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Client Kings and Amarna Letters

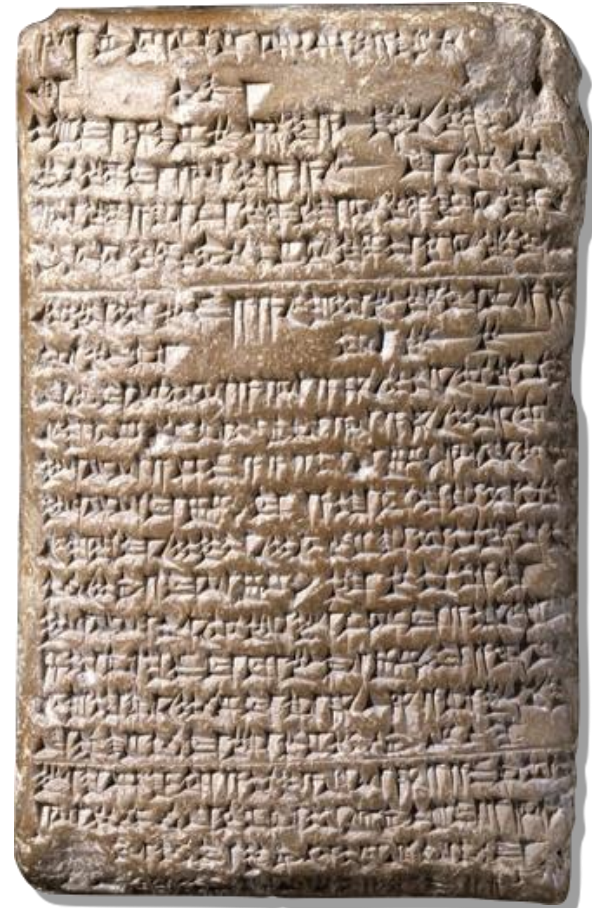
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Connected Worlds

Dr. Katharina Zinn

The Amarna Letters

- ❑ The imperial diplomatic archive from Amarna
- ❑ AMARNA PERIOD

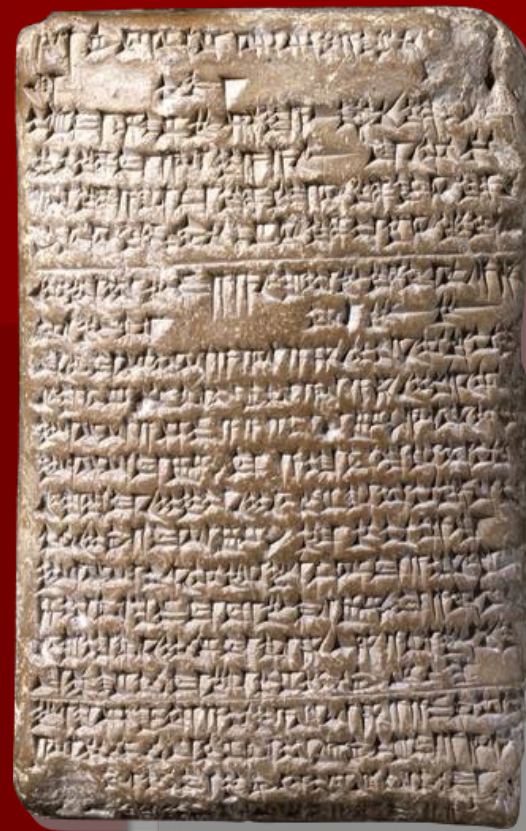


William L. Moran, The Amarna Letters, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992

- Amarna corpus of 380+ letters: several from Egyptian vassals to notify the Pharaoh that they have followed his instructions → (EA 378) :
- *To the king, my lord, my god, my Sun, the Sun from the sky: Message of Yapahu, the ruler of Gazru, your servant, the dirt at your feet. I indeed prostrate myself at the feet of the king, my lord, my god, my Sun...7 times and 7 times, on the stomach and on the back. I am indeed guarding the place of the king, my lord, the Sun of the sky, where I am, and all the things the king, my lord, has written me, I am indeed carrying out--everything! Who am I, a dog, and what is my house... and what is anything I have, that the orders of the king, my lord, the Sun from the sky, should not obey constantly?*

The Amarna Letters

- Ancient diplomatic archive discovered at Amarna in 1887
- Bureau of Correspondence of Pharaoh
- 382 tablets known, including some scribal training texts (Mesopotamian myths and epics, Akkadian wordlists, etc.)



The Amarna Letters

- ❑ Most tablets received from elsewhere; some written in Egypt
- ❑ Written in cuneiform script
- ❑ Vast majority in bastardized “Babylonian” Akkadian
- ❑ Some in the Assyrian dialect of Akkadian; others in Hurrian and Hittite



International correspondence

Two chief groups of letters

International correspondence
("Great Powers")

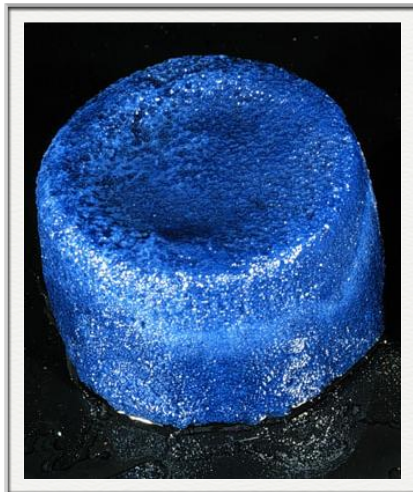
Correspondence from vassals



International correspondence (“Great Powers”)

Letters from rulers of powerful nations

Mainly concerned with
“brotherhood” through royal gift
exchange, diplomatic marriages,
and lists of marriage gifts



Vassal correspondence

- Greatest bulk of the archive from Egyptian vassals in Canaan [Palestine], Phœnicia [Lebanon], and Syria
- Most letters from Rib-Hadda of Byblos (72 total!)
- Egyptian garrison administrators based at Gaza, Joppa (Tel Aviv), Ullasa, Beth-shan, Sumur, and Kamid al-Lawz



Vassal correspondence

Petroglyphic analysis reveals that messengers (or kings) often went to an administrative center in order to send their letters

Example: King of Beirut sends a letter from Gaza

Letters were forwarded on to Egypt for action (or not ...)



Egypt's neighbors:

Aegean and Anatolian
places at Kawm al-Hitan
(Amenhotep III)

Direct contacts with
Mycenæan and Minoan
cultures

Mycenaean ceramics found
at Amarna in large numbers

Aegean soldiers in Egyptian
military



Egypt's neighbors: Asia

Anatolia (Hittite empire)
and Cyprus

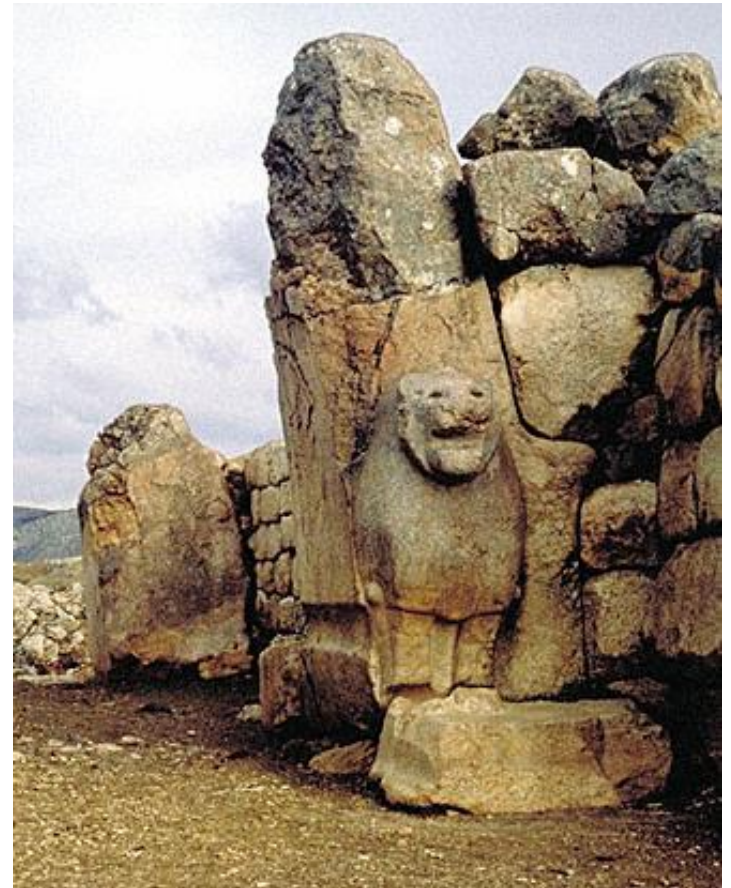
Mesopotamia (Mittanian
empire, Assyria,
Babylonia)

The Levant (Palestine,
Lebanon, Syria)



Egypt's neighbors: Anatolia

- Anatolia (Turkey) home to the Hittite empire (Hatti) based at Hattuša (Boğazkale)
- Indo-European speakers
- Aggressive expansion under king Šuppiluliumaš into north Syria and the Mitannian empire
- In direct contact with Egypt



Mesopotamia: Mitanni

- Located northern Syrian and Iraq
- Hurrian-speakers (not Indo-European or Semitic)
- Capital Waššukanni [Tall al-Fakhariyyah?]
- Ruled by Tušratta, father of Tadukhepa (wife of Amenhotep III + Akhenaten → Kiya?)
- close diplomatic alliance with Egypt since Thutmose IV
- Under severe military threat from Hittites



Amarna Letter 15

- Say to the king of Egypt: Thus Aššur-ubalit, the king of Assyria . . . I send my messenger to you to visit you and to visit your country. Up to now my predecessors have not written; today I write to you. I send you a beautiful chariot, 2 horses, and 1 stone of genuine lapis-lazuli as your greeting-gift. Do not delay the messenger whom I send to you for a visit. He should visit and then leave for here. he should see what you are like and what your country is like and then leave for here.

Mesopotamia: Babylonia

- Located in the southern part of Iraq
- Direct rival of the Assyrians
- At this time ruled by king Burna-buriash
- Babylonian princesses in the household of Amenhotep III



Mesopotamia: Babylonia

Relationship seems to be
primarily economic

Constant requests for gold
and complaints about it

Certainly no military
support

Burna-buriaš rather
unaware of geography . . .



Amarna Letter 7

- Has my brother not heard that I am ill? Why has he shown me no concern? Why has he sent no messenger here and visited me? My brother's messenger addressed me saying "it is not a place close by so your brother can hear about you and send you greetings . . . Ask your own messenger whether the country is far away and as a result your brother did not hear about you and did not send anyone to greet you . . ." Now since I asked my own messenger and he said to me that the journey is far, I was not angry any longer, and I said no more.

The Levant: Definitions

Core of the Egyptian
empire in southwest Asia

Syria–Palestine

The Levant [Retjenu]

Canaan ($\approx$ Palestine)

Phœnicia ($\approx$ Lebanon)

Syria (modern Syria &
Lebanon)



The Levant: Amarna Letters

Largest part of the Amarna archive is from Egyptian Levantine vassals

Different areas not equally represented

Not tied to size or importance

Hardly any letters from Ugarit or Damascus but over $\frac{1}{3}$ of total archive from Byblos (± 73 letters)



The Levant: Gubla (Byblos)

Costal city-state south of
Amurru

Contact with Egypt since
the Predynastic
period and highly
Egyptianized

Ruled by Rib-Hadda

Most prolific writer (±73
letters)



The Levant: Shechem

Located in Palestine
(ancient Šakmu); modern
Nablus

Ruled by Lab'ayu

Pro-Hittite and
expansionist policies
irritate his neighbors and
Egyptians



The Levant: Qidšu (Qadesh)

Northern most edge of
Egyptian influence, on
border with Hittites

Located at Tall Nabi Mand
(Syria)

Ruled by Aitukama, who
went over to the Hittite
side late in Akhenaten's
reign



The people mentioned in
the letters or writing

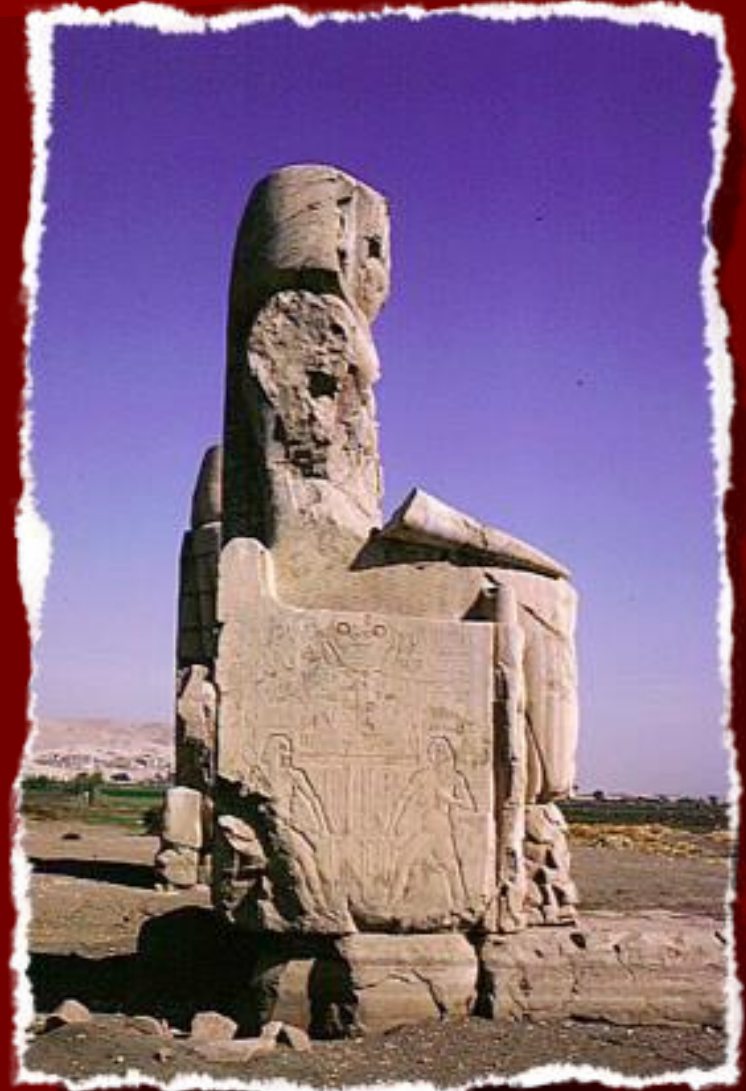
Amenhotep III

- Amenhotep III is the father, and immediate predecessor of Akhenaten
- Ruled *circa* 1390–1352
- Son of Thutmose IV and a minor consort named Mutemwiya



Amenhotep III's foreign policy

- Tended to act through diplomacy rather than military campaigns
- Policies documented in the "Amarna Letters"
- Egypt received "tribute" from as far away as Mycenae, Babylon, Assyria

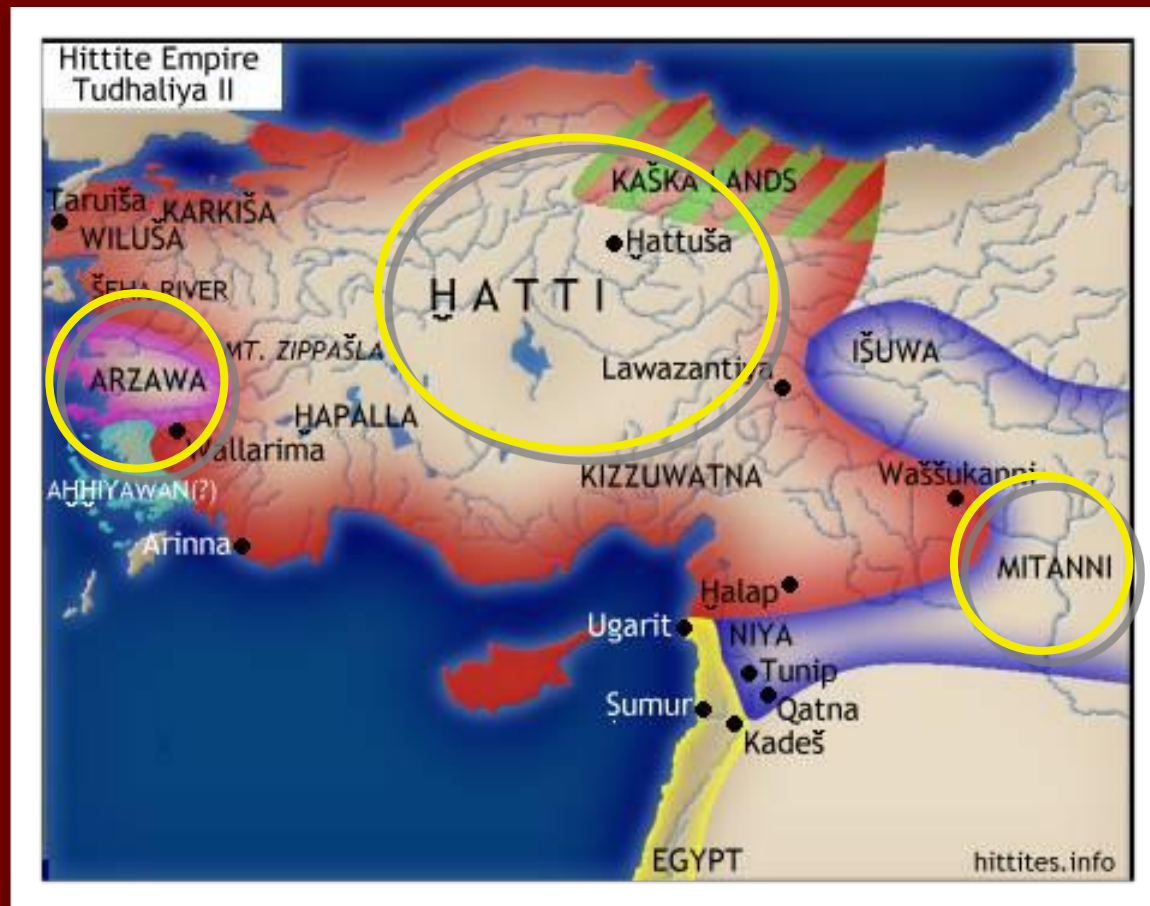


Amenhotep III's Foreign Policy

- Kawm al-Hitan list: Phaistos, Mykenae, Thebes (Greece!), Knossos, Lyktos, Troy, and others
- Objects of Amenhotep III or Tiye found at most of these sites
- Trade relations



Amenhotep III's Foreign Policy



Amenhotep III's foreign policy: diplomatic marriages

- Regnal Year 10: Gilukhepa, daughter of king Šuttarna of Mittani, arrives in Egypt, along with 317 servant women
- 20 years later, Amenhotep bargains for her niece, Tadukhepa, the daughter of king Tušratta
- Also married two Babylonian princesses and a daughter of the king of Arzawa (western Anatolia, Lydia, bordered with the Hittites)
- Kings often nervous about sending their daughters

Amarna Letter EA 1

- *Letter of Kadašman-Enlil I, king of Babylon:*
- Here you are asking for my daughter in marriage, but my sister whom my father gave you was (already) there with you, and nobody has seen her (so as to know) if now she is alive or if she is dead.

Amarna Letter EA 1

- *Reply of Amenhotep III:*
- Did you, however, ever send here a dignitary of yours who knows your sister, who could speak with her and identify her? Suppose he spoke with her. The men whom you sent are nobodies. One was [. . .] of Zaqara, [the ot]hers, an assherder. . .from [. . .] There was no one among the[m who knows her, wh]o was an intimate of your father, and who could identify her.

Amenhotep III's Foreign Policy

- However, despite the requests of foreign kings, Amenhotep III refused to send Egyptian princesses abroad to marry



Amarna Letter EA 4

- *Amenhotep III:*
- From time immemorial no daughter of a king of Egypt is given to anyone.
- *Reply of Kadašman-Enlil I, king of Babylon:*
- Why not? . . . You are a king, you do as you please. . . Someone's grown daughters, beautiful women, must be available. Send me a beautiful woman as if she were your daughter. Who is going to say, "she is no daughter of the king!"

Amenhotep III's Foreign Policy

- “Trade” in princesses was not just about the women, but rather to cement alliances with foreign power
- Maintained Amenhotep III as the premier ruler in the Near East; Egypt set apart (“no marriage” policy)
- Women always accompanied by lavish exchanges of gifts and rare raw materials: precious metals, horses, lapis lazuli, furniture, etc.
- Gold constantly desired from Egypt

Amenhotep III's Foreign Policy

- Result is a long period of stable relations with foreign neighbors
- Mitanni is no longer a threat, though the Hittites are rising as a power
- International commerce is good, allowing for major building projects in Egypt without the distraction of war

BM
EA57399:
Shrine
stela of
Amenhote
p III and
Queen
Tiye



Tiye with feather crown

- **King's Chief Wife Tiye:**
- Remembered as “Commoner Queen” – non-royal birth: daughter of God's Father and Commander Yuya and Priestess of Min, Tuya (normally not used to express royal relationship)



Amenhotep III's family

- ❑ **King's Chief Wife Tiye:**
- ❑ Remembered as “Commoner Queen” – non-royal birth: daughter of God's Father and Commander Yuya and Priestess of Min, Tuya (normally not used to express royal relationship)
- ❑ Mentioned in Amarna letters
- ❑ Wrote Amarna letters

Amarna Letter 26

Say to Teye [= *Tiye*], mistress of Egypt: Thus, Tušratta, the king of Mittani [. . .] You are one that knows that I myself always showed love to Mimmureya [= *Nebmaatre*], your husband [. . .] And now you are the one that must not forget your love for Mimmureya, your brother. Increase it for Napkhurreya [= *Neferkheperure*] and maintain it for him.

The new King

- Amenhotep IV / Akhenaten
- 10th king of 18th dyn., son and successor of AIII



Queen Nefertiti:

Chief consort

Thought to be the daughter
of Aye (Noble family with
origin in Akhmim)

Bore AIV at least 6
daughters

High religious role

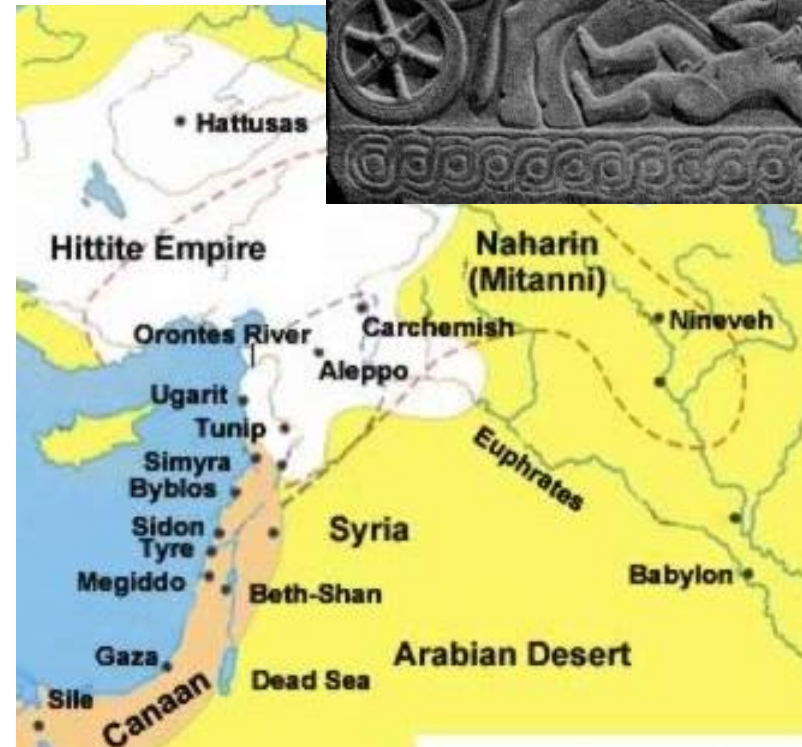
→ **Only mentioned once
in Amarna letters**

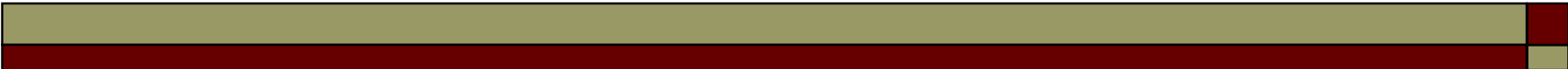


**WAS THERE ONLY
DIPLOMACY?**

The Great Syrian War

- Regnal Year 12 of Akhenaten, Hittite king Šuppilulimaš invaded Mitanni, sacking Waššukanni and driving king Tušratta into exile
- Mitannian vassals in northern Syria now under Hittite control
- Hittites avoid any direct conflict with Egypt





The Great Syrian War

Tunip's ruler was at that time in Egypt, so the question is why was Aziru in Tunip entertaining the Hittites?

Did Egypt want Amurru to expand?

Akhenaten summons Aziru of Amurru to Egypt to explain himself

The Great Syrian War

- While in Egypt, Aziru received letters from his two brothers with a report that Hittite forces, including Šuppilulimaš, were massing near Nuhašše
- The Egyptians allowed Aziru to return to his homeland, along with an Egyptian commissioner to report
- Seemingly there was a desire for a strong buffer state between the Egyptians and the Hittites, one in place of Mitanni
- However, upon return, Aziru immediately opened negotiations with the Hittites and continued attacking his neighbors (esp. Gubla)

Akhenaten's motivations

- Akhenaten is often viewed as being a pacifist, ignoring his foreign vassals, focusing on the Aten instead of messy international politics
- More likely he was a realist, working in the best interests of Egypt
- Mitanni was weak and unstable: no need for Egypt to act on its behalf
- Squabbling vassals on the Hittite border provided a good buffer state
- No need to expend Egyptian military to the area to protect marginal powers; Amurru, even if “disloyal” still served its role of buffer

Egyptian attack on Qidšu

- Amurru was also unlikely to be loyal to the Hittites as well
- Problem: Qidšu was in the Hittite sphere, allowing the Hittites access to areas directly under Egyptian control further south
- Number of letters to Egyptian vassals telling them to prepare for the arrival of the Egyptian army



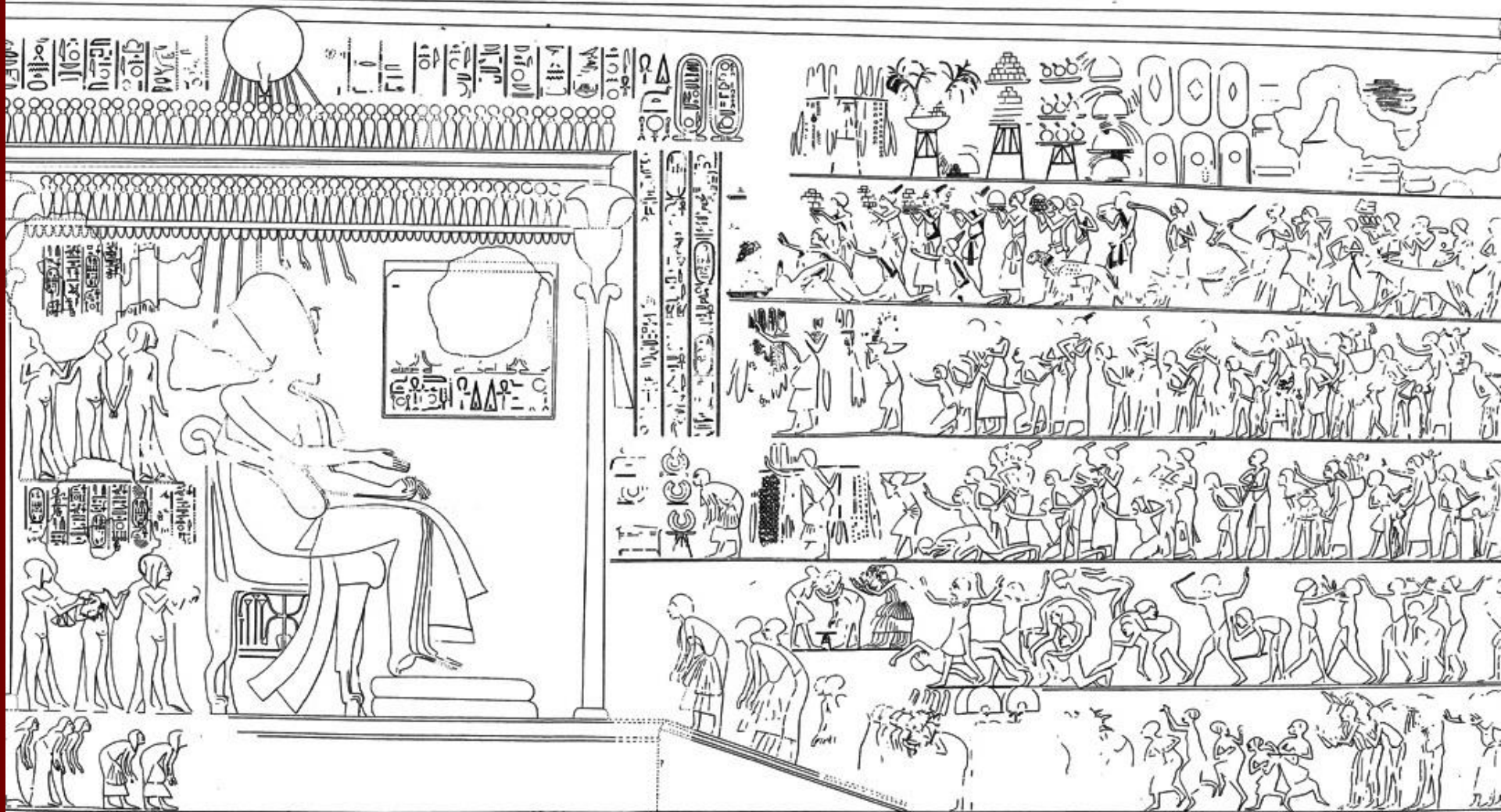
Amarna Letter 141

- Message of Ammunira, the ruler of Beirut:
... Moreover, as to the king, my lord, my Sun, having written to his servant and the dirt at his feet, “make preparations before the arrival of the archers of the king, your lord.” I listened very carefully and I have indeed made preparations, including my horses and my chariots and everything of mine that is available to the servant of the king . . . And may the archers of the king smash the heads of his enemies

Egyptian attack on Qidšu

- Letters indicate two Egyptian forces: one marching overland from Gaza, through Palestine and Lebanon; one arriving via sea in Lebanon (Sur [Tyre], Sayda [Sidon], Beirut?)
- Exact result is not known as there are no Egyptian texts referring to the battle except—perhaps—by Tutankhamen: “if an army was sent to Djahi [Syria-Palestine], to widen the boundaries of Egypt, they could not succeed”
- Set up situation for more Hittite–Egyptian conflict years later (Tutankhamun, Seti I, Ramesses II)

Tomb of Mery-Re II

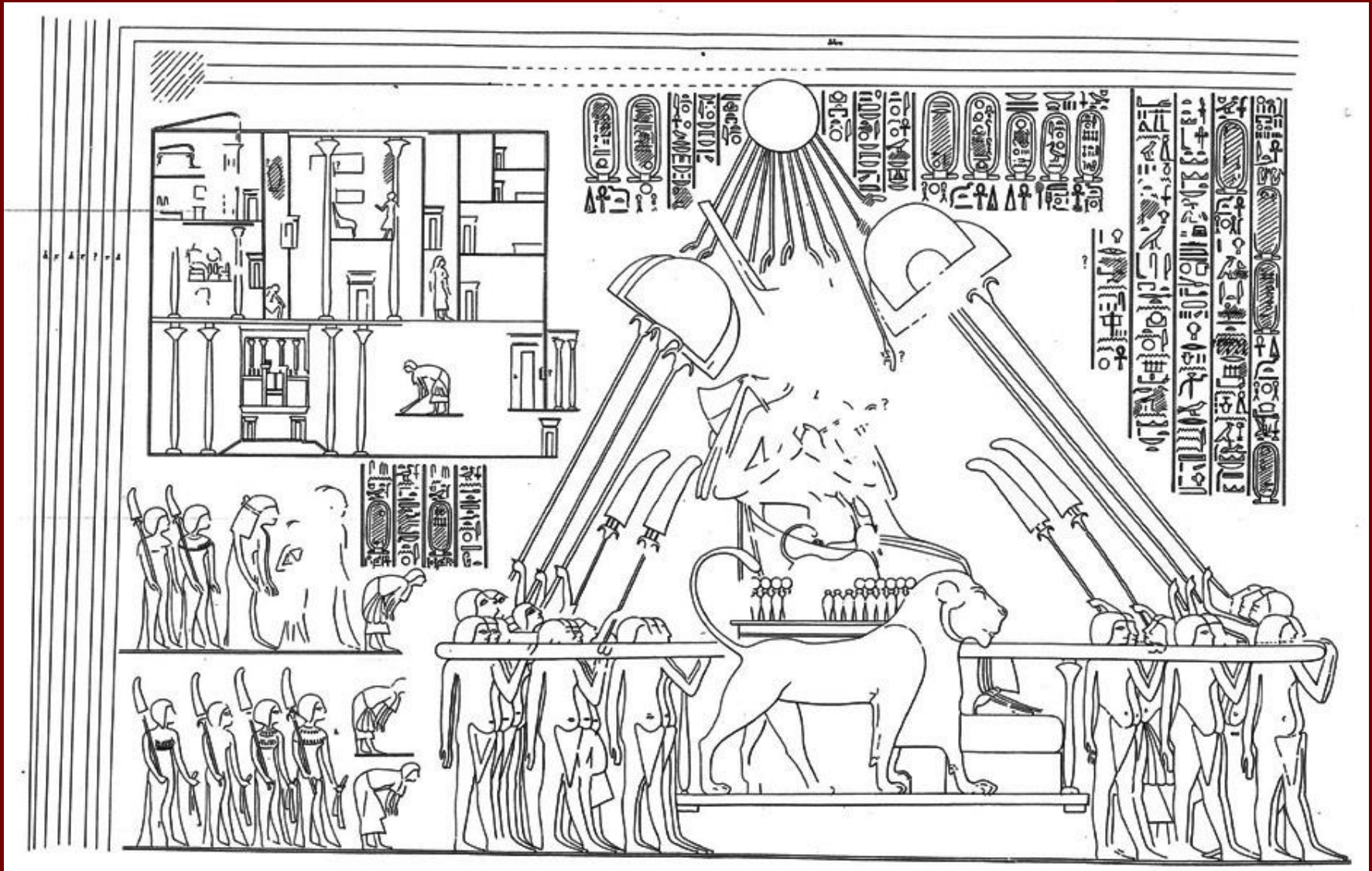


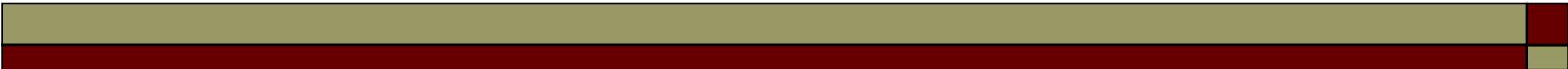
“Durbar” of Regnal Year 12

- “Durbar” (Persian *darbar* “court”): ceremonial gatherings in Delhi during the British Raj
- Indian rulers demonstrate loyalty
- Borrowed into early Egyptological literature



Tomb of Huya

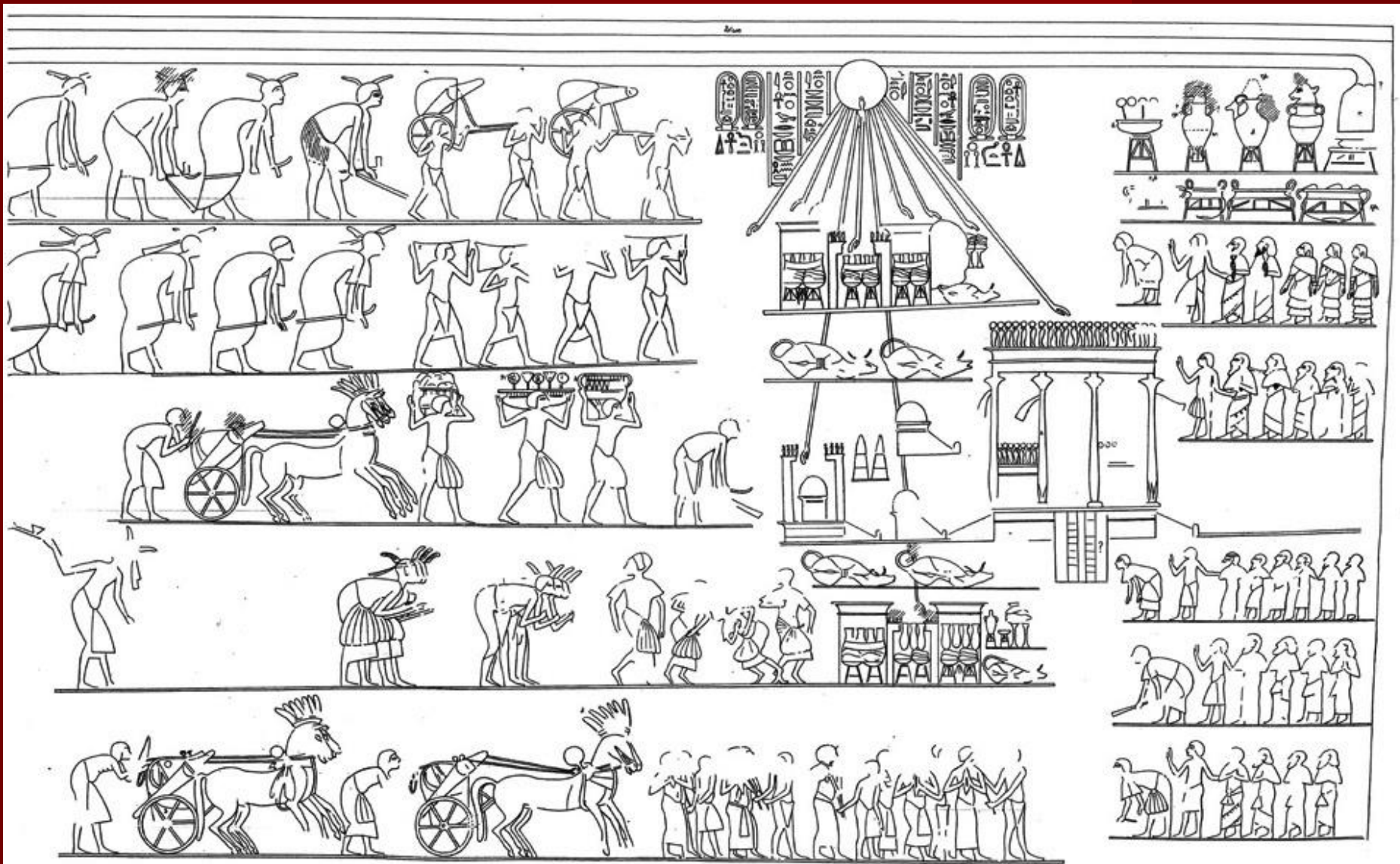


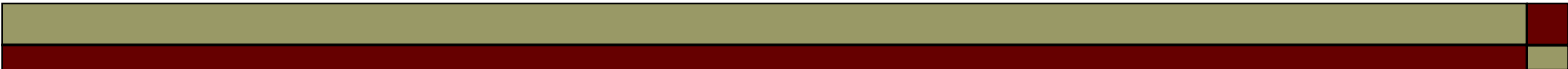


Akhenaten's “Durbar” of Regnal Year 12

- Refers to the gathering of foreign dignitaries in Akhet-Aten in Regnal Year 12 depicted in the tombs of Huya and Mery-Re II
- Shows the royal family receiving tribute from Syria, Nubia, Libya, the Aegean, Hittites, Mittani

Tomb of Huya





Tomb of Huya

Long live the royal father Heka-Aten, given life forever! Appearance of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, [Akhenaten] and the King's Chief Consort, [Nefertiti]—may she live forever!—on the great sedan chairs of electrum, in order to receive the products of Syria and Nubia, the West and the East. All foreign countries gathered as one, and the islands in the midst of the sea [the Aegean], are presenting products to the king upon Akhet-Aten's great throne of receiving the dues of every foreign country, while the granting the breath of life is made to them.

Akhenaten's foreign policy - summary

- 1. It was centred on **diplomacy** *not war*
 - a. Diplomatic correspondence between Akhenaten and his 'brother monarchs from Mitanni, Assyria, Babylon and *Khatti* (the Hittites)
 - b. Diplomatic marriages between Akhenaten the daughter of Tusratta (from harim of his father), king of Mitanni, as well as a Cassite princess.
 - c. Many foreign ambassadors attended Akhenaten's *Heb-Sed* Jubilee in the 12th year of his reign.
 - d. Akhenaten made alliances between Egypt and Cyprus as well as with the Assyrian empire

Akhenaten's foreign policy - summary

- 2. Akhenaten → **international problem**: total destruction of Mitannian empire by expanding Hittities:
 - a. Hittite power in the Bronze Age Near East grew
 - b. *Khatti* challenged indirectly Egypt for control of Northern Syria (especially Kadesh + Ugarit, Amurru)
 - c. Amurru bullied smaller Egyptian vassals (Byblos) → plea for help
 - d. contact with the Mycenaean Greek world → Mycenaean soldiers appear in wall reliefs serving as mercenary troops

Akhenaten's foreign policy - summary

- 3. Akhenaten's foreign policy was **proactive**, *not passive*.
 - foreign affairs close personal circle (royal entourage)
 - Mycenaean mercenaries
 - punished Aziru of Amurru
 - strengthened Egypt's defences at Deir el-Balan
 - friendly contacts with the Hittites
 - Egyptian campaign deep into Nubia (12th year)
 - Some Nubians in Akhenaten's retinue
 - Akhenaten and Nefertiti were portrayed 'Smiting the Enemy'
 - Akhenaten shown wearing his blue war helmet
 - Military men (Ay, Horemheb) = courtiers