

# Miszelle

## Amarna *ālāni pu-ru-zi* (EA 137) and Biblical *Cry hprzy/hprzwt* ("Rural Settlements")

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Amarna tablet EA 137 is one of the latest letters of Rib-Hadda of Byblos, written shortly after his expulsion from his home town and dispatched to the Pharaoh by the hand of his son. Rib-Hadda describes in great detail the background for the expulsion, explaining how his young brother and the citizens of Byblos had driven him out of his town and trying again and again to persuade his overlord to send troops to conquer the town. This long, well-preserved, colourful and artistically portrayed document did not fail to attract the attention of scholars and has been translated and interpreted several times in the last forty years (e.g. by W.F. Albright, A.L. Oppenheim, M.J. Seux and W.L. Moran).<sup>1</sup>

Remarkable in the letter is the sudden appearance of a town called Buruzilim (lines 64, 67, 85) which Rib-Hadda asks for permission of residence in case the Pharaoh should install another candidate on the throne of Byblos. The reading of the place name was first suggested by H. Winckler in his edition of the Amarna tablets and was subsequently accepted by all scholars who discussed the letter.<sup>2</sup> However, deciphering of the assumed town name involves problems in all three references to the name.

First, there is no qualifying URU determinative before BU-*ru-zi-ŠI* in lines 64 and 85. Line 85 reads URU-*la* (*āla*) *iš-tu* B[U-r]u-z[i-ŠI], having no determinative before the assumed toponym. Line 64 reads URU-*la* BU-*ru-zi-ŠI*. The sign URU with phonetic complements (*la/li/lu*) appears several times in the letter (lines 18, 25, 60, 73, 80, 93, 101) referring always to a noun (*āla/āli/ālu*), whereas URU as a determinative always appears without phonetic complement (lines 17, 31, 41, 73). Line 64 should be transcribed *āla* BU-*ru-zi-ŠI*, the assumed town name again having no qualifying determinative before it. Second, when one reads <sup>uru</sup>*Bu-ru-zi-lim* in line 67, „Les lignes 67s. sont extrêmement difficiles“.<sup>3</sup> And third, a town called Buruzilim is not mentioned in any other document from the Coast of Lebanon. Thus, one would very much doubt whether a city with this name ever existed; another solution for the enigmatic BU-*ru-zi-ŠI* should better be sought.

<sup>1</sup> For the publication of the Amarna letters, see J.A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln* (VAB 2; Leipzig 1915). For a new translation of all the Amarna letters, including many invaluable notes and new readings, see W.L. Moran, *Les lettres d'El Amarna: Correspondance diplomatique du pharaon* (Littératures Anciennes du Proche-Orient 13; Paris 1987). For the various translations of EA 137, see the literature cited by Moran, *ibid.*, p. 357.

<sup>2</sup> H. Winckler, *The Tell-El-Amarna-Letters* (London-New York 1896), No. 71; see recently, Moran, *ibid.*, pp. 358-59, 596.

<sup>3</sup> Moran, *ibid.*, p. 361, n. 13.

In order to clarify the problem, I will first suggest a new transliteration and translation (with some notes) to the difficult passage in lines 66-68, to be followed by a translation of the relevant section of the letter (lines 59-87). The enigmatic *ālu/ālāni pu-ru-zi* will then be compared with some biblical references to *kpr/ᶜry hprzy/hprzwt* which, in my opinion, is the key for the correct interpretation of the Byblian noun.

(A) Transliteration: (66) *i-nu-ma* (67) NA.KAR<sub>5</sub>-*ra-at* (*nakrat*) URU<sup>ki</sup> (*āli*)  
<sup>didli</sup>URU (*ālāni*) *pu-ru-zi-ši* (68) <sup>na</sup>KÚR-*ru* (*nakrū*) *pal-ḥa-tu* DUMU<sup>meš</sup> (*mārē*)  
 ÌR-*aš-ra-ti*.

Translation: „When the city (i.e. Byblos) rebels, its p. settlements rebel, being afraid of the sons of ᶜAbdi-Ashrati“.

Notes: For KAR<sub>5</sub> (NA.KAR<sub>5</sub>-*ra-at*), compare line 17 (*i-na-kar<sub>5</sub>-mi*) and EA 119:26 (*kar<sub>5</sub>-šī*). For the reading <sup>didli</sup>URU (*ālāni*), compare line 76 (<sup>didli</sup>URU<sup>ki</sup>). With Moran (Les lettres d'El Amarna, p. 361, n. 13) I interpret *palḥatu* as a fem. sing. participle. Rib-Hadda claims that the city's rebellion and his expulsion are the result of the city's fear of the sons of ᶜAbdi-Ashirta. Lines 120-121 of letter EA 138 may be restored and interpreted in the same manner: (120) *pal-ḥa-tu* [DUMU<sup>meš</sup> ÌR-*aš-ra-ti* ...] (121) URU<sup>ki</sup> LÚ-*la ar-[nī]* LUGAL. „Being afraid [of the sons of ᶜAbdi-Ashrati], the city [accepted(?)] the traitor to the king (i.e., Rib-Hadda's younger brother; compare lines 59, 104 and see CAD A/2 299a)“.

(B) Translation of lines 59-87: „The king, my lord, should not neglect the city (*āli*). Verily, there is very much gold and silver within it, there are many possessions in its temple. If the king, my lord, shall capture it, then he may do to his servant as he pleases, but let him give (me) one of its (i.e., Byblos) p. settlements (*āla pu-ru-zi-ši*) for my residence. At the moment I am with Hammuniri. When the city (*āli*) rebels, its p. settlements (*ālāni pu-ru-zi-ši*) rebel, being afraid of the sons of ᶜAbdi-Ashrati. When I went to Hammuniri it was on account of the sons of ᶜAbdi-Ashrati, because they were powerful against me and because there was no breath from the mouth of the king to me, and I said to my lord: ‘behold, Byblos became their city (*ālu-ši-na*). There are many possessions of the king in it, the property of our ancestors of old. If the king neglects the town, all the cities of the land of Canaan will cease to belong to him.’ The king must not neglect this matter!

Now, your servant, my son, I have sent to the king, my lord, and let the king send him back quickly with troops in order to capture the city (*āla*). If the king, my lord, be gracious to me and return me to the city (*āli*), then I will guard it as before for the king, my lord. If the king, my lord, [does not bring me back] into it, then [let him give me (*ia-di-in-ni*; compare line 64)] a town (*āla*) out of its p. settlements (*iš-tu p[u-r]u-z[i-ši*]). [Let the king, my lord, do to his servant] as he pleases, [but] he [must not] aban[don me].“

It is remarkable that in all three passages where the noun *ālu/ālāni pu-ru-zi* is mentioned, the post-determinative KI does not appear after the URU sign (line 64 URU-*la*; line 67 <sup>didli</sup>URU; line 85 URU-*la*), whereas in all other passages (with one exception in line 101 URU-*lu-mi*) the post-determinative KI follows the noun *ālu* (URU) (lines 18, 25, 47, 51, 53, 56, 57, 60, 67, 73, 75, 76, 80, 82, 93, 99, 101). It is clear that the scribe deliberately emphasized the difference between the towns and

cities of Canaan on the one hand and the *ālu/ālāni pu-ru-zi* on the other hand and that the latter were regarded by him as a kind of semi-settlements.

As is well known, the noun *ālu* refers to a very wide range of settlement forms, e.g., city, town, village, manor, estate, fort etc. (see CAD A/1 379-388). Various nouns have been selected by the scribes to describe the surroundings of the cities and sometimes they appear in contrast to the city (CAD A/1 380-381). However, the noun *pu-ru-zi* is mentioned nowhere else in cuneiform texts. One would therefore assume that it is a Canaanite loan word selected by the scribe from the local Byblian vocabulary in order to accurately define the message of his lord.

(C) When one looks for a similar noun in the West Semitic vocabulary, the biblical root *prz* immediately comes to mind.<sup>4</sup> Five passages seem particularly relevant to the Byblian references and will be translated here in sequential order (following the Revised Standard Version):

Deut 3:5 „All these were cities fortified with high walls, gates and bars, besides very many unwallled villages (<sup>ʿ</sup>*ry hprzy*)“.

1 Sam 6:18 „Also the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities to unwallled villages (*kpr hprzy*)“.

Ezek 38:11 „and say: I will go up against the land of unwallled villages (<sup>ʿ</sup>*rs przwt*); I will fall upon quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls and having no bars or gates“.

Zech 2:4-5 „and said to him: Run, say to that young man, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls (*przwt*), because of the multitude of men and cattle in it. For I will be to her a wall of fire round about, says the Lord ...“.

Esth 9:19 „Therefore the Jews of the villages (*hprwzym*), who live in the open towns (*b<sup>ʿ</sup>ry hprzwt*), hold the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day for gladness and feasting and holiday-making ...“.

Common to all five references is the marked contrast between the fortified cities and the unwallled rural villages. The number of the latter group was far more than the number of the former (Deut 3:5; 1 Sam 6:18). A similar picture appears in the annals of Sennacherib in which the Assyrian king described his attack on the Kingdom of Judah: „I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities (*ālānīšu dannūti*), walled forts, and to the countless small villages (*ālāni šeḥrūti*) in their vicinity and conquered (them)“.<sup>5</sup> The unwallled rural settlements must have been of a variegated character, i.e., villages, hamlets, manors, farms etc., and located either on the border of the fortified cities or in isolated places all around the countryside.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See F. Brown, S.R. Driver and C.A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford 1906; 2nd ed. 1951), p. 826; G.R. Driver, „Problems in Judges Newly Discussed“, *Annual of the Oriental Society of the University of Leeds* 4 (1962/63), pp. 8-9; L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament* (3rd ed.; Leiden 1983), pp. 908-909, with earlier literature.

<sup>5</sup> A.L. Oppenheim, in J.B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (3rd ed., Princeton 1969), p. 288.

<sup>6</sup> For the spatial organization of the land of Israel in the second and first millennium B.C., see J. Portugali, „*ʿArim, Banot, Migrashim* and *Ḥašerim*: The Spatial Organization of Eretz-

Remembering this background, we can interpret the references to *ālu/ālāni pu-ru-zi* in the Byblian letter. Rib-Hadda tried to convince the Pharaoh to send troops in order to capture the city. His personal fate following the conquest should be left – so Rib-Hadda – to his lord’s decision. He may decide to put him back on his throne, or he may install another candidate on the throne of Byblos (lines 62-65, 81-87). In the latter case he asks the Pharaoh to give him one of the rural settlements of Byblos for his residence (lines 64-65, 84-85). The present hostility of Byblos and its rural settlements (*ālāni pu-ru-zi-ši*) is the result of the fear of ʿAbdi-Ashirta’s sons (lines 66-68). The capture of Byblos by the Egyptian troops would immediately pacify them, so he would be able to live peacefully in one of these settlements.

We may conclude that *ālāni pu-ru-zi* in Rib-Hadda’s letter and *ʿry hprzy/hprzwt* in the biblical references have exactly the same meaning of „rural unwallied settlements“. The territory of the city-state of Byblos was relatively small and many of its rural settlements must have been located not far from the capital city. „One of its rural settlements“ (line 64) and „a town out of its rural settlements“ (line 85) refer to sites in the neighbourhood of Byblos, where Rib-Hadda would have been able to find shelter in his late years, provided that the city was taken by Egyptian troops and governed by someone favourable to him.

*Abstract:*

Lines 64, 67 and 85 of letter EA 137 should be transliterated *āla/ālāni pu-ru-zi-ši* rather than <sup>uru</sup>*Bu-ru-zi-lim*. *Pu-ru-zi* is a Canaanite loan word that should be compared with biblical (*kpr/ʿry*) *hprzy/hprzwt*, both having the same meaning of „rural unwallied settlement(s)“.

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