1. The town of Mušḫuṣuña is mentioned three times in the Amarna corpus, in letters EA 182, 183 and 184\(^1\). All of them were sent by king Šutarna of Mušḫuṣuña. It is a small corpus that provides little information from a historical point of view: only the heading of the message is preserved from EA 183 and 184 and in EA 182 Šutarna requests the pharaoh to send a garrison\(^2\).

2. As Goren, Finkelstein and Naʿaman sum up (2004, 172), the location of the town of Mušḫuṣuña is unknown: “city of unknown location. It is commonly identified with Ḡšḥ of Thutmose III’s topographical list (No. 25), which is mentioned side by side with well identified cities of the Bashan”. The possible relationship between Mušḫuṣuña with the town known as Ḡšḥ in the topographical list of Thutmose III has also been pointed out by various authors, for example Röllig (1995): “Aufgrund der Verbindung mit ägypt. Ḡšḥ in der Liste Thutmosis III. (Simons, Lists I 25) sucht man den Ort südlich von Damaskus im Bereich des Ḡabal Drūz (vgl. ḡāḍī mušaḥḥa)”; Liverani (1998, 249 n. 19): “Mushihuna è da identificare con la mu-ši-ḥa della lista di Tuthmosi III, dove è associata a Tubu, Bashan, Qanu, Ashtartu”; Belmonte (2001, 201): “Ort in der Nähe des Ḡabal al-Drūz ... Evtl. eine Ortschaft nördlich von Izraʾ (→ Şiribašani) nach Bunnens – Kuschke – Röllig (1990) ... Vgl. äg. Ḡšḥ\(^3\); regarding this, see already the observations of Sayce (1894, 36: “Muskhuni is probably the city of Masak mentioned by Thotmes III at Karnak among the towns of northern Palestine”) and Dhorse (1908, 519: “C’est encore non loin de Qānār qu’il faut, selon nous, placer la ville de Mu-ši-ḫu-na..., en l’identifiant avec Ma-sa-ḫa qui précède Qānār dans la liste de Thoutmosis III (nº 25)”.

* This article is the result of the Research Project “Lenguas y dialectos en la Siria-Palestina del Bronce Final. Nuevas bases para el estudio del strato semítico-noroccidental en la correspondencia de El-Amarna (s. XIV a. C.)” funded by the Spanish Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia within the National Plan for Scientific Research, Development and Technological Innovation (I+D+I) (BFF2003-03883) and by the European Union (Feder Funds). It has also received financial support from the “Hiberus” Group of Excellence (Government of Aragón, Spain). The article gives the provisional result of our research on the scribes of the Cananean letters from El Amarna. The final result will be published in an appropriately illustrated monography.

\(^2\) Liverani (1998, 249) also attributes to Šutarna from Mušḫuṣuña letters EA 180 and 181. This possibility will be considered in the monography abovementioned in n.1.
3. The most general opinion, therefore, suggests that the location of Mušiḫuna would be in the area of Bashan, south of Damascus, and that is where it is situated on the map made by Bunnens, Kuschke and Röllig (1990: map B III 3). The question of the possible location of this town must, however, take into account the following observations.


From Knudtzon’s observations it can be concluded, on the one hand, that EA 182 and 183 could be the work of the same scribe, whereas EA would have been written by another scribe; on the other hand, that at least EA 182 and 183 are closely linked from a palaeographical point of view with the Beqa‘ letters. The petrographic analysis carried out by Goren, Finkelstein and Na’aaman (2004, 172 y 173) highlight some of these aspects: the geological composition in EA 182 and 183 is identical and in both cases “a source area in the Bashan is highly unlikely”, “unlikely that they were written in the

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Bashan”. The geological composition of EA 184, however, “is different from EA 182-183 ... However, there are no other details that may help in the definition of its ... origin” (Goren – Finkelstein – Na’aman 2004, 173)”

5. As stated above, Knudtzon believes letters EA 174, 175 and 176 to be the work of the same scribe; EA 363 should be included in this group, as other authors have concluded. From our side, we have had the opportunity to ascertain directly the palaeographical unity of the four letters. They are, therefore, letters written by the same scribe but sent to Egypt on behalf of four kings: Bieri of Ḥašabu (EA 174), Ili-daya of Ḥazi (EA 175), ‘Abdi-Riša of ‘Enu-Šāsî (EA 363) and a king whose name is not preserved, ruling a town unspecified in the message (EA 176). The four letters present an identical message addressed to the pharaoh, a message written basically in the same terms asking Egypt for help against the advance of Itaggama of Qadeš, allied to the Hittite invaders; they make up what Campbell (1964, 135) rightly called the “Beqa’ Alliance”. The letters are, without a doubt, strictly contemporaneous (end of the reign of Akhenaten, cf. Campbell 1964, 123 y 135; Liverani 1998, 259)

6. From our collation of the Amarna letters kept at the Vorderasiatisches Museum of Berlin it can be concluded that EA 182 is the letter from Mušiliuna that has the clearest material and palaeographical relationship with the four letters from the Beqa’ EA 174-176 and 363; in this respect, see the examples of palaeographical comparison between EA 182 and EA 363 that are produced in pl. 11.

The relationship between EA 182 and the letters of the “Beqa’ Alliance” can also be seen in their contents. The kings of the Beqa’ specify that “we are in ‘Amqu, (and we are) cities of the king, my lord” (ni-i₅₅-su i₅₅-ba-ša-nu a-na kur Am-qî uruḫu₅₇₅₅₃₅₇₅₇₅₇₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅₉₅₂₅ₙ

4 Weber (1915, 1280) includes these observations.
5 “Knudtzon (1915:1281) noted that EA 184 is different in script from EA 182-183, an observation now supported by the petrographic analysis” (Goren – Finkelstein – Na’aman 2004, 173).
6 See, for example, Liverani (1998, 259): “Quattro lettere virtualmente identiche ... senza dubbio scritte da uno stesso scribe nella stessa occasione”.
7 We would especially like to thank B. André-Salvini (Musée du Louvre) and C. B. F. Walker (British Museum) for permission to study the Amarna letters kept in their museums, as well as for the help given during our research stay, in both cases in 2004.
8 See the presentation of the letters in Weippert (1970, 268).
10 See, for example, Vita (1999) and Marzahn – Vita (2003).
11 We thank the Vorderasiatisches Museum and the Musée du Louvre for permission to publish these photographs.
request the help of the pharaoh. At the end of EA 182 (line 11), Šutarna also addresses
the pharaoh in plural: “so that we may hold (ni-leq<-qê>, cf. Moran 1992, 264) the
cities of the king, my lord”; this declaration seems to repeat a collective request for
help. Both the contents and the palaeography, seem to connect directly letter EA 182
with the letters of the “Beqa‘ Alliance”, that is, the town of Mušiḫuna with the
Lebanese Beqa‘. EA 174-176, EA 363 and EA 182 must be contemporaneous, maybe
written at the same time by the same scribe and as an answer to a common danger
threatening the area.

7. Therefore, it can be questioned whether the commonly suggested identification of
Mušiḫuna as the town known as Mšḥ in the topographical list of Thutmose III is correct.
Goren, Finkelstein and Na‘aman (2004, 173) raise directly this issue: “Should we then
dismiss the equation of Mushiḫuna with Mšḥ (No. 25) of Thutmose III’s topographical
list and locate the city elsewhere?”. Their answer is not, initially, conclusive: “we avoid
suggesting identification for Mušiḫuna and for the origin of its three letters”. However,
they explore yet another option: accepting that Mušiḫuna was situated in the area of
Bashan, it could be possible that “Shutarna sent his letters from the Egyptian centre at
Kumidi” (Goren – Finkelstein – Na‘aman 2004, 173); they also suggest (ibid.) the
possibility that EA 184 came directly from Mušiḫuna, whereas EA 182 and 183 could
have been sent from Kumidi.

8. In principle, it cannot be ruled out the possibility that Mušiḫuna was a town
situated in the Bashan and that its king Šutarna sent his letters, or at least some of them
(such as, perhaps, EA 182 and 183), from Kumidi. However, we may presume that
Šutarna would have, in principle, the services of a scribe for the administration of his
own kingdom, a scribe who would be able to write his own letters. But in the event that
Šutarna needed to require, for various reasons, the services of scribes from other towns,
it seems rather difficult to explain why, if Mušiḫuna were in fact situated South of
Damascus, Šutarna would have to use the services from a scribe from Kumidi in order
to communicate with the pharaoh. It is much more likely that in that case Mušiḫuna
would be under the direct political influence of Damascus and that such political
situation was reflected on the palaeography of some of its letters, as in the case of the
letters from the towns of Şiri-Bašâni (EA 201), Ṣašînu (EA 203), Qanû (EA 204),
Țûbu (EA 205) and Naṣîba (EA 206), all of them in the area of Bashan, in connection
with the letter from Damascus EA 195. However, EA 182 and 183 (from Mušḫuṣu-na) and EA 194 and 196 (from Damascus) are the work of different scribes.

9. Therefore, there seem to be enough palaeographic, petrographic and content evidence to suggest that the equivalence Mušḫuṣu-na = Mšḥ is not correct and that, in any event, Mušḫuṣu-na was not located in the area of Bashan. The location of Mušḫuṣu-na should be placed, in our opinion, in the Beqa‘; Goren, Finkelstein and Na‘aman state a similar opinion in another part of their work (2004, 133: “which [=Mušḫuṣu-na] can therefore be identified in the area between Damascus and the Lebanese Beqa‘”), despite the doubts that they produced the aforementioned quotes sub §7. But this new location of Mušḫuṣu-na does not imply, in our opinion, that the letters of Šutarna were necessarily written and sent from Kumidi. The kings of the towns belonging to the “Beqa‘ Alliance”, where we believe Mušḫuṣu-na could be included, could have got together in one of those towns (Ḥašābu, Ḥazi, ʿEnu-Šāš, Mušḫuṣu-na, etc.; cf. above sub §5) in order to lay out the appropriate strategy against an external danger that threatened the region and request the help of the pharaoh; the scribe of the town where such a meeting took place would have been the author of, at least, letters EA 174, 175, 176, 363, 182 and 183. It would be a similar procedure to that used, for example, in letters EA 201-206, of the area of Bashan (cf. §8).

Bibliography

12 All the palaeographical observations stated in this paragraph will be duly proved in the monography aforementioned in n.1.


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Plate 1