

‘THE KING, MY LORD, WROTE ME IN A TABLET:
“...”’ (EA 149:54–55): DIRECT CITATION AND
COMMUNICATION IN THE SYRO-CANAANITE
EL-AMARNA LETTERS

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This paper examines the use of direct citation in the correspondence between the Egyptian Pharaoh and his officials and his Syro-Canaan vassals in the El-Amarna archive. A frequent phenomenon in the modern and ancient world alike, direct citation serves to support the writer’s claims, lay the blame on or absolve others, demonstrate loyalty, and depict distress. The examples adduced fall into four categories: authoritative, third-party, confirmative, and fabricated/imaginary speech. Raising the question of the validity of applying modern linguistic theories to ancient sources, these types are analysed in the light of the international diplomacy that flourished in the Fertile Crescent during the 14th-century BCE.

Key words: direct citation, El-Amarna, international diplomacy, linguistic theory.

Introduction

This paper explores the literary genre known as ‘letter writing’ as exemplified in the international correspondence of the 14th-century BCE ancient Near East, specifically in the missives that form the El-Amarna archive (Moran 1992, pp. xiii–xxxix; Co-chavi-Rainey 2005; Rainey 2015, Vol. 1, pp. 1–35). As Bakhtin (2010, p. 84) observes, the exchange of written communications is based on the preservation of a continuum between past, present, and future. Closely allied to spoken language, while letter writing exhibits few artistic features, it betrays clear signs of the author’s hand (Bakhtin 1981, pp. 383–384; Biber–Conrad 2001, pp. 185, 190–192). Creating a discursive community, it is of social as well as linguistic significance, reflecting its members’ cultural background and mindset (Baynham 1999, pp. 486, 490; Selting 2009, p. 23; Gurdin 1994, p. 61; Foucault 1981, pp. 62–63; Weinryb 1987, p. 258). As

Wittgenstein (1986, p. 9) notes, ‘to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life’ (cf. Defez 2103, pp. 190–193).

In modern linguistics, ‘direct quotations’ are customarily defined as reports of an utterance attributed to another – e.g., ‘Sam said: “I’ll come.”’ An ‘indirect quotation’ is usually a paraphrase of another’s speech in one’s own voice: ‘Sam said he would come’ (Tannen 2007, p. 102). Consisting of two principal speech elements – the quoter and the quoted (Bakhtin 1999, p. 196; Holt 2009, pp. 194–195; Sternberg 1982, p. 107) – direct quotation constructs a dialogue that exceeds the simple act of transmitting information. It is thus generally considered a more effective form of communication than other speech acts (Tannen 2007, pp. 19, 103, 112, 119; Waugh 1995, p. 154). On occasion, it is also referred to as double voicing or a voicing strategy (Maybin 1999, pp. 460, 474; Macaulay 1987, p. 29; Baynham 1996, p. 66).

Adducing someone else’s words – especially if that person is a figure of influence – helps to bolster a claim, the speaker’s interpretation in indirect speech being open and overt (Blakemore 2001, p. 112). While direct speech ‘transmits’, indirect quotation ‘transforms’ (Tannen 2007, p. 132). Because the voice cited in direct speech is mediated by the speaker’s (Maynard 1996, pp. 209–210), however, it does not necessarily correspond to the original language. The words are thus not always adduced in their precise context (Macaulay 1987, p. 31; Ziv 2006, p. 141): although intended as a verbatim report, they sometimes take the form of editing or paraphrase; or are written ironically, as exaggeration, or sympathetically (Bakhtin 2010, pp. 92–93; Antaki–Leuder 2011, pp. 473–475). Direct citation is thus a function of selection or (witting or unwitting) accommodation to the speaker’s needs or purposes (Clark–Gerrig 1990, pp. 774–775).

Direct quotations fall into four principal categories:

1. Authoritative citations that play a referential role, granting weight to the speaker’s statements;
2. Third-party quotes that describe a potential reality – e.g., eye-witness testimony;
3. Confirmative quotations that support the writer’s claims – frequently a citation of his own words or thoughts (Maynard 1996, pp. 218–219, 224; Weizman 1998);
4. Fabricated/imaginary quotations, i.e. words that might have been said, either in the past or in the future.

On occasions, quotations appearing in dialogue with one another (dialogical citation) are “quotes within quotes” – also known as recursive citation (Clark–Gerrig 1990, pp. 773).

Authoritative Quotes

As we noted above, this type of direct citation serves a referential function, validating and legitimising the writer’s statements. The letters in the El-Amarna archive contain a wide variety of examples of this rhetorical device, employed for diverse purposes. It frequently forms part of an explanation. Citing the obligations imposed

upon them by their Egyptian overlord, local rulers report how they have carried out his instructions. On a number of occasions, the Egyptian Pharaoh requests that the rulers obey his orders or those of his officials, and the rulers replied him that they have done so (EA [El-Amarna archive] 292:17–26, 317:19–25). Zimredda of Lachish, for example, wrote Amenhotep IV of Egypt saying that: ‘I have heard the words of the king, my lord, which he wrote to his servant: “Listen to your governor and guard the cities of the king, your lord, that are with you”’ (EA 294:6–11). Other examples occur in the framework of supplying the Egyptian army with provisions or ensuring the safe passage of Egyptian caravans (EA 337:7–12, 255:8–11). These reflect the decline of Egyptian power during this period (Breier 2016), trade routes being vulnerable to attacks (EA 7:73–82, 8:8–33) – even Egyptian horses and boats falling prey to plunderers (EA 108:34–45; 105:2–331). The Egyptian king’s need for up-to-date intelligence reports (Cohen 2000, pp. 87–89) is indicated by Abimilki of Tyre’s citation of the king’s request for information – the vassal then providing him with the facts at his disposal (EA 149:54–63).

Three vassals quote the king’s command that they appear before him or his officials, then proceeding to explain that they are prevented from fulfilling his wish by security considerations (EA 102:13–19, 283:7–13, 306:11–16). For his part, Amenhotep IV cites the evasive statements made by Aziru, son of ‘Abdi-Ashirta, insisting that he appear at the Egyptian court – or send his son in his stead (EA 162:42–54; cf. 165:18–27; 168:4–12).

Rib-Hadda of Byblos frequently quotes the Egyptian Pharaoh’s injunction to preserve peace and order and maintain his rule in the face of the insurrection staged by ‘Abdi-Ashirta and his son Aziru (Altman 1978; Liverani 2004, pp. 59–117). This somewhat ritualistic refrain leads him to reiterate time and again the absurdity of this command, his personal status and authority being of no effect without concrete Egyptian aid and his very life being in danger (EA 112:7–15, 119:8–18, 121:7–17, 122:9–21, 123:29–37, 126:30–32, 130:14–19). One of the Pharaoh’s most frequent vassal correspondents – 68 letters from his hand being preserved in the El-Amarna archive – he often adduces the Egyptian king’s notation of the volume of his communications: ‘B[ehold, th]us you say: “It is yo<u> always writing to me mo[re than a]ll the city rulers.” W[h]y should they write to you? [They] have cities. [It is my citi]es Az[iru] has taken’ (EA 124:34–40; cf. 117:6–9). Rib-Hadda’s foe, Aziru, also quotes the Pharaoh as denouncing him as a rebel: ‘[Wh]at are your words, my lord, to m[e, that you are sa]ying? [Wh]y [do you spe]ak [thu]s, my lord: “You [are an] ene[my of the land of E]gypt and you are com[mitting a crime against the me]n of the land of E[gy]pt”?’ (EA 62:4–8). Countering this claim, Aziru presents himself as working towards rather than against Egyptian interests (EA 62:8–34; cf. 160:20–32, 161:30–34). Another letter, whose author and provenance have unfortunately not been preserved, responds to a similar complaint, namely, that the ruler has not been sufficiently compliant (EA 207:9–14). Rib-Hadda also cites the Egyptian Pharaoh’s accusation that he (Rib-Hadda) has lied to him, thereupon proceeding to refute this charge (EA 117:29–34).

On other occasions, statements are cited in order to demonstrate their lack of foundation or to note commitments that were not honoured. Rib-Hadda, for example,

remarks that the Egyptian Pharaoh had pledged to come to Byblos, but reneged on his word, as well as claiming that his envoy Irimayašša had arrived in the city (EA 93:4–9, 130:9–14). In similar vein, he rebuts the assertion made by an Egyptian official by the name of Yanḥamu that he had supplied Byblos with a certain amount of grain (EA 85:23–32).

Third-party Quotes

This type of citation is employed in order to support the writer's claims, frequently quoting his own words or thoughts. Close to despair, Rib-Hadda, for example, adduces his own reiterated complaint: 'I have been saying: "They have a[ll] made an [agreement] against [me]"' (EA 69:10–11). In another letter, he cites his stated belief that the Pharaoh would come to his aid (EA 83:41–43). Etakkama of Qidšu and Abi-Milku of Tyre make use of the same device to strengthen their declaration of loyalty (EA 189:13–20, 147:57–60). Taking the same tack, Lab'ayu of Shechem sought to present himself as a loyal vassal, explaining his entry into Gezer by quoting his own words (EA 253:18–28, 254:16–29; Altman 1977b, p. 18; Galil 1997, pp. 8–14).

In his repeated efforts to strengthen his requests for assistance from the Egyptian king, Rib-Hadda cited his previous statements, few of which had brought any results, thus forcing him to write yet again (EA 88:5–9, 90:8–16, 117:53–56, 136:16–23). On the edge of despair, he on occasion quotes himself several times in the same missive:

'I was in the town of Shig[ata] and I wro[te] you: "Take counsel concerning [your] ci[ty], [les]t 'Abdi-[Ashirta] take it." [But] you did not listen to me. [Fr]om the town of Baṭrôna I [also] wr[ote you:] "Send people that they may guard [the to]wn for you." [My] words never being heeded or [veri]ly accepted, now [he is tak]ing my towns.' (EA 90:8–19; cf. 91:2–8)

Once, he even relates to his own statements in the third rather than first person (EA 124:6–11). Elsewhere, he reaches back to the previous generation, recalling words written to the Egyptian king's father during the days of 'Abdi-Ashirta, Aziru's direct forebear (EA 132:8–16; cf. Cochavi-Rainey 2005, p. 169). References to the present Pharaoh's father also occur in the correspondence between the 'great kings' – the superpowers of the day. Tušratta of Mittani, for example, sought to strengthen the kingdom's waning ties with the land of the Nile by adducing the two countries' earlier bonds (EA 27:19–30; Bryan 2000, pp. 83–84; Altman 2004, p. 86; Kahn 2011, p. 150). Hereby, he attempted to buttress his status and that of Mittani, both of which were threatened by the rise of Hatti and Assyria (Artzi 1978, pp. 25–41; 2004, p. 107).

Confirmatory Quotes

This type of direction citation brings validation from another source, thus clearly not being as weighty as authoritative quotations. Ancient Near Eastern rulers made use of

this device on numerous occasions in their correspondence with the Egyptian Pharaoh for diverse purposes. Appealing to his Egyptian overlord to rescue him from his enemies, the vassal ruler of Byblos adduces past statements to the effect that the 'Apîru are seeking to take control of Egyptian lands (EA 83:15–18; cf. Rainey 2015, Vol. 1, pp. 31–34). His officials and subjects pressuring him to adopt a different political tack because of the Egyptian Pharaoh's inability to defeat the rebels (Altman 1978, pp. 23–24), Rib-Hadda reports how the inhabitants of the city depicted the circumstances under which they found themselves: 'Seeing this, the men of the city of Byblos said: "How long shall we be impoverished (by) the son of 'Abdi-[Ashirta]? The silver has been used up for the war"' (EA 138:36–38; cf. 83:35–37). The reference at the end of this passage to Aziru as 'son of 'Abdi-Ashirta' indicates the contempt in which he was held by Rib-Hadda – in much the same way as Saul alludes to David as 'son of Jesse' (1 Sam 20:28, 30–31, 22:7–9, 12, 25:10; cf. Bar-Efrat 1996, p. 264). After conveying his subjects' scorn for the Egyptian king's dismissal of his numerous appeals in the past (EA 138:122–126; cf. Liverani 2004, pp. 106–112), he presents them as regarding him as good as dead and his rule as virtually over: '... he is seeking [to give the city] to Aziru. So may the king, my lord, [not] keep silent [con]cerning his ci[ty], leading the city to say, "Rib-Hadda is dead, th[us we are free from] h[is authority; let us join] Aziru"' (EA 138:108–113). Finally, he alleges that even his wife and son are pleading with him to change allegiance and sign a treaty with the "son of 'Abdi-Ashirta" (EA 136:5–15). In order to strengthen his appeal to the Egyptian Pharaoh and his officials, he cites statements made by his internal and external adversaries to the effect that the Egyptian army is too weak to return and re-take control of the region (EA 129:32–33, 362:13–27).

Like Rib-Hadda, facing the approaching Hittite army, Adad Nirari of Nugassa requests Egyptian protection on the basis not only of the current ruler's loyalty to his kingdom, but also that of his forefathers:

'[Lo]ok, when Manahpiya, king of the land of Egypt, the father of your father, would appoint [T]a[ku, the fath]er [of] my [fath]er to kingship in the land of Nuḡasse, then he poured oil on his head and thu[s] he said: 'Whom the king of E[gypt] has app[ointed] to kingship [and] poured [oil on his head], [let not] anyone [.....] He gave [....] New [.....]' (EA 51:4–11; cf. Rainey 2015, Vol. 2, pp. 1393–1394; Gromova 2012, pp. 2–3; Stavi 2015, p. 86)

City rulers frequently adduce the loyalty of former generations (see EA 52:5–7, 117:86–88, 129:46–48, 253:11–17, 317:13–18). Citations of past oral or written declaration of diplomatic ties likewise appear in the international correspondence in the El-Amarna archive (EA 27:9–10, 19–23, 41:7–10; cf. 9:19–30).

A confirmatory quotation also occurs in a sophisticated letter written by one of Aziru's sons to a high-ranking Egyptian official. Intended to restore his father to the throne in Amurru, this was composed during Aziru's forced residence in Egypt, estimated to have lasted between a number of months and three years (Kraus 1981, p. 62; Klengel 1992, p. 164; Warbuton 2001, p. 72; Cordani 2011, p. 111). Herein, Aziru's

son twice cites the rulers of Nugassa and the men of Sutu as rejoicing over his father's exile in Egypt, allowing them to sabotage Egyptian interests (EA 169:16–39). This direct quotation is thus designed to put pressure upon the Egyptian Pharaoh – who eventually acceded to Aziru's request and permitted his return (Beckman 1999, p. 33, § 2, i 14'–26'; Gromova 2013, p. 111). His fate contrasted with that of his father, 'Abdi-Ashirta, who never saw his native land again (Altman 1977a; Liverani 1998, pp. 393–394; Na'aman 1990, p. 404).

Confirmatory citations also formed part of appeals to the Egyptian throne characterised by complaints against another person. Rib-Hadda, for example, adduces numerous such quotes in his lengthy correspondence regarding 'Abdi-Ashirta's behaviour. He also cites his enemy's call for the men of Ammia to assassinate their ruler and join forces with his own troops (EA 73:23–28, 74:23–26), accusing 'Abdi-Ashirta of encouraging an uprising in his city (EA 74:29–4, 81:11–13, 132:19–23; cf. 122:40–44).

Confirmatory quotes frequently serve to provide information (see EA 120:35–37, 178:19–26). In a letter to a senior official written by another by the name of Pa'pau, the latter complains about the rulers of Lachish and Sidon who are rebelling against the king, allegedly citing their traitorous statements (EA 333:7–22). The same device also appears in two objections raised by city rulers in regard to the Egyptian administrative system. Milkilu of Gezer, for example, complains about a corrupt Egyptian official by the name of Yanhamu who, he contends, is 'demand[ing] 3000 (shekels of) silver from my hand, saying to me: "Give me your wife and your sons, or else I will smite (you)"' (EA 270:14–21).

Mayarzana of Ḥasi cites the words of a colleague who asked an official by the name of Amanhatpe to hand over the Apiru who had sought shelter with him. Rather than doing so, however, Amanhatpe allowed them to escape (EA 185:55–60). In a lengthy missive to Aziru lobbying for his continued loyalty to Egypt, Amenhotep IV quotes some incriminatory information that has reached his ears: 'And now the king has heard that: "You are on good terms with the ruler of Qidšu." Have you been taking food and strong drink in fellowship with him?' (EA 162:22–23). Later on, the Pharaoh seeks to persuade Aziru to cut off ties with anyone considered to be a Hittite vassal (EA 162:24–29; cf. 151:59; Liverani 2014, p. 339; Stavi 2015, p. 87).

While confirmatory citations most frequently occur in letters of complaint against vassals and officials, they also serve as a form of defence against accusations raised. Mut-Ba'lu' of Pella (Piḥilu), for example, quotes in a letter to Yanhamu, Mut-Ba'lu' of Pella (Piḥilu), for example, quotes another Egyptian official that raised accusations against him of harbouring Ayyāb, the ruler of Ashtartu (EA 256:4–6). Biridiya similarly cites the words of Surata of Acco in order to refute the accusation that he had facilitated the flight and murder of Lab'ayu of Sechem (EA 245:24–30), thereby essentially holding Surata responsible (EA 245:31–35). In his defence against Egyptian censure, 'Abdi-Ashirta, who took control of the administrative city of Ṣumur, likewise quoted the words of four men who had been present in the palace: 'and they (themselves) said to me: "Deliver us from the hand of the city of Sehlali"' (EA 62:29–31; cf. Klengel 2002, p. 43; Liverani 2014, p. 3344; Pfoh 2016, p. 21).

Rib-Hadda also employs confirmatory citations to refute certain rumours circulating about him, quoting statements allegedly made to the king regarding the vicissitudes of the Egyptian army (EA 119:18–21), the conquest of Byblos (EA 84:18–21, 124:17–19), his flight, and even his death (EA 138:5–18, 65–70).

Fabricated / Imaginary Quotes

This type of direct citation relates to a possible scenario – what might have been stated in the past or could be said in the future. Such quotations appear on numerous occasions in the El-Amarna letters. Serving primarily to reinforce an appeal to the Egyptian Pharaoh and urge him to act, vassal rulers placed statements they thought should have been made in the king’s mouth. Requesting that a governor by the name of Yanḥamu take care of his city, Rib-Hadda, for example, cites the king’s order to be conveyed to the governor (EA 83:40–42). He also states what he thinks the Pharaoh should say in instructing Yanḥamu and Piḥuru to retake the Amurru cities (EA 117:59–64; cf. EA 127:13–14). Like the ruler of Byblos, Suwardata of Gath formulates a question he believes the Egyptian ruler should raise with regard to Yanḥamu in order to verify the plight in which he found himself (EA 283:27–33). Ba’al-Meher of Gath-Padalla, who claimed to be harassed by Lab’ayu of Sechem’s sons, similarly suggests that the king should issue an ultimatum: ‘So may it please the king, my lord, that he dispatch one of his senior officials to Biryawaza and say to him: “March against the two sons of Lab’ayu or be a traitor to the king”’ (EA 250:23–28).

Imaginary quotes also serve to demonstrate vassals’ loyalty in the face of accusations levelled against them by their Egyptian overlord. Suspected of disloyalty, Lab’ayu, for example, adduced possible orders that he hastens to assure the Egyptian Pharaoh he would be quick to obey – including giving his life for the king (EA 252:23–27, 254:41–45).

As we saw above, despite his reluctance, Aziru of Amurru was forced to present himself at the Egyptian court, apparently in the wake of numerous arguments put forward by the Pharaoh (EA 162:35–38) who attributed statements to Aziru to the effect that he will continue to refuse to come to Egypt – then proceeding to reject these excuses (EA 162:50–51). In his desperation, Rib-Hadda similarly announces to the Egyptian king that if he fails to extend him aid he will write him declaring his abandonment of Byblos (EA 83:43–51). Alongside such threats, imaginary citations also functioned as a way of soliciting rewards for loyalty (EA 99:17–20).

One of the most interesting usages of this device in the El-Amarna letters turns upon its translation. In order to hasten Egyptian assistance, Rib-Hadda adduces circumstances relating to the king of Mittani, citing the ties that appear to have been created between ‘Abdi-Ashirta of Amurru and Mittani – which he claims impinge on Egyptian interests (EA 90:19–22). Elsewhere, the opportunity of a visit by the king of Mittani is mooted – an event scholars dispute (Singer 1991, pp. 71–72; Klengel 1999, p. 157; Gromova 2007, p. 293). According to Moran’s and Cochavi-Rainey’s translations (the latter into Hebrew), Rib-Hadda appears to have reported the Mittani

king's visit and words to the Egyptian Pharaoh, describing a recent incident: 'The king of Mitta[ni] visited the land of Amurru and said, "How great is this land! Your land is extensive"' (EA 95:27–33; Moran 1992, p. 169; Cochavi-Rainey 2005, p. 136). Anson Rainey, in contrast, understands the text to refer to a possible visit in the future: '[... t]o whom will I g[o]? (To) the king of the land of Mit[anni]? (To) the land of Amurru? Let him loo[k] and say to me: "What is this land? Your land is extensive"' (EA 95:27–31; Rainey 2015, Vol. 1, p. 535, Vol. 2, p. 1440). On the first reading, Rib-Hadda quotes the king of Mittani, confirming the words of a third party. On the second, however, he engages in an imaginary citation, alluding to a possible future scenario.

Dialogical and Recursive Citations

Having reviewed examples of the four types of direct quotation in the El-Amarna letters, we may now look at two further forms – namely, dialogical and recursive citations. Adducing the fierce exchange of words between himself and his subjects, Rib-Hadda observes:

The men of the city of Byblos saw (and said:) "How long will we be impoverished (by) the son of 'Abdi-[Ashirti]? The silver has been used up for the war." So they rejected me and I smote them. But they said: "How long will you smite us? Where will you get men to inhabit the city?" So I wrote to the palace for troops, but troops were not given to me. And the city said: "Leave him, let us join Aziru!" But I said: "How can I join him and abandon the king, my lord?" (EA 138:36–37)

This type of dialogue also occurs in the missives sent by three other Syro-Canaanite rulers reporting their conversations with rebel supporters (EA 53:11–16, 197:13–25, 250:9–23, 40–47). This apparent verbatim record was intended to demonstrate the writer's loyalty to the Egyptian throne. A similar exchange of international correspondence is cited by Burraburiyis of Babylon, who describes the discourse his father Kurigakzu held with the rulers of Canaan. Herein, he quotes the latter as calling upon the king of Babylon to cut off all ties with the Egyptian Pharaoh, then proceeding to report that the Babylonian king rebuffed this appeal, declaring his continued loyalty to Egypt (EA 9:19–30). In citing this (alleged) conversation between the loyal Babylonian monarch and rebel Canaanites, the king's son, having inherited his father's throne, sought to strengthen his ties with the land of the Nile as part of the growing links between Egypt and Assyria (EA 15:16; Artzi 1978, pp. 25–41; 1997, pp. 320–336; Avruch 2000, p. 155; Jönsson 2000, p. 195; Liverani 2014, p. 365).

Recursive citations are "quotes within quotes". We find one example in the El-Amarna letters, forming part of the Egyptian Pharaoh's charges against Aziru whom he holds responsible for plotting against his enemy Rib-Hadda – even following the latter's deposal. The Egyptian king complains that the ruler of Amurru had failed to report Rib-Hadda's appeal to him to return to his city (albeit not necessarily as its

ruler): ‘If you are a true servant of the king, why did you not denounce him to the king, your lord, saying: “This city ruler has written to me, saying, ‘Receive me and reinstate me in my city’”’ (EA 162:15–18). Here, Rib-Hadda’s (alleged) statement is adduced in support of the Egyptian king’s claim – occurring, however, within a citation of a declaration Aziru should have made to the king. The outer quotation is thus an imaginary citation of words that were never actually spoken. Despite the complex form of recursive quotations, they occur in the international correspondence in the El-Amarna archive (EA 1:26–29, 78–81) as well as the Mari letters and Hittite archive/missives (*ARM* 26/1, 26 76, 26 233, 26 258:1–7; *HKM* 71:3–7; Heimpel 2003, pp. 207, 266, 277; Hoffner 2009, p. 227).

Conclusion

This paper examines the use of direct citation in the El-Amarna letters between the Egyptian Pharaoh and his vassals in the Syro-Canaanite city states. Looking firstly at the distinctive nature of this genre, we noted that, despite being written, it is closest in form to spoken language. We then proceeded to outline the primary features of direct quotation, dividing the phenomenon into four types (authoritative, third-party, confirmative, and fabricated/imaginary), as well as noting the existence of two further forms (dialogical and recursive). Albeit not always constituting an accurate and/or verbatim report, direct citation is employed in order to clarify, validate, and support the writer’s words. Analysis of the literary exchange between the city-state rulers and the Egyptian Pharaoh and his officials evinces that it was frequently used in all its forms. The authoritative citations serve primarily as the basis for the explanation the letter writer offers, statements made by the addressee in the past also being adduced so that they can be refuted. The confirmatory quotes, in contrast, customarily cite the writer’s own words and thoughts, functioning to stress vassal loyalty to the overlord and strengthen appeals not yet met. The third-party citations generally relate to oral statements made by a person outside the immediate discourse, helping to reinforce the writer’s requests, evince the loyalty of former generations, and present Egypt’s enemies as opposing the country’s interests – thereby inducing the current ruler to intervene in the present state of affairs. In order to support the Egyptian administration, city-state rulers also on occasion provided it with intelligence by this means, as well as using it to rebut charges or false rumours. The imaginary or fabricated quotes served to goad the Egyptian Pharaoh and/or his ministers into extending aid to vassal states, the writers putting into the king’s mouth the words they wished him to utter and act upon. They also constituted a way of expressing and pledging continued loyalty. These four types are complemented by dialogical and recursive quotes. Hereby, it becomes clear that modern linguistic theories in this field can be applied to ancient sources such as the El-Amarna archive and to the international correspondence between the Pharaoh and his officials and Egyptian vassals.

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