

THE NATURE OF THE TRADE BETWEEN UGARIT AND THE HITTITE EMPIRE

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The Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 B.C.) is often referred to as the "International Age". The "Great Powers": the Hittites, Egypt, Mitanni, Babylonia and Assyria, had one common interest: the domination of the commercial route, largely penetrating Syria-Palestine region, in order to control the supply of metals. When they could not achieve this goal by means of force, they had to consolidate and share the metal market through peaceful cooperation. Virtually all the small city-states in Syria-Palestine were to come under the hegemony of these powers either by force or friendship. The Hittite and Ugarit are good examples of the use of diplomacy rather than coercion. While the Hittite Empire depended on military power, Ugarit relied on economic strength.

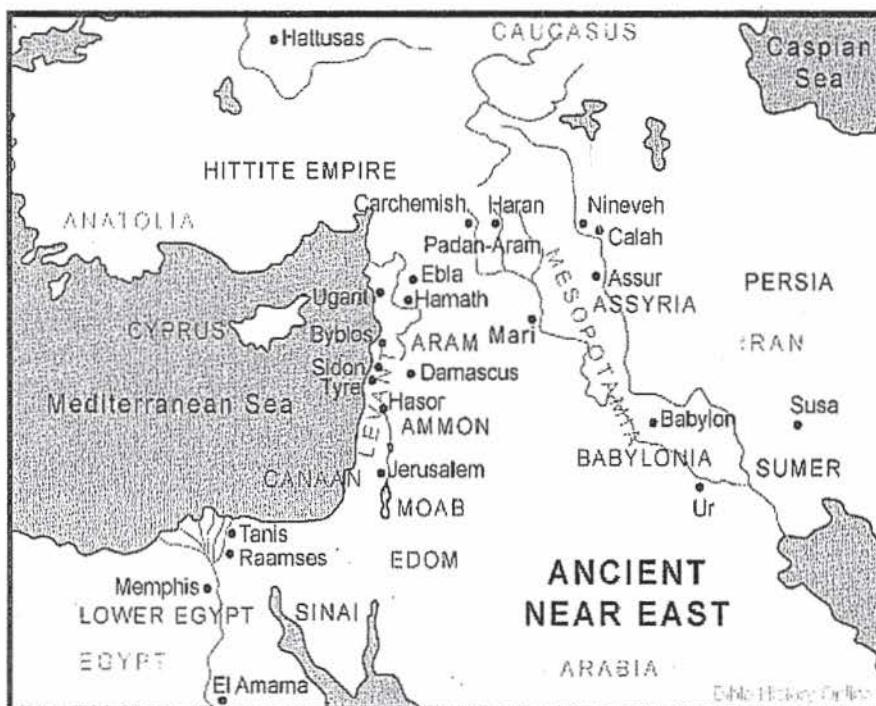
The purpose of this paper is to discuss the nature of trade between the Hittite Empire and Ugarit. First, I shall consider textual and archaeological sources and the political history of both countries. Second, basis of the economy in both states, their merchant activities, types of goods, and the commercial aspects in treaties and law will be the main themes of this part. In the last section, I will put forth a conclusion about the nature of the trade between the Hittite and Ugarit⁽¹⁾.

Ugarit, on the northeastern coast of the Mediterranean, was not a small city-state of the Phoenician type, but included a large part of northern Syria in command of many towns that depended on agriculture, commerce, and crafts. The growth of the city as a commercial center must be attributed to its geographical position in northern Syria and lying next to the Mediterranean. It was at a very close distance of the Aegean and Cyprian ports, and the Cilician ports of Anatolia. In addition, the city is located within the Syrian Highway which, runs from Egypt to Asia Minor. It commands the overland route to the eastern cities of Carchemish, Alppo, and Qedash and the states of Babylonia, Assyria and Hittites.

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(1) I should admit that these divisions are not always maintained, and some of these parts interact with others. All dates are B.C. except otherwise noted

The history of the site goes back to the Neolithic Age. The earliest reference to the city in cuneiform tablets is found in the archives of Ebla dating to the third Millennium. The political history of Ugarit began around the end of the Third Millennium when, Ugarit had a direct commercial relation with the kingdom of Mari⁽²⁾. The history of Ugarit in the Second Millennium is well preserved through its cuneiform tablets and in those of the Great Powers that started to expand towards Syria. Eventually Ugarit was destined to sink into the vassalage system, but it is not clear when this happened.



From Bible History Online,

http://www.bible-history.com/geography/maps/map_ancient_near_east.html

Suppiluliumas (1380-1346) sent a letter to the Ugaritic king Niqmaddu during the "First Syrian War" proposing an alliance and reminding him of the earlier friendship between their Ugarit and Hittite ancestors. Since there

(2) M. C. Astour, "Ugarit and the Great Powers," in G. D. Young, *Ugarit in Retrospect*. Eisenbrauns, 1981, p. 5-8

is no existing record of this alliance, it has been assumed that it took place during the Hittite Old Kingdom campaign in Syria⁽³⁾. Until Suppiluliumas' campaign in the 14th century, Ugarit shifted its policy from a pro-Hittite stand to Egypt and even to Mitanni. In general, the historical records point out that the city had never been forcibly subjugated by these powers, and that the city continued to develop its commercial activities in its neutral zone⁽⁴⁾. Georges Roux suggests that the campaign into Syria which ended with the subjugation of the kingdoms of Carchemish, Alppo and Qadesh, "marked the northern limit of Egyptian dominion in Syria", and instantly brought Ugarit under the Hittites suzerainty, even though it was not in the direct path of the campaign⁽⁵⁾. We must also emphasize the city of Carchemish, which became the principle city in Syria and rolled by Hittite princes.

During the time span of the Hittite Empire, Ugarit came under the influence of the Great King. The treaty, which is fully preserved in the Ugaritic text (PRU IV, 2-4), has an interesting piece of information and reveals the wealth and prosperity of the city. It included the following terms:

- pay an annual tribute worth 30 minas and 20 shekels of gold⁽⁶⁾,
- a number of gold and silver vessels, and some pieces of clothing,
- quantities of red and blue purple wool for the king, queen, heir apparent, and a few Hittite high officials,
- supply troops during war or as labor in state projects,
- renounce the right to conduct their own external policy⁽⁷⁾.

Therefore, the Ugaritian joined the Hittites king Muwatallis, with other Syrian polities, in the battle of Qadesh 1285 B.C. against the Egyptian army under Ramesses II (1250-1224 BC)⁽⁸⁾. The treaty allowed Niqmaddu to retain

(3) Astour., p.10-11

(4) Astour and other scholars believe that "the whole territory north of the Sumur, south of Alalah, and west of the Barylus formed neutral zone" Astour, 1981, p. 12-15; M. Drower, Ugarit," CAH V.II, pt.2, ch. XXI (b), p. 135

(5) Georges Roux, 1986. Ancient Iraq. 2nd Ed, 237-238, دمشق: دار علاء الدين 46-45

(6) Each mina is worth 50 shekels, and the shekel is 10 gram, thus the total tribute was about 15, 200 kg

(7) Astour, 1981, p.20; Drower, 1975, p.138.

(8) 36

a large territory which he had conquered earlier. During the Hittite period, the city maintained its role as a maritime center, providing the Hittites with an access to maritime trade which the Great King valued very highly to allow to be reduced by excessive interference⁽⁹⁾. The city also gained a great advantage from Hittite protection and its market.

The Hittite Empire was the supreme era in Hittite history. The king became an absolute monarch and mediator between the gods and men, and was divine after his death. The political organization of the empire seemed to be a confederacy based on feudalism which was applied at every level⁽¹⁰⁾. A class of military warriors was developed, and made economically independent through grants of lands for the purpose of being free for the protection of its lord and the empire. Feudalism also determined the relationship between the king and the civilian officials who became an instrument of his policy⁽¹¹⁾.

In the new territories the local kings were bound to their master by treaties that allowed them to maintain their freedom, but with certain obligations: to pay tribute, to supply troops, and to abandon their own external policy. As early as the era of the Old Kingdom, economic considerations were important factors in the Hittite expansion policy that aimed at controlling trade route to ensure a steady supply of metal⁽¹²⁾. Representatives of the king came to replace local authorities in most aspects of the economy in Anatolia. However, this larger and more centralized economic circuit brought negative results, since those Anatolians who had inherited the Assyrian trading network were now almost diminished in favor of the more centralized economy based at Hattusas⁽¹³⁾.

Bernard Knapp interprets the Hittite treaties as defining mutual obligation between lord and vassal state. It also coincides with the concept of other inland states that depended on the trading center states for "imports and exchange and were thus inclined to establish friendly relations and to uphold the neutrality of the harbor states". Although, this neutrality, whether

(10) A. Goetze, "The Hittite and Syria (1300-1200 B.C.)," 1975 in *CAH V.II, pt. 2, ch. XXIV*, p. 267-26879-65 *verso*.

(11) Goetze, p. 286; J.G. MacQueen, *The Hittites and their contemporaries in Asia Minor*, New York, 1986n, p.76-77

(12) Mac Queen, p.36-37

(13) A. Archi, "Anatolia in the Second Millennium B.C." in A. Archi ed., Circulation of Goods in Non-Palatial Context in the Ancient Near East. Roma, 1984, p. 204-206

through agreements or consensus, was not always respected, as in the case of Ugarit, it is widely accepted that Ugarit maintained "a predominantly independent existence"⁽¹⁴⁾.

The surviving archive of the Hittite empire contains a small number of texts dealing with the economic sector. There is also an entire lack of commercial texts. Therefore, one must rely on non-commercial texts such as those about law, administration, religion, etc. Even these texts may lead to an interesting remark as Archi has suggested, that in Hittite Anatolia most texts point to a rural community living on a subsistence economy⁽¹⁵⁾. In addition, they give us valuable hints about the origin and circulation of goods. Two methods of acquisition can be distinguished: exchange of gifts with other reigning houses, and tribute paid to the Hittite king and his party.

In these texts, large numbers of different raw materials and artifacts are listed. The tribute category is the greater of the two, since these Hittite dependents were not only required to supply food products, but finished objects as well. Some of these goods are not from Anatolia, such as tin, which cannot be identified with any specific region in the peninsula. Moreover, copper cannot be found near cities that have contributed copper to these lists such as, Ankwa. Therefore, one has to admit that a commercial network did exist between localities and externally which would explain the availability of these goods in such places⁽¹⁶⁾.

The archaeological evidence from Hattusas exhibits a few objects that can be determined as foreign objects. For example, only two Egyptian articles are found on the whole city, one of them dates to the 18th century. Bittel concludes that "today, now that Buyukkale has been fully excavated; one has to admit that the hope [for finding foreign objects] has not been fulfilled."⁽¹⁷⁾

If we now turn to the Ugaritic sources, there is a plenty of information from texts and excavations. In comparison to the Hittite archives, the Ugaritic texts provide an almost complete picture about the mechanism of trade in the Late Bronze Age. They present much more detailed and precise

(14) Knapp, 187-188

(15) Archi, p.200. Compare-241 سعور، 252, who point out to the emphasis of the law gave to trade and the protection of properties, good and coins.

(16) Archi, p. 202-203

(17) K. Bittel, *Hattusha, The Capital of the Hittites*, New York, 1970, p. 15. He also cautions that some of these objects may have been Syrian imitations of Egyptian ones.

information about commercial and manufactures goods, prices, law, and transportation. This would attest to the commercial activities of the kingdom in the 14th-13th centuries. Beside its role as middleman Ugarit exported its own goods such as bronze weapons, purple-dyed cloths, woods and agricultural produce⁽¹⁸⁾. These texts also shed new light on the history of the neighboring countries.

The Hittite law offers information about merchants and prices of goods which is very useful for comparison with other non-Hittite sources. Three articles in the law prohibit encroachment upon other trade. Sections 146-148 state that if a person deprives another person from selling his goods to a customer at lower price, he must pay a fine and in addition he has to purchase the same goods from the original seller at the same price⁽¹⁹⁾. In law No.5, a person has to pay one and a half minas of silver if he slays a merchant, to make restitution for his goods, and his estate as well is liable for penalty⁽²⁰⁾. The multiplicity of laws on theft is rather unusual. This indicates that we are dealing here with a period when movable personal properties were of higher value than immovable property⁽²¹⁾. Another set of laws regulate prices of goods in the Hittite Empire.

However, these commercial laws are probably designated to deal with local trade rather than international trade which is regulated by treaties. They also differ on the topic of compensation from existing records. The Ugaritic text (RS, 17.128) deals with a Hittite merchant who admits stealing from an Ugaritic merchant one copper vessel and one kettle of copper. He had to pay three fold the price of the goods⁽²²⁾. In another case, the Ugaritian merchants had to pay a hundred minas of silver for the death of a Hittite merchant in their land⁽²³⁾.

Trade was an important source of revenue for the Hittite kings, so they had an obvious interest in its growth. Therefore, they were willing to grant protection by defining the rights of merchants visiting their country. This aspect is clearly shown in Ugaritic texts, which provide us with the interesting conclusion that foreign merchants were not subject to the jurisdiction of the king of Ugarit. They were either under the jurisdiction of

(18) Knapp, 189

(19) E. Neufeld, *The Hittite Laws*, London, 1951, n. 146-148, p. 177

(20) Neufeld, no. 5, p. 2

(21) Neufeld, p. 117

(22) Yaron, p. 78-79

(23) M. Drower, "Commerce and Industry," *CAH V.II, pt.1, ch .X, sec.8*, 1973, p. 506-

the Great King or his representative in Carchemish, which was at that time the main center of the Hittite power in Syria⁽²⁴⁾. Its king served as the viceroy over all Hittite Syria; this justifies his interference in legal cases involving Hittite merchants. Ugarit "found itself under dual control: it communicated with, and received orders from, the Great King Hatti, but many decisions were transmitted or initiated by the king of Carchemish."⁽²⁵⁾ "Even cases of theft were not solved locally, but were brought to the king of Carchemish.

The origin of this involvement is not known, but it may have its route in the treaty or in other edicts issued by the Hittite king. For example, Ugarit texts (RS,17.146; RS,17.158), which deal with the killing of merchants between Ugarit and the Hittite, provide protection for merchants against murder and robbery, this is usually related to the Hittite law against theft, that forced the thief to pay 24 fold of the value of the stolen goods or face death⁽²⁶⁾. The state and its merchants were responsible in the event a trader was killed in its land, and whether or not the killer had been arrested, blood-compensation of 150 shekels of silver had to be paid in addition to restitution of the chattels that had been stolen.

We now must ask ourselves how these people were involved in the Ugarit-Hittite trade. It is known that even private traders were official and personal ambassadors to foreign courts. In the Hittite Empire, the temple was an economic organization that had an expanding and developed economy with numerous personnel and extensive storerooms⁽²⁷⁾. The role of the temple was due to its connection with the palace, and several members of the royal family belonged to it. The temple economy in the Hittite Empire was more independent economically than the Ugarit temple, however, it was bound politically to the king⁽²⁸⁾.

The engagement of the Hittite officials in trade is attested in several texts. For example, the Carchemish officials sold horses to the king of Ugarit⁽²⁹⁾. The official nature of the Hittite merchants is confirmed in the

(24)R. Yaron, "Foreign Merchants at Ugarit," *Israel Law Review*, 1969, 4: 78

(25)Astour, 1981. p. 23

(26)Yaron, p.75-77, 224 مس.

(27)H.G. Güterbock, "The Hittite Temple According to Written Sources", *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, 1975, V. 20: 129-130

(28)Heltzer, 1982. *The Internal Organization of the Kingdom of Ugarit*, Wiesbaden, 1982, p. 138-139.

(29)J.M. Sasson." Canaanite Maritime Involvement in the Second Millennium B.C.", *American Oriental Society*, 1966, 86: 134.

treaty between the Hittite king Suppiluliumas and Amurra of southern Syria. According to the treaty, the 300 shekels of gold was to be collected by Hittite merchants⁽³⁰⁾.

The merchants of Ur in the western Cilicia deserve special attention since they seem to have been acting independently under the Hittite king's aegis. But first we should discuss briefly Ugarit's maritime activity. The sea power of Ugarit reached a very high proportion that was not matched until the Greek period. In one text the Ugarit king demands the equivalent of one hundred and fifty ships from a vassal king⁽³¹⁾. The city fleet was the main naval power of the Great King, being not only required to supply ships for war, but also to carry certain goods to the Hittite land, especially grain and metal. On several occasions the Hittite king requested Ugarit ships to transport grain from Mukis in northern Syria to Ura. The most important text is RS, 20.212. In this he requests the shipment of 500 metric tons of grain in one or at most two Ugaritic ships⁽³²⁾. The Hittite text (Bo 1810) refers to one hundred ships carrying grain to Ur⁽³³⁾.

It seems that the city of Ur was the main commercial port of the Hittite Empire. It should be noted that the only Hittite text referring to merchants in the New Kingdom mentions the merchants of Ura. The text (KBo XII 42) is only a fragment of a larger one that was written in epic style⁽³⁴⁾. The enumeration of the goods, which include metals, animals, and food products, testifies to the wide range of activities. Archi, who considers Ur as a unique case in the Hittite Empire, states that

"The social structure of the city was left intact. But Ur's fleet was at the disposition of the Hittite and if its merchants on one hand acted as a commercial representative of the king and were protected by him, on the other (hand) they maintained their autonomy regarding the investments and the areas of their trade."⁽³⁵⁾

(30) M. Heltzer, *Goods, Prices and the Organization of Trade in Ugarit*, Wiesbaden, 1978 p.135. This practice may even apply to Ugarit, since the craftsmen of the city designated part of their tribute to their king as a tribute to the Hittite king. See Heltzer, 1982, p. 90-91, 95-96

(31) Sasson, p. 133

(32)Sasson, p. 132

(33)E. Linder, E. 1981 "Ugarit: A Canaanite Thalassocracy", in G.D. Young, *Ugarit in Retrospect*. Eisenbrauns, 1981, suggests that this text refers to Ugarit, p.40. For other textes, see Drower, 1975, p.145-146; Heltzer, 1977, p. 209-210

(34)H. Hoffner "A Hittite Text in Epic Style about Merchants," *Journal of Cuneiform Texts*, 1968-69, 22: 44-45

(35)Archi, p. 204

However, this privilege drew resentment in Ugarit. In the text (RS 17.130) the Ugaritic king complains to Hattusil III and accuses the merchants of Ur of being “very heavy on land”. Hattusil’s decision was to restrict the activity of the Urian merchants to the summer only. Moreover, they were prohibited from seizing houses and lands in Ugarit, but they were allowed to seize those Ugaritian debtors and carry them off to Ura⁽³⁶⁾. The text testifies to their extraordinary privileges and the capability of the Ugaritic king to deal with them.

Another case involving the Hittite merchant in Ugarit is preserved in text (PRU IV.118). The Hittite sailor, who was in charge of an Ugaritic ship, had been accused of destroying the ship and its cargo by an agent of the Ugarit king. The Hittite king made Skku responsible for the shipwreck even though the ship was crashed against the quay, and did not result from negligence⁽³⁷⁾.

Thus far our efforts have been concentrated on the Hittite economy; now we should discuss the Ugarit economy. The wealth of the city was not only due to importation and exportation, but other sources of revenue came from developed industry based on the country’s agricultural products, imported metals, and wool manufacture. Economic texts list more than 350 different items of raw material, finished objects, agricultural products, and livestock. The most frequently mentioned products in these texts are copper and bronze objects, fabrics and garments, grain and oil⁽³⁸⁾. There was a well developed metal industry which is confirmed by texts and archaeological evidence. They also specialized in the purple dye industry, a product which was produced from the sea. About 35 types of garments and cloths are mentioned in texts⁽³⁹⁾.

In Ugarit most of the craftsmen belonged to the royal dependents who supplied these artisans with raw materials from royal stores. The state monopoly over agricultural and crafts productions is clear in these texts. Heltzer emphasizes that this state monopoly was due to the large scale

(36)R. Yaron, “Foreign Merchants at Ugarit”, *Israel Law Review*, 1969, 4: 71-75; Heltzer, 1978, p.127-129.

(37)F. Fensham, “Shipwreck in Ugarit and Ancient Near Eastern Law Codes,” *Oreins Antiquis*, 1967, 6: 221-224; Linder, p. 34. His suggestion that the cargo belong to the ship owner is more plausible than it belonging to a Hittite merchant as Linder argues. For if the cargo was belonged to a third party, he would have been represented in the text.

(38)Heltzer, 1978, p. 17-52

(39)Linder, p. 38

development of the economy and attributes this development in Ugarit to "the specific geographical and political-economic position of this state in the framework of the Eastern Mediterranean."⁽⁴⁰⁾ With regard to trade the king was in control of a large portion of it through his royal dependents. However, private merchants are recognized in Ugarit texts, and some of them acquired great wealth⁽⁴¹⁾.

Trade between Ugarit and Anatolia was carried on either through land or by sea. Several economic texts reveal that overland caravans, mainly donkeys, traveled from Ugarit along the Syrian coast before crossing to the Cilician Gate to the heart of Anatolia. From there the principle route passed through Adana, Tarsus, Mersin, Silifke, and then Karaman. Another route was the Euphrates route which ran from Mesopotamia via north Syria before it reached Kanesh and thence Hattusas⁽⁴²⁾. One Ugarit text (PRU 17.59) refers to 10 caravans of donkeys in their way to Hattusas. Another text (PRU 17.348) mentions a caravan of 400 donkeys that was sent to Carchemish⁽⁴³⁾. Maritime trade with the Hittite was larger than overland trade.

As to the Aegean traders, there are enough evidence about their activities. Minoan traders established a colony at the port of Ugarit, and later the Mycenaean were engaged in the commercial activities inside the city⁽⁴⁴⁾. Some texts also mention that Cyprus was sending annual tribute of copper to the Ugarit king. Archaeological excavations also have revealed many Aegean objects, such as one thousand Cyprian pottery containing traces of perfume and some precious stone from northern Europe⁽⁴⁵⁾.

The Ugaritian activities in Asia Minor covered several places such as Hattusas, Ur, Pali, and other cities⁽⁴⁶⁾. Texts referring to trading activities in the Hittite capital are few, but they are very informative. Text (PRU IV, 149) mentions the Great King incursion on the Ugaritic "bank" at Hattusas. Tudhaliyas IV (1265-1235), who had requested 50 minas of gold from Ugarit, did not wait for the arrival of the money; instead he took it from the Ugaritic merchant house⁽⁴⁷⁾. This considerable amount of capital shows how

(40)Heltzer, 1982, p. 100-102

(41)Sasson, p.135; Heltzer, 1978, p. 132-134

(42)J. G. Macqueen, *The Hittites and their contemporaries in Asia Minor*, New York, 1986, p. 54-55

(43)Heltzer, 1978, p. 149, 75.

(44)Roux, 220, 393, «الخطيب» 37

(45)36, 47

(46)Astour, 1981, p. 22

(47)Astour, 1981, p. 22, 27

much the Ugaritians were involved in commercial transaction in Anatolia. In another text, an Ugaritian merchant sent a letter to another merchant in Ugarit telling him about lucrative trade in the Hittite country. The Ugaritian merchant Zallana sent a letter asking for more gold to be sold in Anatolia⁽⁴⁸⁾. They even exercised monopoly over the trade of horses from Anatolia. The Hittite king Tudhaliyas IV granted the Ugaritian king Ammistamru full "control over the movement of horses from Hatti to Egypt and vice versa".⁽⁴⁹⁾

The geographical position of Ugarit between Mesopotamia, Anatolia, the Aegean, and Egypt led its merchants to trade in most of the available commodities of the Late Bronze Age, whether in the form of raw material or finished artifacts. A complete list of these goods in Ugarit and the neighboring countries has been accomplished by Heltzer⁽⁵⁰⁾. Grain, gold, silver, garments, and horses were the most frequently traded goods between Ugarit and the Hittites. A comparison of the prices of these goods in both regions is very useful. It should be noted that the main medium of exchange during this period was silver and to a lesser extent, gold. In Ugarit the ratio of one shekels of gold to silver was 1:3-4, while 1:16-48 in Anatolia. Copper was less expensive in Ugarit than in Anatolia despite the fact that it was locally minded in Asia Minor. However, the prices of animals such as horses and donkeys were higher in Ugarit.

We know from these texts that these commodities were either attributes, or gifts to the Hittite king, his family, and high officials. One example of these indirect channels of trade is illustrated in text (RS 20.187). The Ugaritic king sent garments to a Hittite prince and asked for horses and bows. The commercial aspect of these gifts is further emphasized in text (RS 17.144). The Ugaritic vizier had received horses, mules, a slave boy, a bronze vessel, an iron dagger, and a raw glass from a certain Hittite, who later sent a letter in which he wrote, "But when my brother wrote me saying if you send me these requests of mine, then I will send [you] their prices, do I ever set any price for my brother? And for me, my request is for a lot of gold."⁽⁵¹⁾ This is not difficult to understand, since Ugarit was the middleman in the trade of metals. They engaged in importing cheap gold from Egypt

(48)M. Heltzer, "The Metal Trade of Ugarit and the Problem of Transportation of Commercial Goods," *Iraq*, 1977, 39: 207

(49)Astour, 1981, p.25., for the trade with Egypt see Roux, 218-220

(50)Heltzer, 1978, table 1-2, p. 17-52, 86-93

(51)Heltzer, 1978, p. 9-10

and copper from Cyprus and selling it at high prices for the cheap silver in Asia Minor.

It is time to sum up our previous discussion. The Ugaritic-Hittite trade was beneficial to both parties, and was based on mutual exchange of service. The Hittite relied heavily on Ugarit for the supply of metal, grain and luxury products, while Ugarit sought Hittite protection. It seems that the inferior jurisdiction of the king of Ugarit in laws regarding the activity of merchants does not indicate an inferiority of its kingdom and king in the Hittite affairs. If the Hittite power had derived from strength from the infantry troops and chariots, it had to rely on the Ugarit fleet in times of peace as well as war. The city was an important factor in the Hittite system especially from the economic perspective. We might consider that the Hittites attempted to rely on the Ugarit economy for their advantages.

As we have seen, the merchants of Ur were restricted by the Hittite king to seasonal movement in the city when the king of Ugarit complained about their activities. Although the merchants of Ur were favored by the Hittite kings and his Anatolian subjects, the Great King was equally interested in protecting the Ugaritian economy. If we apply the theoretical hypothesis of a "marketless trade" economy depending on "reciprocity, redistribution and exchange" as has been advanced by K. Palonyi, apparently this would fit a large portion of the evidence we have from this period. Nevertheless, it has been shown that this does not reflect the whole situation outside of the palatial circuit. Private or semi-private merchants from both countries were involved in this commerce.

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