

“Send the Archers”: Archery’s Primary Role in Canaanite-Levantine Military Thought

**“Enviar a los arqueros”: el rol central de la arquería en
el pensamiento militar cananeo-levantino**

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Abstract: This article explores the importance and reliance that rulers in the Canaanite – Levantine region attached to archery during the Amarna period. It argues that the Amarna Letter correspondence of these kings reveals a dependency on archery that was unmatched by Egypt and that was unique, especially in this period. The title phrase of the article or some form of it, “send the archers” is found in the Amarna Letters 84 times. The article demonstrates how this was an exceptional number of requests which far exceeded any request for any other form of military weapon assistance, including troops or chariots, which was minimal and often asked for until archers could arrive. The article examines several representative Amarna letters, both from the International correspondence of the kings outside of Canaan and the Levant and those in Canaan and the Levant, and uses these to demonstrate the contrast between the Canaanite king’s perception and that of the Egyptians and those outside of the region in regards to the use of archers. The examination considers both sides of the correspondence as well as touching on the importance that chariotry had in New Kingdom Egyptian military philosophy and how it came to eclipse other forms of military arms. The article looks at annals, iconographic and orthostatic representations of Egyptian military campaigns to demonstrate that there was a preponderance of reliance on the chariot in the Egyptian military mentality that was not shared by the Canaanites or the Levantine rulers. Canaanite kings sought after the protection of Pharaohs Amenophis III and Amenophis IV (also known as Akhenaten) archers and regularly sent requests asking for their support in facing down an invasion or insurrection of the ‘Apiru. These requests were

heavily biased in language and construction towards an emphasis on archers as opposed to charioteers or infantry.

Keywords: Amarna Letters, Archery, Canaan, Egypt, Chariots.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza la importancia y dependencia de los arqueros que tuvieron los gobernantes de la región de Canaán y Levante durante el periodo amarniense, defendiendo que la correspondencia de El-Amarna perteneciente a estos reyes revela que dicha relevancia fue un rasgo único, especialmente en este período, sin paragón incluso con Egipto. Sin ir más lejos, en las cartas de El-Amarna podemos encontrar reproducido hasta 84 veces el título de este artículo, “enviar los arqueros”, o alguna fórmula similar. Así, este trabajo evidencia hasta qué punto se trataba de un número excepcionalmente alto de peticiones que excedía con mucho las referidas a cualquier otro tipo de asistencia militar, incluyendo infantería o carros, que eran mínimas y a menudo estaban condicionadas a la llegada de los arqueros. Para ello se examinan varias de las cartas representativas de El-Amarna, tanto de la correspondencia internacional de los reyes de fuera de Canaán y Levante como de los pertenecientes a la región, las cuales permiten subrayar el contraste existente entre la percepción de los reyes cananeos, los egipcios y otros extranjeros sobre el uso de los arqueros. Este análisis toma en consideración ambas partes de la correspondencia, al tiempo que aborda sucintamente la importancia que los carros tuvieron en el pensamiento militar del Imperio Nuevo y cómo eclipsaron otros tipos de armamento. De este modo, el trabajo se centra en estudiar anales y representaciones iconográficas y ortostáticas de las campañas militares egipcias para demostrar que la importancia de los carros en la mentalidad militar egipcia no era compartida por los gobernantes de Canaán y Levante. En este sentido, los reyes cananeos buscaron la protección de los arqueros de los faraones Amenofis III y Amenofis IV (también conocido como Akenatón), para lo cual solicitaron regularmente su apoyo para acabar con una invasión o insurrección de los Apiru. Estas solicitudes estuvieron ampliamente orientadas tanto en el lenguaje como en su construcción hacia un énfasis en los arqueros, en contraposición a los carros o la infantería.

Palabras clave: correspondencia de El-Amarna, arqueros, Canaán, Egipto, carros.

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The Amarna letters make it clear that, for the Canaanite – Levantine vassal kings during the Amarna period, the archer was the most important figure in the military structure. This is evidenced by the frequency of archer requests as well as the specific language that favored the archers over and above the chariots or troops contained in the Amarna letters. This high view of the archer was not limited to their own archers but was imputed upon foreign archer corps and resulted in more numerous requests for them than any other forms of military support. The letters were written within the narrow geographic area of Canaan and were authored over an undetermined, yet lengthy period of time and assembled collectively into what is known as the Amarna Letters. These represent a series of diplomatic messages from these Canaanite rulers to the Pharaoh’s of this period. The Canaanite kings sought after the protection of Pharaohs Amenophis III and Amenophis IV (also known as Akhenaten) archers and regularly sent requests asking for their support in facing down an invasion or threats from insurrectionists identified as the ‘Apriu. These requests were heavily biased in language and construction towards an emphasis on archers as opposed to charioteers or infantry.¹

Contextualizing this Study

The range and depth of studies that have focused on many different aspects of and approaches to the Amarna Letters is of considerable breadth. The Amarna letters have been used for studies from a multiplicity of research angles; ancient diplomacy, grammatical rules, rules regarding the use of specific forms of address, and the political and social dimensions of military activity to mention the most prominent.² These

¹ The principle translation that was used for this study was that of William Moran. Although a detailed discussion of his use is below, it was based on research into his background as a leading authority. Other translators were also used to verify his findings. I would also like to add that this paper was written over the course of a two-year research program that was finished in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

² Raymond WESTBROOK: “Babylonian diplomacy in the Amarna Letters”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*; 120:3 (2000), pp. 377-382. Ellen F. MORRIS: “Bowling and Scraping in the Ancient Near East:

studies have emerged from a variety of institutions, mostly universities in Israel that are focused on languages and archaeology. There have been some studies that discuss military issues; however, due to their origin they favor a linguistic approach and they tend concentrate on outcomes in these texts that are political and social rather than militaristic or reflect philosophies of military organization. This is highlighted by works such as *The Men of Arwad*. This text, while insightful and valuable as far as political and social outcomes are concerned, does not address purely military concerns and in the course of the discussion the author, Jordi Vidal, makes some noticeable military-historical errors.³ The errors stem from an over-application of linguistic theory and not enough reflection on common occurrences of temporary military lapses.

Within this wider historiography there have not been studies that reflect on archery but rather more on chariotry and other Egypto-centric military themes. These include, and are certainly not limited to, the discussions of the role of king's and their operations on behalf or in opposition to, the rule of the Pharaoh within their vassalage. This present study's approach is to examine the issue of archery within the context of a military philosophy expressed by the rulers with limited consideration of the linguistic aspects of the texts themselves. It is also from the Canaanite-Levantine viewpoint and not dependent on Egyptian, chariot, or other consideration, inasmuch that it seeks to re-adjust and correct the view of chariot dominance to one of archery dominance.⁴

There are examinations of Egyptian archery on the dissertation level but these are restricted to areas involving more socially or politically directed objectives and not uses. The dissertation *Variability and Change in Ancient Egyptian Archery Technology* focuses on the technological development of archery and changing forms of bows, arrows, and arrowheads.⁵ The same is largely true of monographic sources. Anthony Spalinger, a leading Egyptologist, asserts that the archers continued to have the

An Investigation into Obsequiousness in the Amarna Letters”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 65:3 (2006), pp. 179-196. Stanley GEVIRTZ: “Evidence of Conjugational Variation in the Parallelization of Selfsame Verbs in the Amarna Letters”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 32:1-2 (1973), pp. 99-104. Y. Lynn HOLMES: “The Messengers of the Amarna Letters”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 95:3 (1975), pp. 376-381. Israel FINKELSTEIN, Yuval GOREN and Nadav NA'AMAN: *Inscribed in Clay: Provenance Study of the Amarna Letters and other Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, Tel Aviv, University of Tel Aviv, 2004.

³ Jordi VIDAL: “The Men of Arwad, Mercenaries of the Sea”, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 65:1-2 (2008), pp. 6-16. Other works that were consulted for this work but were more oriented towards linguistics approach include; Shlomo IZRE'EL and Itamar SINGER: *The General's Letter from Ugarit: A Linguistic and Historical Re-Evaluation of RS 20.33* (Ugaritic V, No. 20), Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv University, 1990.

⁴ A study that looked at the full range of military weapons in Canaan but does not really develop a single theme or concept is William J. HAMBLIN: *Warfare in the Ancient Near East to 1600 BC.: Holy Warriors at the Dawn of History*, New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 269-284. Ian Shaw considers a small aspect of the military situation in the Amarna era but spends only one page on the military, focusing largely on the Aten Cult. Ian SHAW: *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 270.

⁵ S.L. COOK: *Variability and Change in Ancient Egyptian Archery Technology*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Liverpool, 2018.

same level and status in the Egyptian army with the introduction of the chariot that they did before its introduction. At the latter portion of this article there will be further discussion of chariot perceptions in Egypt during the New Kingdom. Suffice to say at this point, Spalinger does not make it easy to obtain a clear view as the importance given archers and charioteers in that time frame considering his writing between two different texts. On the one hand he seems to give very high status to the charioteers in one writing (discussed in detail below) and then, in another work entitled, *War in Ancient Egypt: The New Kingdom*, asserts that the charioteers, by taking up a bow transformed into archers even while still driving the chariot. The preponderance of writing on New Kingdom warfare from other Egyptological sources places this same heavy emphasis on the chariot and not archery.⁶

Yigael Yadin in his well-known text *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands* does acknowledge that there was “great demand” for archers in this period, however, he does not explore the mechanics of those demands or sources his conclusions. Yadin does not cite the Amarna epistolary corpus nor is there specific indication that he has derived his thesis of this demand from the Amarna letters.⁷ Indeed, the majority of his direct evidence stems from archaeological remains and representations. In addition, Yadin sources the locus of desire on the Egyptians and their superior reputation and ignores any possible locus in the Canaanite-Levantine cultural complex. This paper will argue that the locus of Canaanite – Levantine desire for the archers was firmly rooted in their own particular cultural military tradition and not at all or solely on Egyptian prowess.

The Amarna Letters are a series of diplomatic and military request messages sent from various Near Eastern empires and vassal states of Egypt to at least two different Pharaohs. They were uncovered at Tel Amarna and, although published by various authors, were more accurately published by J.A. Knudtzon, an Assyriologist from Norway, in 1907. The Knudtzon translation remains the principle text on which others have followed, including that by William Moran. William Moran, who first published them in French, produced an English language edition in 1992.⁸

There are 382 letters contained in the Amarna epistolary corpus and Moran, upon whose text I principally draw for reasons discussed below, divided the Amarna

⁶ Anthony SPALINGER: *War in Ancient Egypt: The New Kingdom*, Hoboken, John Wiley & Sons, 2008. If it can allowed, it seems that chariotry has so bedazzled the archaeological field that their archer supports have been left in the dust, so to speak, and left to obscurity.

⁷ Yigael YADIN: *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands in Light of Archaeological Discovery*, 2 Vols., New York, McGraw-Hill, 1963, p. 80. I take some issue with some of his conclusions in this section which will be explored in future publications.

⁸ J.A. KNUDTZON: *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln, mit Einleitung und Erläuterungen*, Aalen, Anmerkungen und Register bearbeitet von Otto Weber und Erich Ebeling, 1915. William MORAN: *The Amarna Letters*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

letters by two different designations which were International Correspondence and then a section dominated by Vassals Communications. Within the 382 letters, there are 58 that were too fragmentary or broken for translation and meaningful reproduction. The first section is made up of communications between the Egyptian Pharaohs and the heads of empires. The defining characteristic of these is that they deal with larger, more generic diplomatic concerns with a few that deal with broken agreements and misunderstandings regarding wives and gifts. The language is very regulated and stilted and befits the co-equal status that these rulers had with Pharaoh. However, this changes with the vassal communication which, although following formulaic language and greeting patterns, quickly descend into frantic and near obsessive complaints and pleadings. One is sometimes jolted by the shift in tone once the formalities have been observed.

Eighty-three of the letters deal with archers in one fashion or another, with a full thirty of these letters having originated with one author, Rib-Hadda, the ruler of Gubla or, as it is now known, Byblos. Some of the letters are interesting because they are joint reports from separate rulers that repeat the same information verbatim. Some are also multiple copies of the same correspondence sent in case the original message did not get through.⁹ In the International Correspondence portion, there are four letters related to archery; two are related to gifts, the first being an inventory of gifts divided into two lists, another letter mentioning the same from Egypt, and two letters from Ugarit.

Since there are eighty-three texts and not all of them can be described I have chosen to concentrate on representative texts and those that represent breaks with the standard requests or patterns. These provide the clearest means to demonstrate the bias in favor of archers in the Canaanite - Levantine king mentality.

Below I have listed the texts which make mention of archers according to the Moran organization. These are all the texts that mention archers regardless of whether there is inclusion of chariot and archers in same letter or the mention of archers is exclusive.

⁹ Petr CHARVAT and Petra Ma. VLČKOVA (eds.): *Who Was King? Who Was Not King? The Rulers and the Ruled in the Ancient Near East*, Prague, Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 2010, p. 74.

All Archer Texts in the Moran Amarna Letters Corpus

(EA is the standard letter-number catalogue reference tool used by Amarna Letter scholars including Moran. EA stands for El-Amarna)

EA 22, 29, 45, 49, 53, 54, 65, 69, 70, 71, 73, 75, 76, 77, 79, 81, 82, 86, 90, 91, 93, 94, 95, 102, 103, 105, 107, 108, 111, 112, 114, 116, 117, 118, 119, 121, 123, 124, 127, 129, 131, 132, 136, 137, 141, 142, 144, 171, 174, 175, 176, 191, 193, 195, 196, 197, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 216, 244, 266, 269, 272, 281, 282, 283, 285, 286, 287, 288, 290, 292, 296, 300, 333, 335, 337, 362, 363, 367

The Use of the Word 'Archer' in the Amarna Corpus

The proper interpretation of the Egyptian sign representing the idea of “archer” that is used throughout the Amarna corpus is vital, especially in light of some interpretational disagreement among scholars. William Moran’s translation served as the principle basis for this research given its initial and larger accessibility. In addition to Moran, Ronald Youngblood, A. F. Rainey, and Mario Liverani were all consulted in the process of researching this positive view of the archers. Further research into their respective qualifications and fields of expertise served to inform the weight given to each interpreter’s views. The conclusion was reached that Moran’s and Youngblood’s translations were more in line with the proper meaning. Each translation does vary slightly, however, Moran and Youngblood are in closets agreement regarding the translation of the key word while Rainey departs from it in mild but still significant terms, and Liverani’s interpretation of the word falls the furthest outside normal translational bounds.¹⁰

The word used throughout the Amarna corpus is the Egyptian word “pitatu” (*pd.ty*). The word is unique in that it is one of the few obviously Egyptians words utilized in an otherwise wholly Western Peripheral Akkadian text and therefore, should stand out further in the text as far as clarity and translation. This word has been either translated or interpreted differently, however, and, as mentioned, Moran and Youngblood regularly translated this word as “archer” or “archers” while both were

¹⁰ Mario LIVERANI: *Le Lettere di El-Amarna*, Brescia, Paideia Editrice, 1998. Ronald YOUNGBLOOD: *The Amarna Correspondence of Rib-Hadda, Prince of Byblos (EA 68-96)*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Dropsie College, 1961. William M. SCHEIDEWIND (ed.): *The El-Amarna Correspondence. A New Edition of the Cuneiform Letters from the Site of El-Amarna based on Collations of all Extant Tablets*, Trans. A.F. Rainey, Leiden, Brill, 2015). William MORAN and W.F. ALBRIGHT: “A Re-Interpretation of an Amarna Letter from Byblos (EA82)”, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, 2:4 (1948), pp. 239-248.

careful to note that an even closer meaning may be “bow”. This is significant because their assessment originated in separate works on the same passages. Unfortunately, there is not much discussion of this sign in either work but given that Moran and Youngblood observe the same sign there is adequate justification to maintain that Moran has correctly identified the sign.

The use of an Egyptian word for archer may have led Liverani to interpret this word as representing “Egypt” or that Egyptian troops were meant due to his rendering this as “troops (of Egypt)”, however, neither Moran nor Youngblood render it as troops nor do they add the phrase “of Egypt”. While the addition of “of Egypt” is likely for editorial help it further distorts the meaning. Obviously, the archers in question or those being requested would be from Egypt given the context and only the single word is necessary. Rainey, on the other hand, translated “pitatu” as “regular troops” a meaning for which there is nothing to suggest that this is a proper interpretation given that the word has a limited range of meaning and can only mean “archer” or, as noted, “bow”. Liverani’s “troops” interpretation would fit more precisely to the text while Rainey’s appears to be for the purpose of smoothing the translation. An additional area of concern is that Rainey questioned the approach of Moran and did not fully endorse the concept of the Western Peripheral Akkadian, the language of the letters. Rainey in some instances offered commentary on Moran’s work and in those instances, he often preferred to change Moran’s translations to meanings that were softer and perhaps less abrasive. For example, the Rib-Hadda of Rainey is less stressful than he is in either Moran or Youngblood and that is also indicative of changing the more forceful “archer” to merely “regular troops”.¹¹

Archery in the International Relations Corpus

In the non-vassal portion of the Amarna letters, the so-called International Relations section, there are four mentions of archery. The first occurrence comes in the context of a wedding-gift list which catalogues the gifts given by the ruler of Tusratta. In Moran’s text it is given the appropriate title, «Inventory of Gifts from Tusratta». ¹² In this list it is mentioned that there were given «2 bows...their astragal ornaments overlaid with gold, and on one of them is the gold over lay double. 10 shekels of gold have been used on them». Following this, in the same list, we are told that «100 bows, of

¹¹ There exists those who are acolytes of Moran while there are equally well-trained Rainey acolytes and both scholars had distinctive approaches and schools of thought attached to them. Through an initial review process a part of the “school” rivalry was brought to my attention. Moran’s pioneering work on the Amarna letters and his introduction of the idea of the Western Peripheral Akkadian was significant and much attacked by Rainey.

¹² EA22 “Inventory of Gifts from Tusratta”. Text VAT 395. Lines, 54-56 of section II, p. 55. And lines 45-54 of section III, pp. 55-56.

the apisamus-type, of gold» and «1000 arrows, sharp, 2000 arrows...3000 arrows». Apart from the two bows with gold overlay there is no indication that all the arrows sent were ceremonial and could not have a military application. Weapons that were also listed are; javelins and mace heads but these are in low numbers of 30 and 40, not thousands as listed above with the arrows or the bows. The imbalance certainly reflects a cultural perception that the bow and arrow were far more useful and meaningful to the recipient.

The next occurrence in the International Relations section is contained in EA 29 entitled, «A Long Review of Mitanni Egyptian Relations» and states briefly, “3 bows, 3 quivers overlaid with gold; 90 arrows of bronze». ¹³ This list does contain an entry right after this that there were 3 mace heads given. However, it is possible that the primacy of listing indicates an importance. These are the only mentions of weapons and the number of arrows, the operative portion of the weapon, is substantial. Omitted from this list are any mentions of spears or swords which, as Yadin notes in his text, were widely used in this era. ¹⁴ This makes the omission or the use of the bow on a greater scale that much more important, especially as we get into the later vassal correspondence. Returning to the bow and arrows there are some interesting features within this list.

It is clear from the description that some of these bows and arrows could have been used in actual combat and did not necessarily have to serve a single, decorative purpose. ¹⁵ The ability to use a certain number may have communicated any number of messages, including that the person was to use them for hunting. But these are in such abundance that, they may have been given out in some measure to soldiers for use.

The next two occurrences of archery in the International Relations section comes from two letters that Moran interpreted as having come from Ugarit. The first tablet is more intact and the second miraculously preserved the same salutation material that the first one includes and thus we can come to some conclusions about it. The text is EA 45 and states the following in a salutation section, «*[Say to the king]*, the Sun, *[my lord: Message of Ammistamru, your servant. fall at your [feet] 7 times [and 7 times. May all go well f]o[r the king, the Sun, my lord, for your household, your chief wife, for your (other) wives, for your sons, for your archer/s, [for whatever else belongs to the king, the Sun, my lord], m[ay all go very, very well]*».¹⁶

¹³ EA 29 “A Long Review of Mitanni-Egyptian Relations”. VAT 271 frag. 1600, 1618-20, 2195-96. Lines 182-187, p. 97

¹⁴ Yigael YADIN: op. cit., p. 78.

¹⁵ It can be pointed out that the giving of bows and arrows in either ceremonial manner or at ceremonial times has precedent in the Neo-Sumerian period of the Ur III Empire.

¹⁶ EA 45 “Friendly Ugarit”. 1692 Copies WA 177, VS 11, 17. Lines 1-8, p. 117. Author’s emphasis.

According to various scholars on both the Amarna letters and other related texts the salutation section fulfilled a variety of roles, including establishing social relationships and relative position. This section of the letter was often influenced by various factors, none the least of which was local scribal tradition and how the scribe was taught. Thus, the salutation would or could include local cultural identifiers and items that played a prominent role in politics or social status.¹⁷ Given these conditions this mention of the archers is more prominent given that, in all of the prior letters that open with a similar salutation structure, (a clear pattern can be discerned by looking at EA's 35, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42 etc.) none of them are from the Canaanite – Levantine region, and none of them include archers as a part of the salutation. The phrase is similar; however, the other letters utilize phrasing such as, «your wife, your chief wife, your chariots, your horses (or), your troops». The substitution of archers for chariots or troops was therefore cogent and purposeful. It is likely that the substitution was purposely used to draw attention to that specific element of Pharaoh's army based on the scribe's cultural background and the king's intent. Moran lists EA 49 as coming from a successor at Ugarit and the successor uses the precise same phrasing as 45, «his household, his chief wife, for his (other) wives, for his sons, the archers». Thus, the inclusion of the archers had become a culturally embedded marker, a signifier for them as to the most important items to effectively bless.¹⁸ The retention of the phrase also indicates that the king was aware of its usage and chose not to override the use of it.

While these are the only mentions of archery in the International Relations section, they do highlight the importance of archery and set the context of archery away from that of merely a military role. By placing the archers in the context of the salutation they are setting aside this group for specific mention and praise. It is likely that the Canaanite-Levantine rulers saw them as more than just soldiers but also as a special class of people. It will be shown later how this was not a view shared by the Pharaoh. In addition, archery played an important diplomatic role in the exchange of international gifts.

The Vassal Correspondence

The section that has been termed the “Vassal Correspondence” begins with EA 53. While not containing a sizable number of tablets mentioning archers in this immediate section there are some sprinkled in it. The most significant amount begins with the Rib-Hadda correspondence. The Rib-Hadda epistolary corpus stretches from tablet EA 65 to EA 137 with a minor pause and then resumption. The Rib-Hadda corre-

¹⁷ Grant R. OSBORNE: *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1991, p. 412. Ellen F. MORRIS: *op. cit.*, pp. 192-193.

¹⁸ EA 49 “A Request for a Physician” C 4783 (12238) WA 204 + 180. Lines 1-16, p. 120.

spondence is approximately 36 letters long with 34 of them including requests for archers.¹⁹ From his many letters it is clear that Rib-Hadda is involved in a long war with two neighbors and at one point he specifies that this war has gone on for five years, all of which time the Pharaoh has been dodging his requests for aid. His requests heavily emphasize his desire for archers, so much so, that he actually reduces the value of the regular troops that he is requesting to be sent. He often points to the archers and states clearly that he is awaiting their arrival even while he has troops from Pharaoh. This focus on the archers, at the expense of the troops, is mirrored in some other texts that will be seen after the Rib-Hadda exemplars.

In EA 71, Rib-Hadda makes clear that he is fighting something of a superior force, yet he states that the force will not be so strong if it faces archers.²⁰ It is addressed to a lower servant of Pharaoh and not to the Pharaoh directly. The language adopted is terse, emotional, and not what would be appropriate for the Pharaoh. After giving an appraisal of the situation he states the request in this manner: «What is his auxiliary force that it is strong? Through the ‘Apiru his auxiliary force is strong! So send me 50 pairs of horses and 200 infantry that I may resist him in Sigata *until the coming forth of the archers.*» In the emphasized portion we see that he has put the weight of his argument on his desire for the archers. The weight of the argument is that the infantry and the 50 pairs of horses are really a stop-gap measure, a means to await the archers but not the truly effective instrument with which to deal with Abdi-Asirta, a possible local turncoat who is assisting with the capture of a city called Sumer (not to be confused with Sumer) that is along the Levantine coast. In EA 82 Rib-Hadda quotes back to Pharaoh a message the he says he received in which it was stated that, «I will send him along with an auxiliary force, until the archers come out, to protect your life». This is one of the few acknowledgments that Pharaoh gives back to a subordinate in this entire section and, it is only of the few instances in which he mentions the archers in the same vein as the ruler who is making the request. In the examples of Pharaonic responses in the latter portion of this article it shown that the majority of Pharaonic responses do not attach as great a significance to the archers as these rulers. In this specific message Rib-Hadda is quoting it back to Pharaoh as a complaint because it seems Pharaoh has not backed up his rhetoric with action and the two are locked in a series of dueling expectations, mostly centering on the archers.²¹

¹⁹ Some researchers and translators include more or fewer letters in the Rib-Hadda corpus depending on their understanding of the language and construction of the letters, mostly the very short ones that proceed the clearly identified Rib-Hadda letters.

²⁰ EA 71 “To A Wise Man” VAT 1632 WA 72 VS 11, 33. Lines 23-27, p. 140.

²¹ EA 82 “A Threat to Abandon Byblos” BM 37648. Lines 14-22, p. 152. Carl NIEBUHR: *The Tell El Amarna Period: The Relations of Egypt and Western Asia in the Fifteenth Century B.C. According to the Tell El Amarna Tablets*, London: David Nutt, 1903, p. 41. Toby WILKINSON: *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt*:

In EA 73, he requests the archers and once again resorts to more emotional and less diplomatic language: «Why have you been negligent, not speaking to the king, your lord, so that you may come out together with archers and fall upon the land of Amurru? If they hear of the archers coming out, they will abandon their cities and desert». Rib-Hadda makes a very interesting argument in this message and it may have been based on an incident that he became aware of. In the Amarna letters we are shown an instance, included in this essay, where the enemy did retreat as a result of the Pharaoh's archers being present. He is therefore not making an unreasonable argument as may be supposed or basing his argument on hopeful thinking. It is noteworthy as well because Rib-Hadda was apparently, in this message, writing not to Pharaoh but one of his officials and perhaps a known official who had oversight over the archers.

Rib-Hadda's continual appeal for archers should be thoroughly indicative that for him the archer corps represented a core feature of military support. The Rib-Hadda corpus stretches over a period of five years with a possible sixth and seventh year. This period was only interrupted by two letters that failed to mention archers but was immediately resumed and, by the organization of the letters, appears to have made the requests until the end of his reign in Byblos and in exile in Sidon. This consistency cannot be explained by anything less than a purposeful and intentional fixation on them as a key requirement and corps of military personnel. If chariotry, foot soldiers, or some other element of the Egyptian army was as suitable as the archers then we would expect to see him make different appeals throughout the corpus and perhaps over the long duration, but that does not occur. Rather, we get the strengthening of that request and more frequent invocation of the need for them.

As already pointed out, Rib-Hadda was not the only vassal king to issue calls for the presence of Pharaoh's archers. The number of requests contained in the Amarna epistolary corpus from other vassals surpasses that of Rib-Hadda. Some provide more detail in why they are desirous of the presence of the archers while others simply write the phrase "send the archers". It may have been developing into a formulaic phrase; however, this cannot occur in the absence of a military or cultural driver. The development represents an important addition to the letters and indicator that archers represented in their minds the primary means with which they would achieve recovery of their dwindling possessions. This is juxtaposed by Pharaoh's limited responses in which he briefly mentions his demands that the archers are well fed and

The History of a Civilization from 3000 B.C. to Cleopatra, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010, pp. 266-267.

taken care of, however, he also engages in a formulaic salutation at the close of these letters that does not mention or praise the archers as an individual corps.

Letters Outside of the Rib-Hadda Inter-Epistolary Corpus

In this next section I will present a sample of the non-Rib-Hadda letters. It is worth mentioning that efforts at establishing a rough or accepted chronology have not met with success inasmuch as none of them have gained wide acceptance. The letters offer almost no stable clue to their absolute chronology while a relative, internal chronology is obtainable in some instances. Therefore, the order of the letters as represented here do not follow chronologic order.

In EA 53 a king, Aitukama, is reported to have changed sides and is now fighting on behalf of the Hittite empire and is seizing smaller city-states in the area.²² Apparently, he has a tactic of sending letters to the kings of these city-states requesting that they voluntarily go over to, or join, the Hittite empire as vassals of their empire rather than that of Egypt. Qatna, the possible origin of this letter, is in western, southern Syria. It is in a position straddling the border and interior of the country and close to the Mediterranean but removed from the main routes. However, it was probably not unconnected to the closer seaside trading hubs. The writer of the letter, King Akizzi, begins the letter with a declaration of his innocence and states that he is the only one remaining faithful to the Pharaoh in the region, the other kings having given in to Aitukama. According to the organization of the corpus, and not necessarily the first in actual chronological sequence, this is the first of the vassal letters to begin the requests for archers.²³ The tone of the whole letter is one of pleading and petition to the Pharaoh and a hint of the desperation can be gleaned. A portion of the letters reads,

As far as the king, my lord, can, he co[m]es forth. But] it is being said, "The king, my lord, will not come forth." [*Andso*] may the king, my lord, send archers [that] they may co[me] to this country [Si]nce, my lord, these kings are ones who *l[ov]e* him, let a magnate of the king, my lord, just name their gifts so they can give them. My lord, if he makes this land a matter of concern to my lord, then may my lord send archers that they may come here. (Only) messengers of

²² EA 53 "Of the Villain Aitukama" BM 29820 BB 37. Lines 45-70, p. 125. Philippe ABRAHAMI: "Les lettres de la correspondance d'El-Amarna expédiées depuis l'Oronte", *SYRIA. Archéologie, Art et Histoire*, 4 (2016), pp. 119-135.

²³ There is no universally recognized chronology for any of the Amarna Letters. Reading the surrounding literature reveals very real obstacles and issues regarding proper ordering of the Amarna letters and some have been re-arranged in time sequence based solely on the change and re-interpretation of a single word.

my lord have arrived here... My lord, just as Dimaski in Upu: kaA-di-hi (falls) at your feet, so may Qatna : ka[^]-di-hu-li-ei'(fall) at your feet. My lord, one asks for life before my messenger. I do not fear [at al]P in the presence of the archers of my lord, since the archers belong to my lord. If he sends (them) to me, they will enter] Qatna.

This phrase of «send archers» is repeated here two times in slightly different form but the one main idea is expressed in the phrase, «If he makes this land a matter of concern to my lord, then may my lord send archers». The presence of the archers is proportional and representative of the Pharaoh's concern about his vassals and their well-being. Again, this is a theme that will be repeated ad nauseum throughout the epistolary corpus. This theme speaks to their perception of what represents a full, authoritative response. In their perception chariots, troops, and maceheads do not demonstrate a proper commitment and serious response. Perceptions such as these are usually based in experience and localized with the ruler. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that he has observed a similar pattern in the past and is basing the request on such.

In EA 70 the writer of the letter initially asks for Nubian soldiers to be sent but, this is in lieu of receiving archers.²⁴ To quote in full,

[And] send me [x Egyptians and fx me]n from Meluhha, [just] as (you did to) the kings [to wh]om you [ga]ve c[bariots], so they can gu[ar]d [until the coming] forth of the archers. [And] may the king, my lord, know [that] the land of Amurru longs day and [night] for the coming forth of the archers. [The d]ay the [arc]hers arri[v]e, the land of Am[urru] will [certainly] be join[ed . . . t]o the king, [my lord]

In this passage clear preference is given to the archers and their role in securing the country. Indeed, the infantry are entirely dismissed in light of the fact that, once the archers arrive, they will take over the mission. While the contemporary mindset may be focused on air power prior generations were heavily focused on infantry, and that was the case at the moment that the letter was written. Most military historians of the last few decades have focused on the infantry or cavalry as the mainstays of military power, especially in the ancient world.²⁵ Yet in this passage the writer stands that on end by stating that the archers are the most important soldiers and

²⁴ EA 70 “a Request for Nubian Troops” WA 67 Lines 17-31, p. 139.

²⁵ Christon ARCHER et al.: *World History of Warfare*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2002. Boyd SEEVERS: *Warfare in the Old Testament: The Organization, Weapons, and Tactics of Ancient Near Eastern Armies*, Grand Rapids, Kregel, 2013. For an exception see Yigael YADIN: op. cit., p. 80.

that infantry and cavalry are placeholders at best. That the archers are spoken of as a force that the «land of Amurru longs day and night for the...archers» and that “the day the archers arrive the land will be joined to Pharaoh’s» is not without significance. Both of these simply re-enforce the notion that the archers are the ones who will accomplish the mission. Again, this is a far cry from the more “romantic” choices of media and popular thought.

In the texts EA 174-77 we are introduced to a situation where a king must recover some cities that have been seized by his enemies.²⁶ However, the text is unique because it is issued verbatim by four different kings; Bieri, Ildayyi, Abdi-Risa, and a king whose name has been obliterated. This is significant for its repetition of the appeal for archers and represents a unanimous assent to the facts contained in the letter, as well as the appeal for the nature of re-enforcement requested. Also, that the archers represented a broader, cultural aspect and not a limited desire by prominent kings. Many of these city-states have yet to be identified, thus making their size irrelevant in proportion to their archer aspirations.

Returning to the text, the attack is being led by Hatti troops who had previously attacked and were written about in the immediately preceding letter. It says,

Look, we are in Amqu, (in) cities of the king, my lord, and E[takka]ma, [the ruler] of Kinsa, assisted the troops of [H]att[i] and set [the cities] of the king, my lord, on fir[e]. May the king, my lord, take cognizance, and may the king, my lord, give archers that we may (re)gain the citi[es] of the king, my lord, and dwell in the cities of the king, my lord, my god, my Sun.²⁷

In historical discussions of the Battle of Kadesh, that would take place about seventy-five years after the reign of Amenhotep IV in this same area, the emphasis in those accounts is largely focused on the Pharaoh’s foot soldiers and a portion the chariot corps that he brought with him. This text suggests that, at the time of its authorship the problem was resolvable with not only by a smaller contingent of troops but, by the archer corps and that they were sufficient to recapture the lost territory. The archer corps was considered to be more effective than chariots against Hittite chariot corps or soldiers and this should not be dismissed or thought of as insignificant. The position and significance that the archers held in the perception of military effectiveness in this ruler’s mind is in stark contrast to the usual scholarly approach that asserts that the chariot as the choice or favored weapon by all rulers at this period.²⁸

²⁶ EA 174 “A Joint Report on Amqu” Vat. 1585. Lines 8-26, p. 260

²⁷ EA 176 “A Joint Report on Amqu (3)”. BM: 29829. Lines 7-20, p. 261.

²⁸ Frederic SERVAJEAN: *Quatre Etudes Sur La Bataille de Qadech*, Montpellier, Université Paul Valéry: Montpellier III, 2012.

In a shorter text, EA 196, we read the king give a very routine statement. In it he states, «Moreover, may the king, [my] lord, send me 200 men to guard ((to guard)) the cities of the king, [my] lord, [un]til [I] see the archers [of the king], my lord».²⁹ This appears to indicate that the king was much more interested in receiving the archers than the troops. He asks for 200 men to guard the cities of the king *until* he sees the archers. We have seen the same language in the previous examples in EA's 70 and 71 for example. These are requests from various city-states that were mostly unconnected and not politically integrated but were a part of a common cultural group. For a region to have a unique and particular emphasis on archers at the expense of charioteers and other forms of military power it must have been embedded in far more than a common or shared domination by Egypt. These texts reveal a basic assumption that is still somewhat obscure at this point. This point is made clearer by another very short text labeled EA 333.

In EA 333 it is stated, «May you know that Sipti-Baclu and Zimredda are acting disloyally together», and Sipti-Baclu said to Zimredda, «The forces of the town of Yaramu have written to me. Give me 11? bows, 3 daggers, and 3 swords. Look, I am about to sally forth against the land of the king, and you are in league with me».³⁰ The fact that they are asking for more bows, 11, than daggers and swords does appear to have some significance. It is good to recall that bows were common hunting implements at the time and were faster to use in the hands of both skilled and unskilled hunters or warriors given that even an errant shot could potentially hit something or someone. Also, the skill level of using a bow can be taught easily and to a greater number of people. The sword, being a close quarter and far more personally engaging weapon, could have potentially taken longer and more practice to learn and was less able to be mass produced like the bow and arrow. Using more bows would have reduced the exposure of the forces being requested. There is also documentation that supports that archery gave a distinct advantage in long-distance, or standoff, fighting which neither the mace or sword gave. This would help reduce the number of casualties that would be inflicted on the ruler's own infantry.³¹

While we have seen a number of texts that speak of the sending of archers in the context of the future, as a request for them to come, we are given a text that relates the feelings of at least one ruler once the archers have departed. In text EA 244 «Besieged by Lab'ayu» we are given an insight into what took place after the archers

²⁹ EA 196 "Unheard of Deeds" Vat 1592 + 1710. Lines 33-43, pp. 273-4

³⁰ EA 333 "Plots and Disloyalty". Copy BE ½, PL: XXIV. Nos. 66-67. Photograph. Lines 4-18, p. 356

³¹ Christon ARCHER: op. cit., p. 7. Yigael YADIN: op. cit., p. 82. As Yadin and most other archaeologists are apt to do they state that the bow was a long-range weapon and include it in these categories, however, Archer is one of the few to explicitly note that the reason for this is, is the range of 250 – 300 yards that an arrow could achieve. Certainly a much longer distance than standing mere feet away from the opponent with a sword or spear.

had left.³² The archers had departed and immediately the situation went back to what it had been previously. The message reads in whole,

Say to the king, my lord and my Sun: Message of Biridiya, the loyal servant of the king. I fall at the feet of the king, my lord and my Sun, 7 times and 7 times. May the king, my lord, know that since the return (to Egypt) of the archers, Lab'ayu has waged war against me. We are thus unable to do the plucking: Ka-Zi-ra (harvesting), and we are unable to go out of the city gate: sa-ah-ri because of Lab'ayu. When he learned that archers were not co[ming ou]t, he immediately [determined to take Magidda. May the king save his city lest Lab'ayu seize it. Look, the city is consumed by pestilence, by. . . 5 So may the king give a garrison of 100 men to guard his city lest Lab'ayu seize it. Look, Lab'ayu has no other purpose. He seeks simply the seizure of Magidda (Meggido).

From this letter we learn that the king had requested and received archers from Pharaoh. On the arrival of the archers, as Rib-Hadda had suggested, the enemy abandoned their raids against the town. After remaining for an unspecified amount of time Pharaoh's archers wanted to return to Egypt and did so. At this point the enemy returned and not merely did it return to the prior situation, it deteriorated further to the point of a siege.

While the letter does not in specific terms call for the return of the archers the intention for them to do so is very apparent. The archers are the ones who had displaced the enemies plans and caused a change in the strategic and tactical situation. Lab'ayu could not counter the archers and, rather than confronting them, he chose to retreat and wait the changed strategic situation out until the troops got bored and returned home. It is likely that he did not possess a corps of archers or they were not as well trained or numerous as was necessary to overcome the force Pharaoh dispatched. Consistent with the other Canaanite and Levantine vassals the king does not appeal for chariots, for troops armed with spears or swords, all of which Pharaoh possessed.

We should also note that, as was Rib-Hadda's expectation, the presence of the archers caused the retreat. This point cannot be stressed too much and it merely re-enforced the prior perception that the archers were the mainstay of their stability. Because of the lack of a recognizable chronology it cannot be said that Rib-Hadda was citing this specific instance, however, the genesis of his thinking was based in the same experiences that other rulers had had.

³² EA 244 "Besieged by Lab'ayu" C 4768 (12200) WA 244. Lines 1-33, p. 298.

As with the Rib-Hadda corpus it needs to be made explicit that, there is a long duration and consistency over a period of years that these requests for archers were issued. While a chronology of the Amarna letters is not available internal textual material points to this long duration. The texts contain explicit references to prior letters and unreturned messengers who have been absent. Given that routine correspondence to the Pharaoh may take a matter of weeks in both directions the exasperation must reflect a large gap even for a ruler who would be used to slower communication. There is no doubt that in most cases they represent a correspondence of at least a year or two. The continued emphasis on the role of the archer as the primary focus of their need justifies the contention that the archer remained the core of their military planning and strategy. This same archer centered thinking does not appear in any Pharaonic text and nowhere in reading from Egyptian research sources is archery given the same level of prominence in Egyptian society nor military thought.

Limited Pharaonic Response

There are some tablets that are included which are Pharaoh's responses to vassals who have sent messages to him. The responses that we do have are valuable in this context because they show how different the thinking and priority of the Pharaoh is in military terms than that of his erstwhile vassals.

The Pharaonic responses are very limited and there is a series of them in the latter portion of the Amarna corpus. While they are divorced from a chronological sequence the most important aspect is to examine the emphasis or lack of emphasis on the archers, and there is very apparent lack of acknowledgement on the part of Pharaoh in this area. The first in this series of three responses comes from EA 369. In EA 369 Pharaoh states regarding his military, «And know that the king is hale like the Sun. For his troops, his ch[ariot]s, his horses, all goes very well. Aman has indeed put the Upper Land, the Lower Land, where the sun rises, where the sun sets, under the feet of the king.»³³

This returns us to the importance of the beginning and ending salutations in the letters of this time and in these specific texts. The salutation formula issued from Pharaoh is consistent and remains without the presence of the archers. There is in this tablet a brief, off-hand mention of a stable or overseer of archers being sent out to the ruler of Gazru. The official, named Hanya, is included with other materials necessary to gather female cupbearers and beautiful cupbearers at that. Thus, the emphasis is far from being on the archers or their needs and focuses on the extravagance of the

³³ EA 369 "From the Pharaoh to a Vassal" *Musees Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire (Brussels)* E. 6753. Copy: G. Dossin, *RA* 31 (1934), 127. *Academie Royale de Belgique, Bulletin de la Classes des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Philosophiques* 20 (1934), facing p. 86. Lines 24-32 Moran, *Amarna Letters*, p. 366.

court. In EA 370 we see a similar pattern of response where the Pharaoh speaks of his military in glowing terms, all to the exclusion of the archers, «The king herewith sends to you Irimayassa, . . . [. . .] And know that the king is hale like the Sun in the sky. For his *troops* and his *chariots* in multitude, from the Upper Land to the Lower Land, the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun, all goes very well».³⁴ As noted from the previous passage, the emphasis of the Pharaoh is on his chariots and his troops.

In EA 367 we do see one mention of the archers that is stronger, but by no means as strong as the vassal importance. It reads in part,

The king herewith sends to you Hanni, the son of Maireya, the stable overseer of the king in Canaan. And what he tells you heed very carefully lest the king find fault in you. Every word that he tells you heed very carefully and carry out very carefully. And be on your guard! Be on your guard! Do not be negligent! *And may you prepare before the arrival of the archers of the king food in abundance, wine (and) everything else in abundance.* Indeed he is going to reach you very quickly and he will cut off the heads of the enemies of the king. And know that the king is hale like the Sun in the sky. For his *troops* and his *chariots* in multitude all goes very well.³⁵

The Pharaoh commands the king to prepare food and wine in abundance for his men, but it is worth to note that the archers are not a part of the ending salutation as where the archers an intrinsic part of the opening salutation of the vassal kings, especially that of Ugarit. The Pharaoh is continually focused on proclaiming the greatness of his chariots and troops. It is certainly possible that he was mentally including the archers in his “troops” but that he did not separate them from all of his troops as had the Levantine rulers is of particular interest. In addition to all of this, other researchers, particularly those who have dealt with chariotry and Egyptologists, have explored the issue of the status of the chariot in their writings.

Within the writings of Egyptologists that have been consulted it is clear that chariotry was a leading element of the Egyptian military philosophy of the New Kingdom. John A. Wilson, one of the leading Egyptologists in the last few decades, wrote in his book *The Culture of Ancient Egypt* that within the context of the New Kingdom and our specific period, «The chariotry formed a *corps d'elite*, socially higher than the infantry».³⁶ In a much more recent study entitled, *Depictional Study of Char-*

³⁴ EA 370 “From the Pharaoh to a Vassal” BM 134870 Copy: Gordon Or n.s. 16 (1947), 15. Lines 7-29 Moran, p. 367.

³⁵ EA 367 “From the Pharaoh to a Vassal” AO 7095. Lines 22-25 Moran, p. 365. Author's emphasis.

³⁶ John A. WILSON: *The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 187. For the position that the chariot had a strong place in the military outside of Egypt see Juan Pablo VITA: “The

iot Use in New Kingdom Egypt it is noted that, with the inauguration of the New Kingdom and the Egyptian adoption of the chariot, there is an explosion of artistic depictions of the chariot and a heavy emphasis on its construction. No such depictions or amount of depictions represent the archer. Anthony Spalinger in his work, *Egyptian Chariots: Departing for War* touches on the chariots leading status, at least in the context of the late New Kingdom and introduces a Pharaonic text which states, «His teams of horses (charioteers) were front-line assault troops escorting him, and his infantry were with him; the elite infantry were in two rows». This and the rest of the text by Spalinger generally supports the position that Egyptian military thought was chariot-centric at this time. The chariots were now the leading elements of the attack much like modern armor will lead in advance of infantry units, the infantry being reduced to elements of support. Egypt continued to use archers and navy personnel, however, this and other texts makes it clear that the chariots and charioteers had reached a very high status in both the military and society at large.³⁷

It should be noted, and a possible objection is, that there is archery depicted in connection with chariotry and archers were a part of the Egyptian military. While true, there is a necessary correction. From a reading of literature on the chariot it appears that the bow was only one among many different weapons, including the spear and mace, that could be or were always used by the chariot driver and the second man inside with him. There is also a clear superseding of the archery corps and they are reduced in status from a high elite to a very functional part of the army. No Near Eastern army was without an archer corps, but the clear elevation of status of the chariot should sufficiently address questions regarding the place that the bow had obtained during this period. And, while Spalinger does not make a clear deferential between archers and charioteers in the Amarna letters, within the corpus, as demonstrated, there was a clear mental differentiation made by these rulers. Clearly from the writings above, for the Pharaoh, the archers are just another group in his vast army, for the Levantine rulers the archers are the army.

Power of a Pair of War Chariots in the Late Bronze Age: On Letters RS 20.33 (Ugarit), BE 17 33a (Nippur), and EA 197 (Damascus region)", in Jordi VIDAL (ed.), *Studies on War in the Ancient Near East. Collected Essays on Military History*, AOAT 372, Münster, Ugarit-Verlag, 2010, pp. 87-93.

³⁷ Anthony SPALINGER: "Egyptian Chariots Departing for War," in André J. Veldmeijer and Salima Ikram (eds.), *Chasing Chariots: Proceedings of the First International Chariot Conference*, Leiden, Sidestone Press, 2012, pp. 237-256. Lisa SHABBAHY: "Depictional Study of Chariot Use in New Kingdom Egypt," in André J. Veldmeijer and Salima Ikram (eds.), op. cit., pp. 191-202.

Non-Archer Requests?

The above leads me into a final consideration, there are a limited number of additional letters that make requests for non-archer troops, such as infantry and chariots (the most common designation being “troops”).³⁸

The requests are far outnumbered by the requests for archers and this proves true for the non-Rib-Hadda corpus as well as the Rib-Hadda corpus. As has already been shown, there are some texts where the two are mentioned together, where the archers are given a place of primacy by suggesting that the non-archer troops were to be sent *until* the archers could come. The total number of texts that appear to request something other than archers without their mention is 23, however, that number is somewhat deceptive. In one case the ruler Abdi-Heba wrote five letters (EA 285 – 290) four of which mention requests for archers or makes mention of archers while only one is a request for chariots and for the “troops”. This type of occurrence does happen even with Rib-Hadda who does have a couple of requests for troops and for chariots but these are far outweighed in number and tone by those requesting archers for the defense of his land or its return. There is no clear indication why these texts exist and why there was this sudden, but very short lived, change in request unless the terms were in that moment thought of as somehow interchangeable. It may have also been a request of the moment, Rib-Hadda's request for troops comes well within his text corpus and at a point where it seems he has truly begun to decline emotionally. This may signal that, at least on his part, it was part of a general emotional decline and outburst rather than a clearly laid out, thoughtful request. Additionally, Rib-Hadda and Abdi-Heba were in charge of substantive city-states. Rib-Hadda was located at Byblos and Abdi-Heba was located at Jerusalem. Both of these authored multiple letters and this lends more weight to their requests since archers would probably have had a greater contribution to the defense of their cities than troops and chariots especially given that both cities were located among mountains and were dependent on weapons which could be operated in the mountainous topography unlike chariots.

³⁸ Juan Pablo Vita in his article disagrees with my position and states that the chariot was the primary weapon in this area, however, as I will point out in this section the number of archer requests far outweigh the requests for chariots and, even in the midst of the chariot request, we find the important modifier, “until the archers arrive” clearly indicating that the set value and emphasis was on the archer corps and that the chariots were seen as nothing more than a temporary substitute for what was really being sought after. I hope in the future to write a fuller response to Vita's article but this one will suffice for the present. Also note that some his examples come from outside of the region under consideration while all of the present examples are contained within the region defined. Juan-Pablo VITA: “Le char de guerre en Syrie et Palestine” in P. ABRAHAMI and L. BATTINI (eds.), *Les Armées du Proche-Orient ancien*, Oxford, BAR, 2008, pp. 57-70.

Conclusion

The significant portion of my analysis has been offered throughout this essay, therefore, only a few remarks bare mentioning in this section. Archers play a large role in the corpus of the Amarna letters. The vassal kings of Canaan were frequently requesting the presence of these soldiers to the near exclusion of other types of soldiers. If other “classes” or specialties of soldiers were mentioned they were often mentioned as being temporary or placeholders for the archers who were expected to eventually arrive to the aid of the ruler. Egyptian archers appear to have reached a level of professionalism and reputation as a force to be reckoned with within the context of pre-Israelite Canaan and the greater Levantine region. Yet, this is more likely a reflection of Canaanite – Levantine perception and cultural expression rather than an acknowledgement of an exclusively Egyptian prowess. We have a small snapshot of this cultural identification with archers through the salutation formula at the beginning of letters in the Amarna epistolary corpus. This cultural archery fixation was spread up the Levantine coast as far north as Ugarit, a city well on the nominal boundary of Hittite power and increasingly threatened by such. Archers were near exclusively sought by kings in near proximity to the Hittites and the Mitanni's who threatened to engulf the region. Contemporary with these, the Pharaoh's own salutations demonstrate that he had nowhere the same level of cognizance or high appraisal of his archer corps. Apparently in Egypt the focus was on different military means than the archers, and it appears that Pharaoh's favorite corps were in the order of the charioteers and then the troops, or infantry.

We are able to see that archery implements became a favored wedding gift and was recognized as a valuable offering. The archery given consisted of both decorative and emblematic items as well as practical hunting gear. These archery items were given in numbers that far surpassed those of other weapons; javelins, maceheads, and chariots. This shows an important disposition towards these items. In the wedding-gift list presented in the Moran text there is clear weight given to the gift of a bow and arrow and though many of these were ceremonial in nature and conveyed imagery that had other implications, it still remained a potent symbol of authority and power to those giving and receiving it.

These texts point to a clear preference and in fact, near obsession, with archery in the minds of the rulers of this region, to the near exclusion of chariotry. The letters clearly show that chariotry was requested but in lieu of and until the archers could arrive, which describes and clarifies a clear preference for the archers. It is perhaps that an Egypto-centric mindset has so thoroughly crept into academia that what is clearly a Canaanite- Levantine phenomenon has been wrongly ascribed to the Egyptians. Clearly though the perceptual bias of Canaanite – Levantine rulers is in favor

of archery as a military tool. Further research may uncover more of the archer bias. The material nature of archery means that archaeology alone is inadequate to provide a thorough enough analysis of archery's dominance. Chance survivals such as the "Cave of the Warrior" do not lend as much weight to the argument as these 81 texts do. These texts give us the clear, unmistakable voice of the kings.

Recent scholarship has largely put the idea of archers and their importance into complete abeyance in favor of the more glamorous cavalry, swordsmanship, and the infantry. But a new picture is emerging where the archer was the foremost image of military prowess. The change from the archer as the supreme figure of military power to that of the bearer of the sword is not precise in its timing but that it occurred should not obscure the facts.