) .

Regretfully, the unit of raw glass was not indicated in the letters, so “it is not clear whether it designates the shekel unit or not.”^④ The raw glass amounts to

① Naʿaman (1981), p. 175; (2005), p. 219.

② Janssen (1975), p. 442. The ratio of silver to copper is still 1: 100 in the reign of Ramesses II, but by the year 7 of Ramesses IX it became 1: 60 which lasted early Ptolemaic Period.

③ Heltzer (1976), p. 204; (1977), p. 204.

④ Naʿaman (1981), p. 175; (2005), p. 219.

180 + x units or pieces, of which 80 + x is from southern Canaan.

Wood

EA 126: Rid-Hadda of Byblos mentioned that Pharaoh wrote a letter requesting boxwood; but he didn't send it giving the excuse that Aziru was blocking the road from Byblos to Salhi and Ugarit;

EA 151: Abi-Milku of Tyre sent an unknown article made of wood to Egypt;

EA 160: Aziru of Amurru sent 8 ships loaded with boxwood log, large logs of...;

EA 161: Aziru of Amurru promised to send logs of boxwood.

Three rulers, all from Phoenicia, sent wood to Egypt. No lumber was paid by the vassal states in southern Canaan. In fact, the wood amounts to 8 ships and x logs of wood.

In Ugarit, pine (*šmn*) was priced at a dozen pieces for 1 shekel of silver, a log of juniper (*dprn*) was priced at 1 shekel, *ṣm* tree was priced at 6 shekels per unit.^① At Deir el-Medina in Ramesside Period, a *dṣḥ*-broad planks made of *ṣṣ*-wood cost one tenth of a deben of copper, namely 0.017 shekels of silver according to the ratio of silver to copper 1: 60. The price of a *dṣḥ*-planks made of *ṣṣ*-wood was 2 kit of silver per cubit length, namely 2 shekels of silver.^② According to Davies, *ṣṣ*-wood should be identified as cedar other than pine or fir.^③

In spite of this, the value of wood in the letters was not specified.

Weapons

EA 99: the ruler of Ammiya was ordered to send chariots and horses;

EA 100: the elders of Irqata sent to Pharaoh 15 chariots and 30 horses;

EA 151: Abi-Milku of Tyre sent a whip;

EA 266: Tagi of Gintikirmil sent harnesses for a pair of horses, and a bow, a quiver, a spear.

In addition to 2 harnesses, 1 bow, 1 quiver and 1 spear from southern Ca-

① Stieglitz (1979), p. 17.

② Leprohon (2004), p. 171.

③ Davies (1995), p. 152.

naan, 15 + x chariots and 30 + x horses were delivered by the local princes in northern Canaan. Tagi, an ally and Milkilu's father-in-law, was also an ambitious mayor expanding his territory; his intension in sending the goods to Egypt was to appease Pharaoh.

In Ugarit texts, the price of a mare was 35 shekels of silver,^① but the price of a horse sent by Ishhi-Adad of Qatna to Isme-Dagan was 300 shekels of silver.^② So, the value of horses amounts to 1035 + x shekels of silver in terms of the price of a mare in Ugarit.

In Papyrus Anatasi III, a chariot was valued at 5 debens of silver,^③ i. e. , 50 shekels. Thus, the value of chariots amounts to 750 + x shekels of silver in terms of the price in Egypt.

In Deir el-Medina, a spear was priced at 3 debens of copper,^④ i. e. 0.5 shekels of silver according to the ratio of silver to copper 1 : 60.

Cattle

EA 242: Biridiya of Megidda sent 30 oxen that Pharaoh requested;

EA 301: Šubandu of an unknown city-state sent 500 oxen.

It is worth noting that an unknown city-state in southern Palestine delivered such a large number of oxen on one occasion. The price of a cow or an ox in Ugarit and Kassite Babylonia was respectively 10 – 17 and 2 – 30 shekels of silver,^⑤ and an ox in Egypt at the time of the 18th and 19th Dynasties was valued at about a half deben (= 5 shekels) of silver.^⑥ According to the code of Hammurabi, the price of an ox was no more than 20 shekels of silver.^⑦

So, the oxen paid to Egypt cost 5300 – 9010 shekels of silver according to the price in Ugarit.

① Stieglitz (1979), p. 16.

② Sasson (1966), pp. 164 – 165.

③ Janssen (1975), p. 329; Drews (1993), p. 110.

④ Janssen (1975), pp. 325 – 326.

⑤ Heltzer (1976), p. 208; (1977), p. 208; Stieglitz (1979), p. 16.

⑥ Janssen (1975), p. 176; Baer (1962), p. 26.

⑦ Roth (1997), p. 127.

Personnel

EA 64: ‘Abdi-Ashtarti of Qiltu sent 10 women;

EA 99: the ruler of Ammiya was ordered to send 20 first-class slaves;

EA 156: Aziru of Amurru sent his two sons as attendants;

EA 187: Shatiya of Enišari sent his daughter;

EA 268: Milkilu of Gezer sent 46 females, 5 males and 5 *aširū* to Egypt;

EA 287: ‘Abdi-Ḥeba of Jerusalem sent x *asirū* and 8 porters;

EA 288: ‘Abdi-Ḥeba of Jerusalem sent 21 girls, 10 slaves and 80 *asirū*;

EA 301: Šubandu of an unknown city-state sent 20 girls;

EA 309: a southern Palestine ruler sent 10 maidservants and 10 servants on one occasion and $x + 1$ servants on another.

The king of Enišari sent his daughter as a concubine to Pharaoh, and two sons of Aziru were sent to Egypt as hostages. So, they should not be included in the list of the work force. In EA 287, the porter must be males because their loads were heavy. The group called *aširū* (*ma*) is a kind of person with a special status^①, and may be identified as a kind of military personnel^②. In sum, the number of males is $46 + x$, females 107, *aširū* 5, prisoner (*aširū*) $80 + x$, porters 8, of which males $26 + x$, females 107, *aširū* 5, prisoner (*aširū*) $80 + x$ and porters 8 were from southern Canaan.

The price of a maidservant (cupbearer) was listed as 40 shekels of silver in an Amarna letter (EA 369). In the Alalakh Tablets, a female slave was valued at $33 \frac{1}{3}$ shekels of silver, and the average price of a male slave in the 15th century was 25 shekels of silver. The price of a slave was 30 and 40 shekels respectively in Nuzi and Ugarit respectively.^③ In the 18th and 19th Dynasties, a female

① Oppenheim (1968), p. 440.

② Rainey (1967), pp. 296 – 301. Na‘aman agreed with Rainey’s argument, and he thought *aširū* (*ma*) as a kind of warriors (even bodyguards of the rulers), see Na‘aman (1981), p. 177, (2005), p. 221. But in Mesopotamian texts, a similar word *asirū* is translated as “captive”, see Feigin (1934), p. 220.

③ Mendelsohn (1955), pp. 67 – 68.

slaver was priced at about 4 deben (= 40 shekels) of silver, and a man slaver was valued at 2 deben (= 20 shekels) of silver.^① In the 21st Dynasty, the price of a male slave was 3 debens and 1 kit of silver,^② namely, 31 shekels of silver, but in Stele of Sheshok, the price was 14 – 21 debens of silver,^③ namely, 140 – 210 shekels of silver.

The price for a female was 40 shekels of silver and for a male 30 shekels of silver. Therefore, the total price of males is at least 1380, and for females 4280. But the price of *aširū* and prisoner as well as porter was known, and probably was similar to the price of slave. So the total price for *aširū* is 150, for prisoners 2400, and for porters 240.

Other items

EA 48: [I he] rewith [send to] my mistress [...and] a jar of aromatics: *su-ur-wa* ;

EA 49: And here [with] < I send > as your greeting- [gift...] and 100 [...] ;

EA 219: probably reference to 30goblte [s...], of gol [d] to Pharaoh;

EA 222: Wiktasu expressed that he sent to the king whatever he had on hand.

Provisions

In several letters, the vassal rulers sent letters to Pharaoh and reported that they had already prepared provisions for the Egyptian troops, including ships, food, strong drink, oil, grain, oxen, sheep and goats. (EA 153, 193, 226, 324 – 325) . Preparing provisions for the Egyptian army probably implies that Pharaoh was preparing an expedition.

3. 1. 2 Articles Requested by the Vassals

The ruling class of the vassal city-states sent some goods such as raw materials

① Baer (1962), p. 27; Pritchard, ed. (1969), p. 216.

② Breasted (1906), § 682.

③ Breasted (1906), § 680.

and manufactured works to Egypt, and they also asked for goods from Egypt.

EA 49: Niqm-Adda of Ugarit asked for 2 attendants;

EA 55: Akizzi of Qatna wanted get a sack of gold;

EA 86: Rib-Hadda of Byblos requested grains from Yarmuta, and mentioned that Pharaoh gave him 30 pairs of horses;

EA 91: Rib-Hadda of Byblos asked for 1000 (shekels of) silver and 100 (shekels of) gold for a payoff for Apiru's retreat from Byblos;

EA 265: Pharaoh sent a gold goblet and 1 [2 se] ts of linen garment to Tagi;

EA 269: Milkilu of Gezer asked Pharaoh for myrrh.

Three local rulers were from the city-states on the outermost fringe of the Egyptian empire. Because of their physical distance from the Nile Valley and because they served as a buffer zone between Egypt and threatening rival kingdom, local rulers dared to ask for something from Egypt like the other great powers. It is remarkable that Pharaoh sent a present to Tagi, a local prince in the Carmel region. However, Milkilu of Gezer requested myrrh from Egypt.

In the letters, many vassals asked Egypt for chariots, horses, archers and soldiers from Egypt, Meluḥḥa and Kaša to help them guard the cities (EA 95, 103, 106 – 108, 112, 117, 123, 127, 130 – 132, 139, 148 – 149, 151 – 153, 180, 182, 216 – 218, 238, 244, 269, 271, 279, 281 – 282, 286 – 290, 295, 308, 362). It is not clear whether Pharaoh sent military equipments and soldiers, because no letter of reply about dispatching an army has been preserved.

3.2 Discussion

3.3.1 Source of Luxury Goods

My point of departure is the question: Do the good items paid by the vassal states to Egypt indicate that Canaan was a source of raw material for Egypt? To answer this question, we have to give an overview of the natural and mineral resources in Egypt and southern Canaan.

With respect to metals, Gold and copper were available in the eastern desert,

Sinai and Nubia, but Egypt was poor in silver, electrum and tin. Silver was imported from Mesopotamia, Crete and Cyprus, electrum from Nubia and the land of Punt, and tin could have acquired by intermediate trade with Crete and Cyprus from Spain and Britain. Iron was not exploited in Pharaonic Period and telluric iron was imported from Peloponnese and from the Near East. Lead was imported from Syria and Cyprus to meet an increasing need in the New Kingdom. Although copper was available in Egypt, and was imported from Cyprus and the Near East.^①

Trees such as acacia, tamarisk, willow, sycamore fig, ash and Elm, grew in Egypt, but these native trees were not suitable for the finer coffins and furniture the Egyptian upper classes desired, nor for the stronger timber needed for construction and shipbuilding. The coast of the eastern Mediterranean proved to be the most popular timber source for Egypt, which included cedar, pine and oak. Of course, oak was shipped from regions south of Egypt, such as Ethiopia.^② At the same time, Lebanon could provide resins and oils which were in great demand in Egypt for use in perfumes, medicines and mummification.

Precious or semi-precious stone, such as agate, amethyst, beryl, carnelian, chalcedony, jasper, malachite, onyx, quartz and turquoise, were available in the Nile Valley, the eastern Desert, Sinai and Nubia.^③ But, lapis lazuli, a famous semi-precious stone in northeastern Afghanistan, was not available in Egypt and was exported to Egypt.

Unlike much of the Near East, southern Canaan had limited natural resources. Gold, silver and precious stones were not produced in southern Canaan, so they were brought there by commerce from their lands of origin. Thus, southern Canaan was not rich in raw materials and did not meet the Egyptian requirement. Obviously, southern Canaan was not a good choice for Egypt gaining the raw material and luxury items. On the contrary, other great powers could provide what Egypt desired to get and meet the Egyptian need.

However, in the letters, silver was mentioned as a commodity that would be

① Scheel (1989), pp. 14 – 20.

② Killen (1994), pp. 7 – 9.

③ Bunson (2002), pp. 127 – 130.

sent to Egypt, and this metal was not produced in southern Canaan and was probably imported from other places. Copper, mentioned in the letters, was sent from northern Canaan. As for southern Canaan, copper was available in Timna,^① but Egypt took control of copper deposit in Timna in the 18th Dynasty and the local princes in southern Canaan did not approach this copper mine. According to Ahi-tuv, the main source of copper for Egypt was the land of Isy, perhaps Alashya of the Amarna letters, and not Canaan.^② Lead-isotope analysis indicates that copper discovered in Amarna was shipped from Attica.

Wood mentioned in the letters had nothing to do with southern Canaan, and Lebanon was a source of timber for Egypt. In southern Canaan, oak trees grew in the Sharon Plain, and olives and especially sycamore trees grew in the Shephelah.^③ But there is no solid evidence for exporting that timbers from these trees was exported to Egypt in the New Kingdom period. An analysis of wooden coffin dating from the Old Kingdom (Sixth Dynasty) to the late Second Intermediate Period/early Eighteenth Dynasty in British Museum indicates that 12 coffins were made of cedar. Cedar easily emerged as the leading foreign timber (representing nearly 50% of the total and almost 70% of Pharaonic cases). Besides, boxwood was used into coffin in Pharaonic period.^④ From the Old Kingdom period onward, the Phoenicia coast was main timber source for Egypt. When Egypt had an Empire, Syrian supplied were supplemented by timber from Asia Minor, such as oak, ash, oriental beech, birch and other woods used in the manufacture of war-chariots.^⑤

Chariots and horses are mentioned in the letters sent by northern Canaan. It is not clear whether chariots were produced in southern Canaan. Frankly, chariot was not goods that Egypt was interested in, as Egypt was also able to manufacture them. Horses were requested from Egypt by local princes and became valued gifts

① The hoard of 436 copper objects dating to the Chalcolithic Period from the cave of Nahal Mishmar Near the Dead Sea was found in 1961, but it does not prove that southern Canaan is a source for copper, see Muhly (1977), p. 74.

② Ahi-tuv (1978), pp. 102 - 103.

③ Aharoni (1979), pp. 24 - 25.

④ Davies (1995), pp. 146 - 156.

⑤ Kees (1961), p. 135.

sent by the Egyptian Pharaohs to neighboring vassal kings and allies. So we know that Egypt had many horses in the 18th Dynasty, and the horses sent by the vassals were not considered precious items.

From the Amarna Letters we hear about shipments of raw glass sent to Egypt from Tyre, Lachish, Ashkelon and elsewhere in southern Canaan. The glass vessels with characteristics of the Amarna Period and the 19th Dynasty were found at Tell el-'Ajjul, Tel Sera', Gezer, Bet Shemesh, Megiddo, Tel Dan, Bet She'an and Lachish, but they were all produced in Egypt and exported to Canaan. ^①Glass ingots were discovered in the Ulu Burun shipwreck off the Turkish coast. Judging from their chemical composition, many of them were manufactured in Egypt. ^②“There is no specific proof that glass was manufactured in the Canaan area along the Syro-Palestinian coast,” ^③ because the techniques of the glass industry seem to have not developed in the Levant before the 15th century B. C. According to Oppenheim, the technology of glass was introduced by the Mitanian craftsmen as captives following the campaigns of Tuthmosis III. ^④The Egyptians glass developed quickly and reached its peak after 1400 B. C. , and on the whole in no way was inferior to the Mesopotamian products. ^⑤

As to provisions including food, oil, grain, sheep, goats and oxen, these were necessities not luxury items for the Egyptian army and commissioner. However, food and personnel were available in Egypt and Nubia.

3.3.2 The Vassal State's Burden

It is worthwhile to investigate the economic burden imposed by the Egyptian court on the vassal states. It is necessary to calculate the total value of silver of gifts and tributes paid by the vassals. I list them in Table 1.

① Israeli (2003), p. 35.

② Pulak (2005), pp. 55 – 102.

③ Grose (1989), p. 54.

④ Oppenheim (1973), p. 263.

⑤ Spaer (2001), p. 25.

Table 1

Ammiya	Irqata	Babylos	Amurru	Tyre	Akka	Megiddo	Gintikirmil	Gezer
620 + x	2085 + x	x	x	90 + x	x	510	x	2140
Jerusalem	Qiltu	Ašqaluna	Lakiša	Yursa	anunknown vassal	an unknownvassal	an unknownvassal	
3780 + x	400	x	x	x	830 + x	1400	9300	

How much is these gifts or tributes in silver? When they are compared with the articles mentioned in EA 120, this problem could be easy solved. In EA 120, the number of stolen articles is considerable, including 90 – 100 maidservants and menservants^①, 100 (shekels) of gold, valuable articles such as beds and chairs overlaid with gold, 100 swords and 100 daggers as well as items made of boxwood. Let's consider the value of servant, we will find the total price of servants is at least 2700 – 3000 shekels of silver if servants are all man. This number is more than many of total price of gifts and tributes that were delivered to Egypt from the Southern Canaan.

Tributes and gifts mentioned in treaties and letters between the Hittites and its vassals can throw light on the burden which the Egypt court imposed on the vassal states in Canaan.

In the treaty between Suppiluliuma I of the Hittites and Aziru of Amurru, 300 shekels of fine gold was to be paid to the Hittites as yearly tributes.^②The price of gold paid by Ammurru was 900 – 1200 shekels of silver according to the ratio of gold to silver^③in Ugarit, which is close to the sum total of silver paid by the vassals to Egypt.

In addition to the annual tribute, the vassal state had to pay other tributes or gifts to the Hittites. This is illustrated in a letter sent by Niqmaddu of Ugarit to the King of the Hittites where he listed: gold and 2 gold cups, 13 minas and 50 shekels (including 20 large shekels) in weight; 6 silver cups, 180 shekels in weight;

① Moran thought the reading 9000 was high absurd and put forward the reading 90 – 100 maidservants and menservants, see Moran (1992), EA 120, n. 12.

② Beckman (1996), no. 5, § 1, no. 8, § 5. Pritchard (2011), p. 205.

③ The ratio of gold to silver in Ugarit was between 1 : 3 – 1 : 4, detail see Heltzer (1976), p. 205; (1977), p. 205.

1 large linen garment; 7 linen garments; blue-purple wool, 1200 shekels in weight; red-purple wool, 1200 shekels in weight. ①Among them, the price of gold and gold cups was 2490 – 3320 shekels of silver according to the ratio of gold to silver in Ugarit, so the value of gold and silver amounts to 2670 – 3500 shekels of silver. The price of red-purple wool was 2.7 shekels in silver, and the price of blue-purple wool was 1.3 – 2.5 shekels in silver. ②The price of linen garments was 10.5 – 17.5 shekels of silver, and the price a large linen price was more than 3 1/3 shekels of silver. ③The total value of the tributes paid by Niqmadu is at least 2688 – 3526 shekels silver.

As you have seen, some signs of numbers about the gifts and tributes in the Amarna letters were obscure or great damaged and cannot be recognized accurately, and the unit of some articles did not mentioned in the letters. So, I select the five vassals, i. e. , Megiddo, Gezer, Qiltu, and two unknown vassals in which the signs about number and name of the gifts or tributes delivered to Egypt are complete and clear. And, I will compare the total value of these five vassals with those of the vassal of the Hittite (see Table 2) . From the table, we can see clearly that the burden of Ugarit is heavier than four vassals of Egypt.

Table 2 The total value

Egyptian Vassals		Hittite Vassal
Megiddo	510	Ugarit 2688 – 3526
Gezer	2140	
Qiltu	400	
An unknown state	1400	
An unknown state	9300	

① Cachavi-Rainey and Lilyquist (1999), pp. 184 – 189. This text is damaged, so the restoration of different scholars is different perfectly, details see Knoppers (1993), Beckman (1996), no. 28A, § 2 – § 9.

② In Ugarit, the red-purple wool was priced at five and one-third shekels per talent, and the blue-purple wool was sold at 4 – 7.5 shekels per talent, see Stieglitz (1979), p. 19. But in New Kingdom Egypt, wool per unit was priced at 2 deben of copper (= 0.34 deben of silver = 3.4 shekels of silver), see Janssen (1975) . p. 444.

③ The price of the linen garment ranged between 1.5 to 2.5 shekels of silver, and the highest price of it was 3 1/3 shekels silver, see Stieglitz (1979), p. 19. So the price of the large linen garment could be evaluated on the highest price.

4 Conclusion

4.1 The Position of Canaan in the LB Age

Canaan's location made it a land bridge between three continents, Asia, Africa and Europe. Most importantly, as Africa's only land link to Asia, Canaan was a corridor and a bridge for an exchange of materials and ideas between Asia and Africa. To civilization centers such as Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Hittites, Canaan was a common peripheral region which could provide raw materials. That is to say, Canaan played twofold roles: a raw materials source and a bridge for communication.

In the LB Age, the most powerful states of the Near East, i. e. Egypt, Hatti, Mitanni, Babylonia, and Assyria formed an international society, a "Great Power Club." At that time, Egypt communicated with other powers in Western Asia directly, both in the political and economic realms, and Egypt sought goods exchange with foreign powers such as Mitanni and Babylonia as well as later rising Hittite and Assyria. In a word, Egypt's entrance into Canaan thus enhanced the interaction between the great powers. This contact also created a massive trading network that extended from the island of Crete and mainland Greece to the steppes of northern Iran.

Egypt became the exclusive source of gold, ivory, ebony, and alabaster for the entire region. In Babylonia, the Kassite dynasty had reconquered the Gulf coastland and reestablished a copper trade with Bahrain. The Kassites also built a series of fortresses to protect trade routes into northern Iran that supplied Babylonia with chariots, horses, and lapis lazuli. The kingdom of the Hittite became the source of raw iron and iron weaponry for the region. In addition, Cyprus and Greece became suppliers of bronze and other goods for the entire region. While each of these kingdoms had its own means of procuring raw goods and creating fin-

ished materials, the entire trade network passed through Canaan. ^①

Against this international and diplomatic background, the intermediate role played by the city-states of Canaan in trade and contact with other world powers ceased to exist. The Canaanites were unable to benefit from trade between Egypt and Western Asia. Canaan was generally reduced to a few large urban centers that served as intermediary nodes in a much broader system network. At that time, Canaan was only a passage or corridor for direct communication between the great powers.

4.2 Decline of Southern Canaan

For Egypt, the great powers in Western Asia had more capacity than the city-states in Canaan. Thus, Egypt looked at Canaan only as a trade corridor for international gift-exchange. In order to keep the contact and trade smooth, Egypt's only concern was to maintain a stable situation in Canaan. As was previously mentioned, Egyptian correspondence with the Canaanite mayors was largely concerned with defense with constant admonitions that the mayors be "on guard." A typical letter from Pharaoh to a vassal states: "Be on your guard. You are to guard the place of the king where you are.... And be on your guard! Be on your guard! Do not be negligent!" (EA 367)

With Egypt's gaining what it wanted from other the great powers and the loss of the status of trade agency, Canaanite economic influence was reduced for Egypt. In addition to this, physical resources also contributed to a change in the Canaanite position. Luxury goods such as lapis lazuli, precious stones, gold and silver, as well as raw material such as copper, were not available in Canaan. Ahituv points out, "Canaan itself had very little to offer to Egypt, for it was not worthwhile to transport agricultural products of great bulk, since Egypt itself was rich and self-sufficient. Even if it was worthwhile to import from Canaan luxury items, such as wine and honey, our source inform us of their limited importance." ^②

^① Zaccagnini (2000), p. 145.

^② Ahituv (1978), p. 104.

During the LBAge, the loss of an intermediate position brought a gradual deterioration in wealth and economy in the Canaanite cities. In an attempt to stop the deterioration, some local rulers attacked to caravans of the great powers. A Babylonian caravan led by Shalmu was robbed by Biriawaza (king of Damascus) and Pamhu (unknown, maybe a vassal king) (EA 7: 73 – 82). In another letter the Babylonian king said: “Now, my merchants who were on their way with Ahu-ṭabu, were detained in Canaan for business matters. After Axu-ṭabu went on to my brother, in xinnatuna of Canaan, Šum-Adda, the son of Balumme, and Šutatna, the son of Šaratum of Akka, having sent their men, killed my merchants and took away their money.” (EA 8: 13 – 21) To prevent further accidents, Tushratta of Mitanni even wrote a letter to the local rulers in Canaan (EA 30):

To the kings of Canaan, servants of my brother: thus the king. I herewith send Akiya, my messenger, to speed posthaste to the king of Egypt, my brother. No one is to hold him up. Provide him with safe entry into Egypt and hand (him) over to the fortress commander of Egypt. Let (him) go on immediately, and as far as his presents are concerned, he is to owe nothing.

Pharaoh gave an order to his vassal: “A caravan to Ḥanagalbat is this (man) to send on, and (all of you) send it on.” (EA 255) At the same time, this vassal ruler said to Pharaoh: “Let the king, my lord, send a caravan even to Karaduniyaš. I will personally conduct it under very heavy guard.” (EA 255) Another vassal ruler also expressed in a letter: “[I escorted a] ll the king’s caravans as far as Buršruṇa.” (EA 199)

Archaeologically, the size and number of cities in the LBAge fit well into the backgrounds. The majority of southern Canaanite sites, even those that were well defended in the MB Age, were unfortified during the LB Age, possibly as a result of the reduction of wealth rather than “an Egyptian policy that restricted its vassals from accumulating military strength behind their city-walls”.^①

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① Gonen (1984), pp. 69 – 70.