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Sea Raiders in the Amarna Letters?

The Men of Arwad and the Miši in Context

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Abstract: The Amarna corpus contains several references to maritime conflict and related activities in the 14th century BCE, including blockades, the movement of troops, the capturing of ships at sea, and seaborne evacuation. While most of these are encountered in the context of conflicts between Levantine polities, there are clear references to what might on the one hand be called piracy, but on the other hand either acts of naval warfare or naval elements of a larger war effort, on both land and sea. This paper considers the martial maritime activities discussed in the Amarna letters, with particular emphasis on two uniquely controversial groups mentioned in this corpus in the context of maritime violence: the ‘ships of the men of the city of Arwad’ and the ‘*miši*-men.’ While the men of Arwad are identified with a polity on the Phoenician coast, they are referred to only by this collective term, even when mentioned in lists that otherwise contain only rulers. The *miši*, on the other hand, are not associated with any specific name or toponym. The purpose of this study is to identify just what can be determined about the roles and affiliations of these two groups in their Amarna context in this period.

Keywords: Amarna, naval warfare, piracy, Arwad, *miši*

Introduction

The Amarna corpus contains several references to maritime conflict and related activities in the 14th century BCE, including blockades, seaborne evacuation, and both the movement of troops and the capturing of ships at sea. Most of these are encountered in the context of conflicts between Levantine polities, whose shifting alliances and seemingly constant friction may have resulted in part from competition for access to – and control of – markets and lines of communication, both maritime and terrestrial (e.g. Altman 2014).

The maritime elements of conflict in the Amarna letters seem to be clear references to what might on the one hand be called piracy, but on the other either acts of naval warfare or naval elements of a larger war effort, on both land and sea (cf. Vidal 2008; Emanuel 2018). In addition to the state actors depicted as engaging in these maritime activities, which included Amurru, Tyre, Sidon, Beirut, Šigata, Ampī, and Ullasa (all of which shared a roughly 160 km stretch of coastal territory located in modern Lebanon), the Amarna texts contain references to actions which may be carried out both by non-state actors and by individuals seemingly connected to a polity but not to a ruler.

The Levantine Coast in the Amarna Age: Conflict and Intrigue

A significant number of the letters in question were written by Rib-Hadda, *ḥazannu* of Gubla (Byblos) and a highly persistent correspondent of the pharaoh and his representatives. The picture he paints in his letters is that of a lonely but stalwart client ruler who is beset on all sides (both on land and at sea), with the cities around him posing increasing threats and his own people constantly threatening to revolt. The main antago-

nists in Rib-Hadda's writings are the rulers of Amurru, a territory associated with Mount Lebanon and lands to its west, which had served as the northernmost province in the Egyptian empire since the reign of Thutmose III. The rulers of Amurru at this time – first 'Abdi-Aširta, and then his sons (of whom 'Aziru seems to have been *primus inter pares*) – are portrayed as conducting their affairs in a fashion perhaps more akin to warlords than kings, playing multiple sides of the geopolitical field in terms of allegiance, including Egypt, Mitanni, and Ḫatti (Morris 2010; cf. Bryce 2003: 140; Singer 2011a: 206–207; on chronology, see esp. Cordani 2011; 2013: 58–60).

'Abdi-Aširta's brilliance as a warlord seems to have included effectively mobilizing under his own leadership the fearsome but generally disunified *'apîru* – stateless bandits-cum-guerrillas who set upon merchants, envoys, and even cities, capturing plunder and increasing their own numbers through voluntary and involuntary means alike (Bryce 2003: 137–138; e.g. EA 71) – and effectively warding off Egyptian retribution while enriching himself and his fighters at the expense of the pharaoh's territories in the region.

Much of Rib-Hadda's correspondence focuses on threats to his own territory (e.g. EA 87–88) and to Şumur (Tall Kazal), one of the key cities in the region. Following Thutmose III's conquest of Amurru, coastal garrisons were established at Şumur and at Ullasa, with the latter serving as an important naval base and the former, located near the mouth of the Nahr al-Kabir River, housing the Egyptian territorial commissioners (Singer 2011a: 201, 204, 207).

'Abdi-Aširta initially occupied Şumur, perhaps during the reign of Amenhotep III, under circumstances which the Amurrite king describes as a rescue mission: troops from Şehal attacked Şumur, and 'Abdi-Aširta set out from his base at 'Irqat (Tall 'Arqa) in the foothills of Mount Lebanon (which he had recently conquered, along with the nearby town of Ardata) to save the survivors (EA 62, 371). He seems to have subsequently shifted his headquarters from 'Irqat to Şumur, thus prompting Rib-Hadda to accuse the Amurrite leader of such seditious acts as sleeping in the royal bed-chamber and opening the royal treasury (EA 84). 'Abdi-Aširta, on the other hand, maintained in his communication with the pharaoh that he was simply acting to protect Şumur and other Egyptian interests in the region on Egypt's behalf, even "claiming for himself the status of an acting deputy in the absence of the Egyptian governor" (Singer 2011a: 205; EA 60).

The Amurrite Threat to Byblos and its Ships

According to Rib-Hadda, 'Abdi-Aširta's program of expansion seems to have turned southward toward Byblos. He quickly conquered the coastal cities of Ampî, Şigata, Bit-Arḫa, and Baṭrôna to the north of Byblos (EA 79, 87), partly by force and partly by fomenting insurgency within them. The state of affairs to the south was no less grim: in EA 92, Rib-Hadda recounts the directive the pharaoh issued to the southern coastal cities of Beirut, Sidon, and Tyre to send auxiliary troops to his aid. No troops were forthcoming; instead, those cities also fell to the Amurrite coalition. The loss of Tyre, whose ruler was killed in an uprising – along with Rib-Hadda's sister and her children, whom he had sent away for safekeeping – may have been seen as a last straw by the Egyptian authorities. As Singer (2011a: 205) describes the situation, "Abdi-Aširta's aggrandizement had reached a state in which almost the entire Phoenician coast had submitted to his direct or indirect control. This was beyond the limits of what the Egyptians felt they could tolerate without risking their own authority." Whether or not the fall of Tyre was the impetus for Egyptian action, 'Abdi-Aširta seems to have been removed from the scene shortly thereafter.

While Şumur and its contemporaries seem to have regained the status they had enjoyed prior to being united under 'Abdi-Aširta, the return to the *status quo ante bellum* was short-lived: before long, these polities, including Şumur, were once again being threatened by Amurru – in this case, by 'Aziru and 'Abdi-Aširta's other sons (Pryke 2015: 40–41; Rainey 2015: 18). In EA 104 and 105, Rib-Hadda declares that the sons of 'Abdi-Aširta have taken Ardata, in the foothills east of Ullasa, along with Ullasa itself and the nearby coastal cities of Ya'liya (Waḫliya), Ampî, and Şigata. While the location of these cities in southern Amurru brought the border of the quickly reconsolidating Amurrite coalition uncomfortably close to Rib-Hadda's doorstep, 'Abdi-Aširta's sons also continued northward, once again threatening Şumur, whose garrison troops evi-

dently fled in the face of the Amurrite onslaught (EA 103).¹ Thus, Rib-Hadda warns, if he were to go to Şumur, then he would be beset on multiple sides: the sons of ‘Abdi-Aširta would confront him on land, while ships from these newly-captured cities would join those from Arwad, which were evidently already blockading the coast of Şumur, to hem him in from the seaward side (see below for more on “the ships of the men of Arwad”). Like Şumur itself, Rib-Hadda would be trapped “like a bird in a cage” (EA 105: 8) – a metaphor the Byblian *ḥazannu* seems particularly fond of (cf. EA 74: 46, 78: 13, 79: 35, 81: 34, 90: 40, 116: 18) – while his own undefended city would be overrun by the *‘apîru*.

Rib-Hadda also laments the lack of food at Byblos. While this is a long-standing complaint (e.g. EA 85), in the case of EA 105: 83–87 he emphasizes his inability to feed those who fled Ullasa, home to a navally-oriented Egyptian garrison, upon its attack by ‘Abdi-Aširta’s son Pu-Ba’la (EA 104: 6–9, 30). Finally, he accuses Yapaḥ-Hadda, perhaps the *ḥazannu* of nearby Beirut (but cf. Vidal 2008: 7 n. 7), of preventing Byblian ships from sailing south to Yarimuta to pick up grain. Interestingly, Yapaḥ-Hadda himself had previously declared in a letter to Yanḥamu, a senior Egyptian official in the region, that the lands to his north (including Rib-Hadda’s Byblos!) had joined Amurru in revolt (EA 98).

This may have been subterfuge on Yapaḥ-Hadda’s part, particularly in light of Rib-Hadda’s despondent declaration in EA 83 that the pharaoh should “just send me the word and I myself will make a treaty with ‘Abdi-Aširta like Yapaḥ-Hadda and Zimredda and I will stay alive” (Rainey 2015: 491). As seen above, Rib-Hadda’s further letters strongly suggest that Byblos did not, in fact, revolt and join the Amurrite alliance under either ‘Abdi-Aširta or ‘Aziru, although he did continue to write prolifically about the danger posed toward himself and his territory from those who did. We should, however, note that the apparent contradiction between EA 83 and 98 highlights the risky nature of accepting texts like these as accurate portrayals of history. It also underlines the importance of bearing in mind that the comparative volume of Rib-Hadda’s letters do not necessarily mean that his version of events is more accurate than others for whose point(s) of view there remains less documentary evidence (cf. Liverani 1974).

Rib-Hadda laments in two further letters (EA 113–114) that his ships have been seized and plundered by Yappaḥ-Hadda in collusion with the *‘apîru* (interestingly, he mentions his stolen sheep and goats before inquiring about the men who were assumedly captured along with his ships; EA 113: 14–23). Further, not only is Byblos described as suffering from a lack of grain caused by Yapaḥ-Hadda’s aforementioned interdiction campaign, but Rib-Hadda also warns in EA 114 that Tyre, Sidon, and Beirut also defecting to ‘Aziru and Amurru has put additional ships in danger of being captured at sea, whether sailing north to the aid of Şumur or south to deliver messages to the Egyptian court (in the case of the latter, Rib-Hadda seems to suggest later that his seaborne messenger was forced to sail to Egypt via Alašiya).

Maritime Violence and Nonstate Actors

While Rib-Hadda frequently castigates his fellow *ḥazanni*, as well as ‘Abdi-Aširta and his sons, he also mentions two groups that have been seen in a slightly different light: the *eleppāti amelūti ālu Arwada* ‘ships of the men of the city of Arwad’ and the *amelūti miši*, or ‘*miši*-men.’ While the men of Arwad are identified with a specific polity, they are referred to only by this collective term, even when mentioned in lists that otherwise contain only rulers. The *miši*, on the other hand, are not associated with any specific name or toponym.

The Ships of the Men of the City of Arwad

Lying off the Phoenician coast north of Şumur, Arwad (modern Ruwād) is a 40-hectare island whose leeward (eastern) side features naturally-protected anchorages (Lipiński 2004: 281). Five letters from the Amarna epistolary corpus, EA 98, 101, 104–105, and 149, include references to “the ships of the men of the city of Arwad”

¹ EA 116 notes the fall of Şumur, while in EA 162 the pharaoh himself addresses ‘Aziru as *ḥazannu* of Amurru.

(GIŠ.MĀ.MEŠ LÚ.MEŠ URU *Ar-wa-da*) or a variant thereof. In a letter to Yanḫamu, Yapaḫ-Hadda claims that ships from Arwad have been stationed off the shores of Ampī and Šigata to interdict grain shipments to Šumur:

Why have you been neglectful of Šumur so that all lands from Gubla to Ugarit have become enemies in the service of Aziru? Šigata and Ampī are enemies. He has now [st]ationed GIŠ.MĀ.MEŠ [URU] *Ar^l-wa-^lda^l* [i]n Ampī and in Šigata so grain cannot be brought into Šumur. Nor are we able to enter Šumur, and so what can we ourselves do? Write to the palace about this [mat]ter. It is good [tha]t you are inf[or]med.

EA 98: 3–12 (after Moran 1992: 171)

EA 101 references maritime attacks, the ships of Arwad, and the latter’s curious presence in Egypt:

[Further]more, who is hostile [to] the king? Is it not Ḫaya? [Beca]use, the *GIŠ^l.MĀ.MEŠ* of the *LÚ.MEŠ mi-ši* do not enter the land of Amurru, and kill ‘Abdi-Aširta [or “[No]w, the ships of the *LÚ.MEŠ mi-ši* are not to enter the land of Amurru, for they have killed ‘Abdi-Aširta”]; Moran 1992: 174], because they do not have wool and he does not have garments of lapis lazuli or marstone color to give as payment to the land of Mittani.

Moreover, whose *GIŠ.MĀ.MEŠ* have been hostile to me, is it not the men of the city of Arwad? Behold, they are with you now; seize the *GIŠ.MĀ.MEŠ LÚ.MEŠ URU Ar-wa-da* which are in the land of Egypt [or “Moreover, whose ships stood against me? (Certainly) not (those of) the Arwad people! Are they not staying right now there by you? Requisition the ships of the Arwad people who are in Egypt!”]; Liverani 1998: 389].

Moreover, inasmuch as Ḫaya says [to the ki]ng, “If we don’t [go forth], then [the men of the ci]ty of Tyre and the men of [the city] of Sidon and the men of the [ci]ty of Beirut will bring (him),” whose cities are these? Not the king’s? Place one man in each city and let him not permit the ships of the land of Amurru (to go forth), so that they will kill ‘Abdi-Aširta. The king placed him over them, not they themselves. May the king speak to the three cities and to the *GIŠ.MĀ.MEŠ* of the *LÚ.MEŠ mi-ši*, and no sooner will they go to the land of Amurru than he (Ḫaya) will capture ‘Abdi-Aširta and he will hand him over to you [or “Let the king tell the 3 cities and the ships of the army not to go to the land of Amurru. If a servant seize a bo[a]t, let him give it to you”]; Moran 1992: 174]. So learn the words of your servant.

EA 101 (after Rainey 2015: 552–555)

Originally a two-tablet set, the first tablet of EA 101 is lost, along with the specific identities of its sender and recipient. As will be discussed further below, several aspects of the remaining text are controversial in their interpretation. Liverani (1998: 389) reconstructs both lines 1–2 and 11–13 as rhetorical negatives, resulting in the latter being read as, “Moreover, whose ships stood against me? (Certainly) not (those of) the Arwad people!,” and continuing in lines 14–18 with the rhetorical question, “Are they not staying right now there by you? Requisition the ships of the Arwad people who are in Egypt!”

Further documentary evidence for connections between Arwad and Egypt are very few. While Thutmose III’s claim of having captured and punished *ḫrḫtyw* and *ḫrḫwt* in his fifth and sixth campaigns, respectively, was at one time read as referring to attacks on Arwad (BAR II, §§ 461, 465), these references – which include claims of having destroyed the city’s fields and orchards – almost certainly refer instead to Ardata (Albright 1942: 303; Redford 2003: 63, 68, 217–218). However, the reference in EA 101: 14–18 to Arwadian ships and men in Egypt may be supported by Papyrus British Museum 10056, the record of the royal dockyard *prw-nfr* from earlier in the 18th dynasty, which mentions a chief workman whose name, *ḫrt*, may translate to “the Arwadian” (*verso* 8:11; Glanville 1931: 120; 1933: 27, 33).

In EA 105, Rib-Hadda again mentions the Arwadian blockade against Šumur – the seat of the local Egyptian government – and declares that his own attempt to send three ships to Yanḫamu either resulted in, or put them at risk of, capture by *GIŠ.MĀ.MEŠ* *LÚ.MEŠ URU^l Ar^l-wa-d[a]*.” He also notes that men from Arwad played a role in ensuring that ‘Abdi-Aširta’s property was given to his sons, presumably following his death, thus enabling the continuation of his seditious campaign:

Moreover, may the king give thought to Šumur. Look at Šumur! Like a bird in a trap, so is Šumur; the sons of ‘Abdi-Aširta by land, *LÚ.MEŠ URU^l Ar^l-wa-da iš-tu a^l-ia-ba*, are agai[nst it] day and night. I se[en]t 3 [shi]ps to Yanḫamu, [but] *GIŠ.MĀ.MEŠ* *LÚ.MEŠ URU^l Ar^l-wa-d[a]* were (there) to intercept th[em], and out they came! Consider the case of the people of Arwada. When the archers came out, all the proper[ty] of ‘Abdi-Aširta in their possession was not taken away, and *GIŠ^l.MĀ^l.MEŠ^l-šu-^lnu^l*, by an agreement, left Egypt. Accordingly, they are not afraid. Now they have taken Ullassa, and they strive to take Šumur. Everything belonging to ‘Abdi-Aširta they gave to the [so]ns, and so now they are strong. They have taken the *GIŠ.MĀ.MEŠ* of the *LÚ.MEŠ mi-ši* together with everything belonging to them, and I am unable to go to the aid of Šumur.

... The Egyptians that got out of Ulassa are now with me, but there is no [gr]ain for them to eat. Yapaḥ-Hadda does not let GIŠ.MĀ.MEŠ-ia [in]to Yarimuta, and I cannot send them to Šumur because of the GIŠ.MĀ.MEŠ¹ URU Ar-¹wa¹-¹da¹. Look, he says, ‘Rib-[Hadda to]ok [i]t, a[nd s]o he is against m[e].’

EA 105: 6–31, 83–88 (after Moran 1992: 178)

The Arwadians are also mentioned in EA 149 by Abimilki, *ḥazannu* of Tyre, in the context of an impending assault on his city by ‘Aziru and the *ḥazannu* of Sidon, Zimredda:

Zimredda (of) Sidon and Aziru, the traitor to the king, and the LÚ.MEŠ URU ¹Ar¹-¹wa¹-¹da have sworn and rep^{ea}ted an oath between them and they have gathered GIŠ.MĀ.MEŠ-*šu-nu*, their chariots (and) their infantry in order to capture the city of Tyre, the handmaiden of the king.

EA 149: 57–63 (Rainey 2015: 754–755)

Arwad: A Land Without a Ruler?

EA 149: 57–59 exemplifies the nature of references to Arwad in the Amarna letters in that it focuses on the people associated with this polity rather than on its ruler(s). Members of other polities are sometimes referred to in the same manner; for example, Rib-Hadda declares in EA 114: 10 that the ships of either the “men” or the “rulers” of “the town of Tyre, the town of Beirut, the town of Sidon” (GIŠ.MĀ.MEŠ LÚ.MEŠ URU ¹Šur¹-ri URU Beru-ta URU Ši-du-na) are in Amurru (Moran 1992: 188–189; Rainey 2015: 606–607).

Other groups are also referenced in association with a land or town, although this is not always meant to be taken literally. For example, while Aššur-Urbalit of Assyria refers to Suteans (LÚ.MEŠ *Su-tu₄-ú* and LÚ.MEŠ *Su-ti-i*) serving as guides for diplomatic envoys (EA 16: 38, 40) and Rib-Hadda mentions Suteans (LÚ.MEŠ KUR *Su-te*) as being under the command of the pharaonic commissioner Paḥuru (EA 122: 34, 123: 14), this term is used to refer not just to the nomadic Sutean people known across the Levant, but also to nomads in general (Rainey 2015: 1296, 1348). Arwad, on the other hand, is unique in that its references take this form even when included as an equal in lists otherwise populated by city rulers, as is seen in EA 149, where the context is the swearing of an oath or entering into an alliance with other polities. Additionally, while this form of referring to Arwad is consistent across the Amarna corpus, it is not limited to these texts: a similar reference (*i-na* GIŠ.MĀ.MEŠ-*te ša* KUR *ar-ma-da-ia*) is also found in an inscription of Tukulti-apil-Ešarra I (Tiglath-Pileser I) two centuries later (RIMA 2, A.O.87.3: 21; Briquel-Chatonnet 2000: 130 n. 16).

The lack of references to a ruler has prompted the suggestion that this island polity was not ruled by a monarch at all, but that a more egalitarian form of governance evolved from the island’s focus on maritime pursuits, rather than agricultural development. This has been characterized as evoking “*le phénomène parallèle de l’emporion dans la Méditerranée classique, lieu de commerce qui n’a pas atteint le stade de maturation politique de la polis*” (Briquel-Chatonnet 2000: 132) – or, taken several steps further, as an example of “republican government” in the Late Bronze Age (Stockwell 2010: 126). On the other hand, Arwad’s absence from Hittite records and from the treaty between ‘Aziru and the Ugaritic king Niqmaddu II (1350–1315 BCE), in which the latter agreed to pay 5,000 silver shekels in exchange for “military protection” (RS 19.068), may also suggest that Arwad was simply a client of Amurru during this period, and not an independent polity at all (Singer 2011a: 214; 2011b: 40; but cf. Briquel-Chatonnet 2000: 130).

With Arwad’s natural anchorages perhaps being its natural resource best-suited to support economic prosperity (the island itself being largely devoid of other resources for subsistence or economic development), its economic and governmental foundations may indeed have been built primarily – if not entirely – on maritime activities. This and the potentially tenuous nature of possible footholds on the Phoenician mainland would have made Arwad highly susceptible to changes in regional geopolitics, as well as in both local and international trade networks (e.g. Lipiński 2004: 279–281; Vidal 2008: 9–10). In the case of the Amarna period, Vidal (2008: 11) has suggested that the elevated status of Šumur, which became a focal point of the 18th dynasty Egyptian administration, resulted in Arwad being economically marginalized to such a degree that its mariners took to the sea as mercenaries, operating – at least for a time – as part of the Amurrite coalition.

This potential combination of dependency and adaptability exemplifies a key strength and weakness of communities whose economic prosperity is based not only on maritime activity, but essentially on acting as

an intermediary in local and international communication and exchange. As Artzy (1997: 12) profoundly described this situation:

[E]ntrepreneurs or merchants of the sea...were employed as economic mercenaries within the established, yet varied political and especially economic systems, and followed, usually, the recognized laws of trade in an international age. They served as intermediaries and brought their traditions to coastal settlements and along land routes to the economic hinterland. When the economic situation was no longer favorable, these same people reverted to marauding practices, and the image of ‘Sea Peoples’ familiar to us from the Egyptian sources emerged.

While generally referring to individuals from disparate locations who had become indispensable parts of the trade networks into which they had inserted themselves, Artzy’s description may also be applicable to the notional case of Arwad, although certainty is currently an impossibility – not least because the island itself is largely mute from an archaeological standpoint (Vidal 2008: 5–6, 10). Perhaps more importantly, the documentary evidence alone is insufficient to support conclusions either about the island community’s political structure, or in what numbers these seafarers may have taken to mercenary activities and brigandage to ensure the economic well-being of that community.

However, both the content and context of references to the LÚ.MEŠ URU *Ar-wa-da* do support the interpretation that at least some individuals associated with the island polity of Arwad actively undertook martial maritime activities, and that these were carried out both in opposition to the perceived interests of Rib-Hadda and Yapaḥ-Hadda individually (and to those of Egypt in general), and in support of the Amurrite coalition.

The Miši: Egyptian Sailors, Freebooters, or Something Else?

As seen above, along with the ships of Arwad, EA 101 mentions people called *amelūti miši*, who seem to have been deployed under the command of the Egyptian vizier Ḥaya. Like the men of Arwad, they are associated with *eleppāti*; however, unlike the Arwadians, no toponymic association is provided.

If the prevailing theory that Rib-Hadda was the author of EA 101 is accepted, then all six extant texts that reference the *miši* (EA 101, 105, 108, 110–111, 126) can be assigned a Byblian origin (Moran 1969: 94 n. 1, 95). Because studies of these people have tended to identify and interpret them in opposing terms – either as Egyptian forces, as freebooters, or as shipborne mercenaries – the published glosses are omitted from the translations quoted here, so as to examine them in context and without undue influence.

Both EA 110 and 111, two of the texts that contain references to the *miši* and their ships, are highly fragmentary. EA 110 has been reconstructed in both lengthy and brief forms, with Moran (1992: 185) limiting his translation only to lines 48–54. Rainey (2015: 592–595), on the other hand, attempted to restore more of the tablet:

[Why do] you [keep silent while the sons of ‘Abdi-Ash]irta are doing [what they want? And they have taken all] your [cities... thus [...] ...
[.....]A[ziru.....] the k[ing.....]they (don’t)? [lo]ve them[....] them in [.....he] is doing what I sai[d.....]them in the land [...w]h
does he not come forth? [...o]n their he[ad...]they [(don’t)? I]ove them [...] in the land [...]Azir[u...]and not[...] his, say[ing...
the] LÚ.MEŠ *mi-šī-šū’-n[u]* [GİŠ.]¹MA¹ LÚ.MEŠ *mi-šī* does no[t go] forth [fro]m the land of Cana[an. W]hy does he not give the
king’s [pro]perty which [GİŠ.MA.]MEŠ LÚ.MEŠ *mi-šī* are br[inging]? [The] city rulers and [...] they are [br]inging [...so may the
king, my lord] be apprised concerning [...]of[...]

EA 110: 7–11, 32–58 (after Rainey 2015: 592–595)

EA 111, in which Rib-Hadda likely reiterates his request for troops once more, is similarly brief. Only lines 17–24 were restored and translated by Moran (1992: 185): “[If] this [year] there [are no a]rchers, then all lands [will be joined] to the ‘Api]ru. Look, LÚ.MEŠ *m[i-šī]* have en[ter]ed Akka [in] or[*der to transport ... [...] [nee]ded by the king*” (cf. Rainey 2015: 596–597).

In EA 108 and 126, which are more complete, Rib-Hadda seems to be portraying the *miši* as acting in direct opposition to Egypt’s interests by facilitating the actions of ‘Abdi-Aširta’s sons, including by “transferring all the king’s silver and gold” to Amurru (from where, he claims, it is being passed along to the Hittites):

Furthermore, is it good in the sight of the king, who is like Baal and the sun god in heaven, that the sons of ‘Abdi-Aširta are doing whatever they please? They have taken the horses of the king and the chariots and they have given chariot warriors and soldiers to the land of Su·ba·ru as hostages(?). In whose days has a deed like this been done?

...I wrote to your father and he he[le]ded] my words and he se[nt] regular troops. Did he not take ‘Abdi-Aširta for hi[m]self? Furthermore, since the city rulers did not tu[r]n their faces against them, thus, they are strong. And the LÚ.MEŠ *mi-ši* was bringing them all [their] needs. Thus they did not fear the senior official when they took the hor[ses]. And they are bold. When we became aware that they were strong, then we sp[oke] to the king, “They are strong.” Behold, they are not really able.

EA 108: 8–19, 28–45 (after Rainey 2015: 584–587)

Inasmuch as my lord has written for boxwood, it is from the mountains of Salḫu and from the city of Ugarit that they are brought. I am unable to send my ships there because Aziru is at war with me and all the city rulers are at peace with him. Their ships go about as they please and they bring whatever they need.

...And(!) as for the Hittite army, thus it is setting fire to the territories. I have written over and over; word does not come back to me. All the territories of the king, my lord, are seized, but my lord keeps silent concerning them. And even now, they are bringing the Hittite army to capture the city of Byblos, so take counsel concerning [your] city and don’t listen to the LÚ.MEŠ *mi-ši*. They were transferring all the king’s silver and gold to the sons of ‘Abdi-Aširta and the sons of ‘Abdi-Aširta are transferring that (silver and gold) to the strong king (i.e. of Ḫatti) and thus they are strong.

EA 126: 51–66 (after Rainey 2015: 658–659)

As noted above, consensus about the identification of the *miši* is elusive. On the one hand, the term *miši/mišu* has been connected to Egyptian *mš* ‘army, expedition, soldiers’ (Schulman 1962: 6), and occurrences in the text are thus translated as references to “the army” and “the (men of the) expeditionary force/men of the fleet,” respectively, and references to their ships (GIŠ.MÁ.MEŠ LÚ.MEŠ *mi-ši*) as “ships of the navy/army” (e.g. Knudtzon 1915: 1550; Lambdin 1953; Moran 1992; Liverani 1998: 389 n. 15; Rainey 2015: 1289, 1306).

The opposing school of thought identifies the *miši* instead as “dangerous seafarers,” “freebooters” (Baruffi 1998: 100, 188), “island folk” (de Koning 1940: 215), and “mercenaries with no ethnic or political affiliations [who] specialize in naval warfare” (Linder 1973: 320). Seeking linguistic support to counter the above association with regular (Egyptian) troops, Linder (1973: 320) argued that the meaning of *mš* to which *miši* should be connected was not that mentioned above (“expedition” or “soldiers”), but instead that utilized in the Old Kingdom autobiographical inscription of Uni, commander of the army in the Sixth Dynasty (late 24th–early 23rd centuries BCE), which Erman (1882: 23) translated as ‘warship’– thus, in Linder’s argument, rendering LÚ.MEŠ *mi-ši* as ‘men of the warships’ (cf. Wb II, 156.2–3; BAR I, § 322). However, even at the time, ‘expedition’ or ‘campaign’ were accepted as more accurate definitions (e.g. Griffith 1898: 14, no. 159; Gardiner 1910: 215, no. 38).

The passages that mention *miši* clearly refer to naval activity and maritime conflict. However, despite the same source material, the differences in interpretation are stark, with both malicious and innocuous readings being offered for many of these references. For example, EA 101: 3–4 has been interpreted as declaring that the *miši* were the ones who killed ‘Abdi-Aširta, perhaps at the behest of Mitanni (de Koning 1940: 131; Säve-Söderbergh 1946: 64–67; Baruffi 1998: 101 n. 56), but it has also been read as a declaration that the Amurrites themselves had killed their leader, perhaps following the Egyptian recapture of Šumur (Lambdin 1953: 75; Moran 1969: 95, 98). Still another alternative is an exhortation by Rib-Hadda to Ḫaya and the *miši* to take advantage of ‘Abdi-Aširta’s vulnerability, a situation perhaps exacerbated by his inability to pay for Mitannian protection (Liverani 1998: 390–391; Rainey 2015: 1445; cf. Altman 2003: 364–365). Even the initial lines of this correspondence, which set the tone for the letter, are not without divergent readings: while commonly seen as an accusation against Ḫaya, the Egyptian vizier, of acting against the pharaoh’s interests by refusing both to enter Amurru with his forces and to interdict Amurrite ships that were evidently still moving freely along the coast (Rainey 2015: 19, 1445), it has also been argued (as noted above) that the rhetorical question and response “Who is hostile to the king? Is it not Ḫaya?” in EA 101: 1–2 should instead be read as “Who is the enemy of the king? (Certainly) not Haya!” (Liverani 1998: 389).

The reference in EA 101: 27–37 is similarly ambiguous: while it can be read as an amplification of Rib-Hadda’s appeal for Ḫaya to take the representatives of three cities (Tyre, Sidon, and Beirut) and the *miši* into Amurru to capture ‘Abdi-Aširta (Liverani 1998: 392–293; Rainey 2015: 546–549), it has also been seen as a declaration not only that the aforementioned should *not* enter Amurru, but instead perhaps that they should establish a blockade or an embargo against it (Lambdin 1953: 75; Moran 1969: 97). In each of these scenarios,

though, the *miši* are assumed to be under the pharaoh's control. In EA 105: 23–28, Rib-Hadda seems to state that the Arwadians, in cooperation with the Amurrites, captured the ships of the *miši* and seized the supplies they were carrying, although prior interpretations of these lines saw the *miši* as the ones seizing the ships (de Koning 1940: 215; Säve-Söderbergh 1946: 64).

Rib-Hadda claims in EA 108: 34–41 that the *miši* are supplying embattled rulers. While it seems likely that those being supplied are those who have gone over to Amurru (de Koning 1940: 215), it could also refer to those holding out *against* the sons of 'Abdi-Aširta. In EA 126: 58–66, Rib-Hadda accuses the *miši* of stealing the pharaoh's silver and gold and handing it over to the sons of 'Abdi-Aširta, who are accused, in turn, of funneling said treasure to Ḫatti, while EA 110: 50–52 may suggest that the *miši* are absconding with the pharaoh's property aboard their ships, although it may instead be that they are being asked to transport something for the king (Lambdin 1953: 76). Both of these readings can also be seen as suggesting that they were at least transitorily allied with Egypt, as such a relationship would seem to be a prerequisite for transporting (or for being asked to transport) Egyptian property, whether it be the unnamed cargo that seems to be referenced in the highly fragmentary EA 110, or the king's own silver and gold in EA 126.

It has been said that interpretations of references to the *miši* as malicious were “more or less forced upon [scholars] because of their preconception of the *miši* as hostile to the interests of the Egyptian king,” and that identifying these people with Egyptian troops “clarifies the meaning of the several passages where *miši* occurs” (Lambdin 1953: 76–77). Certainly there is insufficient evidence to support Linder's (1973: 320) pronouncement that the *miši* were “naval mercenaries...specializ[ing] in naval warfare,” whose “home is the ship which serves as their operational base and possibly also as their ‘engine of war.’” It is also a significant stretch to suggest that the evidence for the *miši* includes anything pointing to their either having “com[e] to the Eastern Mediterranean shores from the west and north-west,” or sailing “ships specially constructed and manned for sea battles” (Linder 1973: 317). In fact, EA 105, 108, and 110 seem to suggest that their vessels' primary role was as transports, rather than as ships of war – an interpretation that is further supported when the contexts of references to the *miši* are contrasted with mentions of the men of Arwad, whose maritime actions – including establishing blockades, interdicting shipments, participating in sieges, and capturing ships at sea – are described in much more dynamic terms.

Locating and Identifying the Miši

Scholarly attempts to associate the *miši* with specific groups and geographic locations have long been hampered by the meager evidentiary foundation. Linder (1973: 320), for example, connected his ‘men of the warships’ (discussed above) to the “men of the land of Lukki” mentioned in EA 38, a letter written to the pharaoh by the king of Alašiya in response to an apparent accusation that a raid or raids against Egypt were conducted from the island of Cyprus:

Why, my brother, do you say such a thing to me, “Does my brother not know this?” As far as I am concerned, I have done nothing of the sort. Indeed, men of Lukki, year by year, seize villages in my own country.

EA 38: 7–12 (Moran 1992: 111)

Whether the Alašiyian king was being specifically accused of complicity in this activity by the pharaoh, or simply being castigated for allowing such attacks to be staged from his island, the former responded by vehemently protesting that his territory, too, had fallen victim to maritime attack by marauding “men of the land of Lukki,” who are associated with the Lukka lands in western Anatolia (classical Lycia; see further below).

However, there is no clear reason to associate the toponym or ethonym ‘Lukki,’ or this unrelated Amarna text, with the *miši* of Rib-Hadda's letters. While stipulating that absolute certainty is impossible, Rib-Hadda's use of a generic term for these seafarers suggests that a more specific one was not available, either to himself or to the recipient of his letters. The latter can seemingly be ruled out by the mention of the “men of [the land of] Lukki” in EA 38: 10, which strongly suggests that the pharaoh was familiar with those being referred to by this term. Another option is that the toponym/ethonym ‘Lukki’ was known to the kings of Alašiya and of

Egypt, but not to Levantine *ḥazanni*; however, the absence of the specific term LÚ.MEŠ ša KUR Lu-uk-ki from the extant Canaanite correspondence in the Amarna corpus is insufficient in itself to support this conclusion. Drawing so specific a connection as Linder has done from a term used so nonspecifically in the Amarna texts themselves is a bridge too far at minimum.

The Miši as Aegean Mercenaries?

It has also been cautiously suggested that the *miši* were Aegean mercenaries in the pharaoh's employ (Wachsmann 1998: 130). This is not the only context in which a martial Mycenaean presence has been suggested in the waters off the Levantine coast in the Late Bronze Age: a suzerain treaty executed a century later between the Hittite king Tudḥaliya IV (ca. 1237 – 1209 BCE) and Šaušgamuwa, king of Amurru, prohibits the latter from engaging in trade with Assyria and (seemingly) from allowing ships from Aḥḥiyawa to do the same. In AhT 2, § 15, he writes: “[You shall not allow(?) any ship [of Aḥḥiyawa to go to him (that is, the King of Assyria) [...]” (after Beckman et al. 2011: 62–63, with an emendation by the author to accurately reflect the missing portion of the toponym in the original, which reads [ŠA KUR Aḥ-ḥ]i-¹ya¹-u-wa-aš-ši GIŠ.MÁ).

While this stipulation has typically been read as an order to Šaušgamuwa to prevent goods offloaded from Mycenaean ships at ports in Amurru from being transported overland to the Hittites' Assyrian enemy, the lack of evidence for Helladic pottery in LBA Assyria raises the question of just what Mycenaean goods may have been shipped there (Jung 2007: 551–552; Kelder 2010: 32). War was brewing at this time between Hatti and Assyria, and it may therefore be unsurprising that Tudḥaliya would take measures meant to cause economic damage to his enemy. However, the placement of this demand in a section of the treaty dealing with military, rather than economic, matters may support an alternative interpretation: that Tudḥaliya was not demanding that Aḥḥiyawan goods be prevented from reaching Assyria via Amurru, but seaborne Aḥḥiyawan warriors – in Bryce's (2010: 50; 2016: 70) words, “shiploads of freebooting Mycenaean trawling the Mediterranean in search of either plunder or military service in the hire of a foreign king.”

As discussed above, the Amarna letters demonstrate the precedent of sieges and assaults carried out by coordinated maritime and terrestrial forces in the Levant (viz. 'Abdi-Aširta and the men of Arwad in EA 104–105). Might Tudḥaliya have been attempting to prevent Assyria from carrying out similarly coordinated operations with a seaborne contingent of Aegean mercenaries? Unfortunately, the unprovable nature of such a suggestion prevents it from shedding more light on the context of the *miši* in the Amarna letters, other than to further demonstrate the enduring nature of theories regarding Aegean involvement in the maritime affairs of Eastern Mediterranean polities. Such connections have been hypothesized since at least the end of the Second Intermediate Period, with examples including notional Minoan or Mycenaean assistance in the expulsion of the Hyksos, Egyptian assistance in the post-Thera rebuilding of the Minoan fleet, dynastic marriages between the Minoan and Egyptian courts, and the founding of the Shaft Grave period at Mycenae by displaced Hyksos rulers (e.g. Schachermeyr 1949: 331–333, 341–342; Stubbings 1973: 635–638; Bietak 1996: 80–81; 2005; MacGillivray 2009: 164–165).

While these hypotheses are not well-supported to say the least, there is evidence for contact between Egypt and the Aegean in the early New Kingdom, including 'Minoan-style' wall paintings from Tall ad-Ḍab'a (Bietak 2005: 83, fig. 3.5; 2018, figs. 17–21) and depictions of Keftiu bearing tribute in five Theban tombs (TT 71, 86, 100, 131, 155) which date to roughly a fifty-year period within the 15th century BCE (Wachsmann 1987; Rehak 1998; Panagiotopoulos 2001; Matić 2012). Additionally, the annals of Thutmose III and a papyrus documenting the distribution of ship materials at the pharaonic dockyard of *prw-nfr* reference *kftiwy* 'Keftiu-ships' (Urk. IV.3, 707: 12; Glanville 1931: 117, 121; 1933: 10; Redford 2003: 80; cf. Jones 1988: 148–149), while a *nisbe* on an 18th dynasty ostrakon reads *p3 kftiwy* 'the Keftiuan' (Cline 1998b: 240), a medical papyrus copied under Tutankhamun but dated to Amenhotep III (ca. 1388 – 1351 BCE) directs that “the Asiatic disease” be treated with an incantation spoken in the “Keftiu language” (P. BM EA10059, 1: 4–7), and a school writing tablet contains multiple “names of the Keftiu” (Kyriakidis 2002: 213–14, 217). These examples' contexts and determinatives demonstrate that 'Keftiu' was used to refer to a place (and its inhabitants), rather than simply to a people (Bennet 2011: 158). The Greek mainland, on the other hand, seems to be referenced by both Thut-

mose III and Amenhotep III. The toponym *tinzy* ‘Tanaya’ is mentioned in a list of diplomatic gifts recorded by Thutmose III at the temple of Amon at Karnak (Redford 2003: 96), as well as in three toponym lists of Amenhotep III: those of Amon at Karnak and Soleb in Nubia, and the famous ‘Aegean list’ from Kom el-Hetan (Cline 1993; 1998: 240–241; Cline/Stannish 2011).

In the Amarna period, evidence for Aegean contacts with Egypt takes two main forms. The first is Late Helladic pottery, of which nearly half found in Egypt comes from El-Amarna (Hankey 1981). These ceramics – primarily LH IIIA2 in date, and mostly closed forms which presumably contained scented oils or other liquids – originated in the Mycenaean-Bertrati region of mainland Greece, and seem to have been designed specifically for export (Haskell 1984; Shelmerdine 1985; Mommsen et al. 1992: 298–301). Although this signifies an Egyptian interest in Mycenaean goods, it is not dispositive of direct contact (e.g., *inter alia*, Merrillees 1973: 181–184). After all, “the occurrence of Mycenaean pottery outside areas settled by Mycenaeans proves no more than that the pottery got there” – not how it was transported, or by whom (Bass 1998: 185).

The second form is iconographic – specifically, a fragmentary pictorial papyrus from El-Amarna, dated generally to the later years of Akhenaten’s reign, which is now in the British Museum (Papyrus BM EA74100; Schofield and Parkinson 1994: 160–161). The papyrus has been interpreted as depicting a scene of battle against Libyans, which includes at least two warriors in boar tusk helmets running toward a fallen Egyptian soldier (Schofield/ Parkinson 1994; Parkinson/ Schofield 1995; but cf. Rehak 1998: 39 n. 8). Boar tusk helmets were the most commonly-employed headgear of warriors in the Bronze Age Aegean, with both physical and iconographic evidence attesting to its use from at least the 17th to the 11th century BCE (Everson 2004: 3–8; Georganas 2010: 309). Worked tusks were present in two shaft graves from Grave Circle A at Mycenae (IV and V), while evidence for this Aegean innovation from the Middle Helladic period has also been found at Argos, Asea, Asine, Chora, Eleusis, Eutresis, Kolonna, Malthi, Phaistos, and Thebes, as well as in two shaft graves (Alpha and Nu) from Grave Circle B (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1997: 40–41, figs. 16–18, 21–23).

If the two warriors in boar tusk helmets do in fact depict Mycenaeans, this iconographic evidence is particularly valuable for demonstrating a direct Aegean connection to Egypt at this time. Such evidence is otherwise absent from the documentary record at Amarna, aside from the standard formulaic reference to *iww ḥry-ib n w3d-wr* ‘isles in the midst of the sea’ in a tribute list from the tomb of Huya, Akhenaten’s “Superintendent of the Royal Harem” (Amarna Tomb 1; Davies 1905: 9, pl. XIII). However, while even so general a term as this – with its history of use in reference to the Aegean – could provide some basis for connecting individuals from that region to Egyptian activities in this period, the lack of evidence to support the use of the term *amelūti miši* itself as a reference to Mycenaeans mitigates against such an interpretation.

Can the Miši be Disambiguated at All?

When these passages are considered in their own context, it becomes difficult to interpret the *miši* solely as members of Egyptian military units, particularly in light of the declaration in EA 126 that they were stealing treasure from the pharaoh and handing it over to the Amurrites. Syro-Canaanite ships and seafarers, on the other hand, were highly active agents of communication and exchange in the Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean, albeit often under the suzerainty of the greater powers to their north and south (Merrillees 1973: 182–183; Wachsmann 1998: 39; see below for further discussion of Ugarit in particular).

New Kingdom representations of seagoing ships in Mediterranean contexts (as opposed to travel on the Red Sea, for which Hatshepsut’s Punt ships support the use of Egyptian vessels) have been seen as depicting ships of Syro-Canaanite, rather than Egyptian, design – a tendency which also extends to the determinatives utilized in nautically-related inscriptions (Wachsmann 1998: 17–29, 42–47; see also below). The records of Thutmose III’s Syro-Canaanite expeditions suggest the acquisition of *imw*, *kftiw*, *kbnwt*, and *sktw* ships, both by capture and as tribute (Sasson 1966: 130 n. 22; Redford 2003: 63, 80). In EA 160: 14–19, ‘Aziru himself mentions ships and timber (GIŠ.MĀ.‘MEŠ’ ʾù’ [GI]Š?.TŪG-nu.MEŠ ù GIŠ.MEŠ GAL-bu-t) that he has promised to provide for the pharaoh, and he may be making a similar offer in EA 161: 54–56, although this has also been translated as a request that the pharaoh’s envoys instead provide these items for him (cf. Moran 1992: 248 and Rainey 2015: 801, 1510).

It may therefore be possible that the *miši* were seafarers local to the Levant, transporting goods and people on behalf of the pharaoh and his representatives. Artzy (2001: 38, 40–41 n. 3) has plausibly suggested that they acted “as a form of coast guard for the Egyptian overlords,” although the texts themselves do not directly support such actions. They likewise do not directly support Sasson’s (1966: 130) assertion that these notional Syro-Canaanite seafarers “took advantage of their position within the Egyptian fleet to harass and to plunder other cities which were still loyal to Pharaoh,” which seems to conflate these seafarers and the men of Arwad. There still remains, however, the issue of terminology. As noted above, the mariners from Arwad – also local to the Levant – were known by their associated toponym (LÚ.MEŠ URU *Ar-wa-da*), as at times were the Suteans (LÚ.MEŠ KUR *Su-te* in EA 122: 34 and 123: 14), as well as the Anatolian men of the land of Lukki (LÚ.MEŠ *ša* KUR *Lu-uk-ki*) in EA 38: 10, etc. Thus, the question remains why Rib-Hadda, in his many references to the *miši*, utilized this general term instead of a more specific or encompassing one – if not toponymically-related, then an appellation like that given to the Suteans (LÚ.MEŠ *Su-tu₄-ú* and LÚ.MEŠ *Su-ti-i*) in EA 16: 38 and 40, or the ‘*apîru*, who appear syllabically as LÚ.MEŠ *ḥa-pî-ru* in EA 286: 56. This is particularly the case if the *miši* were in fact Syro-Canaanites, and therefore were known to the author as something other than simply members of Egyptian crews.

However, it is also possible that this was the only capacity in which Rib-Hadda knew of these groups, in which case he would not have had a more specific term at his disposal than the catch-all that he uses in his letters. Significant precedent supports the continuation of foreigners’ group names and ethnonyms, even when serving Egypt in a martial capacity. Representative examples include the well-known Šardana and Pelešet, whose service to the pharaoh is referenced several times in the Late New Kingdom (e.g. Ramesses II’s Qadeš “Poem”; P. Anastasi II R4.7–5.3, V fr. 5; P. Louvre N3136; Kuentz 1929, pl. 6.3; 1934, pl. 220.26; Caminos 1954: 64; Spalinger 2002: 359–362; Emanuel 2013; Manassa 2013: 196–197), as well as the ‘*apîru*, who appear as ‘*prw* beside the term *mš*’ in its meaning of ‘soldiers’ in P. Leiden 349: 14–15 (Wilson 1933: 275–276; Greenberg 1955: 55–57; Manassa 2013: 80–81; Rainey 2015: 34). Had the pharaoh addressed these seafarers in a response to one of Rib-Hadda’s missives, it is conceivable that he would have utilized different (and possibly more specific) terms to refer to them – terms which Rib-Hadda simply lacked at the time of his writings.

The most straightforward answer may be that the term *miši* does indeed equate to *mš*’ and refer to sea-borne troops under the command of the Egyptian military – a reading which still leaves room for those being referenced to be of non-Egyptian origin or ethnicity. Without evidence beyond Rib-Hadda’s own writings to serve as a mechanism of further interpretation, such as a reference to comparable activities utilizing a different term or a pharaonic response, it is impossible to assess either the specificity or the intentionality of Rib-Hadda’s use of the term *miši*.

Ultimately, then, while the martial context of the texts in which the *miši* appear is clear, the rest of the circumstances surrounding these people and their role in the affairs of the Amarna Letters remains less so.

Conclusion

Maritime conflict certainly did not begin in the 14th century BCE, but the documentary evidence available from this period allows for a hitherto unprecedented study and interpretation of martial maritime activities within a specific geopolitical context. Although it provides only a snapshot of international relations in the Late Bronze Age, the epistolary corpus from Amarna is a treasure trove of evidence for such activities, particularly among the 14th-century polities of what would become known as the Phoenician coast.

The relevant letters, the majority of which were authored by Rib-Hadda of Byblos, include accounts of naval blockades, troop movements, the capturing of ships at sea, and references to seaborne evacuation. Many of these activities seem to be acts of war and warfare if considered in a Levantine context, while from the Egyptian point of view they may simply have been seen as small-scale, low-intensity efforts to jockey for geopolitical position, both locally and in the eyes of their pharaonic overlord.

In addition to the state or statelike actors depicted as engaging in these maritime activities, including Amurru, Tyre, Sidon, Beirut, Šigata, Ampî, and Ullasa, groups who have been considered by some scholars to

be non-state actors are also found in the Amarna letters: the men of Arwad and the *miši*. The lack of references to a ruler in texts that address the men of Arwad has led to a range of hypotheses about them, including that they established a republican or egalitarian form of government and that they adopted freebooting and seaborne mercenary activity in response to Egypt's economic marginalization of their island. While the Amarna letters do portray the men of Arwad as being active participants in martial maritime affairs, there is no direct evidence to support such interpretations.

The nature of the *miši* is more opaque than the men of Arwad, and they are additionally burdened by the weight of past scholarly interpretations, which have cast them either as Egyptian naval forces, as freebooters, or as shipborne mercenaries. The most extreme examples of the latter interpretation present them as foreigners from the Aegean or the Lycian coast who “specialize in naval warfare,” and who both sail and live on ships “specially constructed and manned for sea battles,” which serve both “as their operational base and possibly also as their ‘engine of war’” (Linder 1973: 317, 320). The documentary record itself does not support this level of detail, nor does it support a specific geographic connection, whether to the Aegean, to Lycia, or to any other foreign locale.

However, while the status of Arwad and the nature and role of the *miši* remain unclear, the Amarna corpus as a whole does not leave any ambiguity about the important role that ships played in the geopolitics of the Levantine coast, where they were used in offensive actions like raiding, establishing blockades, and enforcing embargoes, and where they could also fall victims to acts of piracy and plunder carried out by enemy seafarers.

Abbreviations

- BAR I Breasted, J.H. (1906–1907a): *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 1, Chicago.
 BAR II Breasted, J.H. (1906–1907b): *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, Chicago.
 Urk. IV Sethe, K. (1909): *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie (Urkunden des Ägyptischen Altertums 4)*, Leipzig.
 Wb II Erman, A./H. Grapow (1926–1961): *Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache I-VII*, Berlin.

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