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Genres of Texts and Archives of Tablets¹

DOI 10.1515/olzg-2015-0065

The book under review and the reviewer's own book, both treating the Alalakh IV tablets, appeared at virtually the same time.² The two works each focus on different selections of material, Niedorf's on the legal documents and mine on the lists of persons, while embracing the entire corpus within the scope of inquiry. They moreover represent different interpretive approaches, mine archival and Niedorf's genre-critical (or typological).³ From the standpoint of the field, then, they complement each other. Meanwhile, since their publication – at which time I meant to abandon the study of Alalakh for other subjects – the ongoing excavations at Tell Atchana directed by K. Aslıhan Yener have yielded substantial new evidence bearing on Alalakh's culture, chronology, and history, but hardly any new tablets.⁴ Thus the corpus that Niedorf

studied has not been augmented and, although the new evidence requires revising the site's periodization, the position of the Level IV tablets within the framework of Alalakh's history remains unchanged: they belong to the latter half of the 15th century BCE, between Idrimi's establishment of Alalakh as the seat of his kingdom and the destruction of the city during the reign of his grandson Ilmilimma, with the heaviest concentration of records during the reign of Idrimi's son and successor Niqmepa.

Old finds and new excavations

Niedorf presents a judicious overview of the history and chronology of Alalakh (pp. 9–17), supplemented by remarks on the internal chronology of the Level IV corpus (pp. 133–34). This and my own contemporaneous discussion of the same subject must now be updated principally by reference to new discoveries pertaining to the end of Level IV. Leonard Woolley, the site's first excavator, defined Level IV as beginning with the construction of the palace he ascribed to Niqmepa and ending with the Hittite conquest of Alalakh, an event marked by the destruction of the “castle” west of the palace and the construction of the massive new “Hittite fortress” atop its remains. Halfway through Woolley's Level IV the palace burned down, c. 1400, while the castle continued in use.⁵ However, new evidence shows that it was not only the palace that burned, as Woolley thought, but the castle, too, and after this destruction the castle was rebuilt thrice before the Hittite fortress replaced it in the late 14th century.⁶ These observations warrant identifying the

¹ Review of **Niedorf, Christian**: *Die mittelbabylonischen Rechtsurkunden aus Alalakh (Schicht IV)*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008. XIII, 497 S m. Abb. gr. 8° = *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 352. geb. Lw. € 96,00. ISBN 978-3-86835-009-8.

² Eva von Dassow, *State and Society in the Late Bronze Age: Alalakh under the Mittani Empire* (Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians 17, ed. David I. Owen and Gernot Wilhelm; Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2008); hereafter *State and Society*. For the tardiness of this review, occasioned in part by delay in assignment and acceptance of Niedorf's book (which I had already acquired) and in part by the usual press of competing commitments, I offer apologies to author and readers.

³ While Gattungskritik is more readily rendered “genre-criticism,” the key term Gattung is sometimes better rendered “type,” where this word and its derivatives “typology” and “typological” fill the semantic slots better than “genre” and its derivatives in English. In what follows I use both terms, the choice depending on which seems best in context.

⁴ Excavations at Tell Atchana have been in progress under Yener's direction for more than a decade now; the inaugural volume of excavation reports is K. Aslıhan Yener, ed., *Tell Atchana, Ancient Alalakh*, vol. 1: *The 2003–2004 Excavation Seasons* (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2010). I joined the project in 2012 and have contributed a chapter on the historical interpretation of the Late Bronze Age II levels to the second volume (K. Aslıhan Yener, Murat Akar, and Mara T. Horowitz, eds., *Tell Atchana, Ancient Alalakh*, vol. 2: *The Late Bronze Age II City*; Istanbul: Koç University Press, forthcoming). A few tablet fragments have so far been found in the new excavations, including lexical fragments attributable to Level IV, for

which see Jacob Lauinger, Epigraphic Finds from the Oriental Institute's 2003 Excavations at Alalakh, *JNES* 64 (2005), 53–58; and Lauinger, Epigraphic Report, in Yener, ed., *Tell Atchana, Ancient Alalakh*, vol. 1, 85–88.

⁵ For the dating, the parameters of Woolley's interpretation, and subsequent studies of the archaeological and textual evidence from Level IV, see *State and Society*, 23–64 (esp. pp. 39–42 and 58–63), with references there.

⁶ The new evidence and its consequences for defining stratigraphic phases are described by Yener in New Excavations at Alalakh: The 14th–12th Centuries BC, *Across the Border: Late Bronze-Iron Age Relations between Syria and Anatolia*, ed. K. Aslıhan Yener (Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement 42; Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 11–35;

destruction c. 1400 as the end of Level IV, and the subsequent series of rebuildings as a distinct period preceding the new construction under Hittite rule. Whether Addunirari, whom the inscription on Idrimi's statue names as Idrimi's son and successor, should be placed in this post-palace period, as has been proposed by Amir Fink and myself, remains in the realm of hypothesis.⁷ As for the beginning of Level IV, it is impossible to conclusively settle the question whether the construction of the palace should be attributed to Niqmepa (following Woolley) or to Idrimi (as I have argued) in the absence of any evidence explicitly attesting that one or the other built this particular building (Niedorf reviews this issue on p. 14). The new excavations have, however, turned up evidence linking Level IV prosopographically with the preceding stratum, in the form of sealings found below the palace courtyard that bear the same seal also impressed on a tablet found in the palace that records furniture for the house of Iri-Ḫalba, a personage well attested in the Level IV archives. Iri-Ḫalba was one of several individuals who were active early in Niqmepa's reign, so he must have been a contemporary of Idrimi as well.⁸ The use of the same seal both on a tablet pertaining to Iri-Ḫalba and during the phase before the palace was built is one piece of evidence indicating a low date, 1450 or later, for the construction of the palace.

But of course it would not be fair to devote a review that appears so long after the book under review to updating the work with reference to information its author could not have known. Niedorf has been extremely thorough in drawing upon all relevant scholarship and text corpora published up to the moment of completing his own book. Indeed his book constitutes but a slice of a larger project, the comprehensive (re-)edition of all cuneiform texts found at Alalakh (that is, all those found during Woolley's excavations), as he states at the outset (p. 1, with n. 1). Another substantial slice of the same pro-

ject, initiated and directed by Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz[†], was Frank Zeeb's study of a selection of Alalakh VII administrative records, like Niedorf's book a revised dissertation; numerous articles publishing or re-editing texts from Alalakh have also been produced by these authors.⁹ Within the framework of their project a new numbering system for the Alalakh tablets has been devised, in which every text is first categorized according to type and sub-type, using as many sub-categorizations as are thought necessary to account for the extant material of a given kind. This system yields numbers like (ATmB) 352.5, in which every digit until the last stands for a level of typological categorization, and the final digit is the number assigned to the individual text within its (sub-sub-)type (as Niedorf explains on p. 33); readers will recognize the system's identity to that applied to Ugaritic texts in KTU.¹⁰ The idea is that, while the system is infinitely extensible to include newly-found or newly-identified texts, the new numbers indicate what kind of a text each one is. In practice, few readers are likely to see such numbers and comprehend them thus, e.g.: "3 stands for legal document, 5 stands for text involving debt, 2 stands for loan document – aha, no. 352.5 is a loan document." More important, typological classification is a tool of limited utility, one that may even obstruct interpretation as it separates records that functioned together into different compartments, which are often labeled according to the texts' content – or what survives of it – rather than according to typological features. This problem is taken up below (under the sub-heading "Gattungskritik and Archives").

The heart of Niedorf's book is a meticulous study (ch. 3) and new edition (ch. 4) of the legal documents from Late Bronze Age Alalakh, including eight previously unpublished tablets or fragments. The editions are based on the photographs and copies made by Dietrich and Loretz in collaboration with Kurt Bergerhof in the 1960s (an endeavor Niedorf describes in n. 1). The number of legal documents, classified as such according to criteria Niedorf defines (pp. 123–24), thus reaches 49, out of a total of 606 tablets and fragments found at Alalakh IV, by his count (p. 47). He does not however examine the legal documents in isolation. Since his study of this material

see especially pp. 15–16, with Fig. 4. On the "Hittite fortress," now termed the Northern Fortress, and its southern counterpart, see Murat Akar's article in the same volume, *The Late Bronze Age Fortresses at Alalakh: Architecture and Identity in Mediterranean Exchange Systems, Across the Border*, 37–60. The revised periodization and its evidentiary basis will be detailed in Yener, et al. (eds.), *Tell Atchana, Ancient Alalakh*, vol. 2.

⁷ See *State and Society*, 31–33, and Fink, *Late Bronze Age Tell Atchana (Alalakh): Stratigraphy, Chronology, History* (BAR International Series 2120; Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), 94–99.

⁸ On Iri-Ḫalba and the seal impressed on AIT 419 (Niedorf's no. 46.3), see *State and Society*, 298–99, with n. 99. By the courtesy of Aslihan Yener I was able to mention the newly-discovered sealings, which have not yet been published.

⁹ For references, see Lauinger's chapter on Alalakh in the *Handbook of Ancient Mesopotamia*, ed. Gonzalo Rubio (Berlin: de Gruyter, forthcoming), in which he details the publication history of the Alalakh texts.

¹⁰ Now in its third edition: Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, *Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani und anderen Orten*, 3rd edition (AOAT 360/1; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013).

was undertaken within the context of a comprehensive study of the Alalāḫ tablets, Niedorf devotes a substantial chapter (Ch. 2) to a detailed survey of the entire corpus of Middle Babylonian (i.e., Late Bronze Age) tablets from Alalāḫ. Here he explains the theory and method of classifying texts by type (*Gattung*), and then he proceeds to describe *all* of the tablets from the Late Bronze Age levels of Alalāḫ under the rubrics to which they are thus assigned. This has the benefit of providing not only an overview of what kinds of texts were produced and found at the site (and what were not), but also a framework within which Niedorf can present corrected readings of previously-published tablets, as well as snippets of unpublished ones, outside the category of legal documents. At the same time, the elaboration of this overview reveals the flaws inherent in applying a genre-critical approach, which aggregates tablets by type regardless of their findspot, archival context, or even stratigraphic level. On the one hand Niedorf attributes tablets found in other levels to Level IV if they seem to fit well into one of the categories of tablets attested in the Level IV corpus and, on present evidence, not later (see for instance pp. 128–29 on the loan document ALT 105 [no. 352.7]). He may be right to do so, but this requires addressing their dispersion into secondary stratigraphic contexts. On the other hand, he treats a group of beer(?)-distribution records, which is distinguished as a dossier produced under Hittite administration by its archaeological context as well as its textual content, as if it were simply another category within a continuum of documentation (his subtype 4.3.3).¹¹ Likewise the scatter of Hittite tablets found in levels postdating IV constitutes one more category (type 8). The overarching classification “Middle Babylonian,” employed to divide all the tablets covered in this work from the “Old Babylonian” tablets of Alalāḫ VII, does not meaningfully apply to a corpus subsuming written records that were produced under different adminis-

trations and in different languages, and that have in common only their provenance, a site by the Orontes.

Gattungskritik and Archives

The theoretical basis of the genre-critical or typological method, as Niedorf explains it, is the proposition that similar situations call forth similar verbal formulations, particularized according to language, culture, and circumstance, so that a given genre or type of text corresponds to a given *Sitz im Leben*. But the same kind of situation does not necessarily produce the same kind of document. Indebtedness, for instance, may find written expression in a promissory note or in a loan document, either of which genres could, depending on the conventions in force, be used to record any sort of debt obligation however incurred – a fact that Niedorf makes note of, repeatedly (e.g., pp. 192, 197, and 203). What genre of text was chosen depended on what stock of legal forms and formulae the scribe had at his disposal, as much as on the nature of the transaction. The idea of a fixed correspondence between a type of situation in reality and a genre in writing proves inadequate to the material, and so does the idea of a one-to-one correspondence between text and genre, for more than one genre may be represented in one text. A letter may incorporate a list, as ALT 113 does (no. 2.10), or the converse: a tablet recording a list may also convey a message, as ALT 423 does (no. 48.7). Of course one lists things when one needs to list them; one does not select from an array of textual genres to do it. How does the observation that “typologically (*gattungsmäßig*) it is to be described as a list with two appended quotations” that lacks the distinctive features of a letter (p. 116) help to understand the text?

Indeed, when it comes to lists, Niedorf acknowledges that here the genre-critical method bumps up against its limits (p. 49), and he resorts to classifying them according to what they list – people, cows, grain, wood, metal (but wouldn’t it make more sense to make one category for tablets recording armaments, regardless of material?), eventually “various materials” (4.8), and finally lists that are unclassifiable (4.9). Typology has collapsed into contents. Meanwhile the necessity of shoe-horning every text into one of these prefabricated compartments results in numerous incongruities. For example, ALT 403 (no. 47.12), a tablet recording copper that Biriyaššuwa, son of Iripšenni, took from the palace for a trip to Ḫatti, is no “list of metals,” yet that is how Niedorf classifies it, even while acknowledging that to do so stretches the category “list” (p. 113). Classification by genre breaks down altogether

¹¹ This dossier comprises ALT 309–318, plus three unpublished fragments identified by Niedorf; the thirteen tablets and fragments are nos. 433.1–13 in his system. I have described these tablets as records of the distribution of grain, because ŠE is what the entries record (*State and Society*, 63, with n. 154). However, Niedorf (pp. 95–96) points out that the totals, which are given in some of the tablets as *x qa KAŠ.ḪI.A*, clearly sum up the individual entries, therefore what is distributed must be beer – or else wine, given that KAŠ is used to mean wine at Alalāḫ (and in Syria generally), and besides, the queen of Ḫatti dreamed of wine from Mukiš. The problem, as he recognizes, is that wine is not made from barley. If amounts of ŠE are summed up as KAŠ, what is distributed should be the main ingredient to make beer.

in cases like that of ALT 405 (no. 47.14), which registers copper brought in by one person and copper debited against another, so that according to Niedorf the text “consists of two parts that ... belong to different genres” (ibid.). While splitting single texts into plural genres, the classification system combines dissimilar texts into single genres, as in the case of ALT 212 and 218 (nos. 42.6 and 42.11), records of fields belonging to two members of the palace’s inner circle. Niedorf observes that these two tablets are categorically unlike the lists of fields and vineyards with which he has to place them, remarking that, “Ich befinde mich hingegen in der unkomfortablen Lage, jeden Text in einer bestimmten Gattung und Untergattung unterbringen zu müssen” (p. 88, n. 337). Why shackle the material to a method that does not suit it?

The two persons whose fields are recorded in ALT 212 and 218 are Pallanuwe, the royal administrator, who appears in several texts of other types (including the obsequious letter that contains a list, mentioned above), and ^fZazē, a woman who oversaw carpenters producing furniture, and whose records of this activity were kept in the palace.¹² Typology sheds no light on their tablets, and so much less on the *Sitz im Leben* either of the tablets or of the people they attest. The records of ^fZazē’s carpenters and their products, which include ALT 114, 417, 418, and 421, share a common findspot (Palace Room 10), are interrelated through a shared sealing as well as shared content, and concern the same people engaged in the same operation.¹³ None of this is considered when sorting the texts according to genre, a procedure that instead partitions the dossier between separate categories: ALT 114 (no. 2.11) is placed among the letters, while ALT 417, 418, and 421 (nos. 46.1, 46.2, and 46.5), plus an additional fragment here published in transliteration (no. 46.14), are placed among other lists of furniture (pp. 105–108). Niedorf does not ignore relationships among these texts: he remarks that the new fragment’s preserved content resembles that of ALT 417 (without mentioning that it also attests ^fZazē), and that so does what remains of yet another unpublished fragment (no. 46.13). However, the genre-critical approach inherently obscures such relationships, as it dismembers archival groups, disregards prosopography as well as depositional context, and neglects aspects of the tablets (like sealings) that are not

accounted for in the system of classification. Only through attending to all these various elements of information (to the extent they survive) can the tablets be fully interpreted and the circumstances of their production and use reconstructed.

It is moreover unclear what is the payoff of the genre-critical approach when applied to an archival corpus. An isolated tablet such as ALT 416 (no. 48.6), which contains a list of mobilia that belong to a woman’s estate, could be illuminated by its archival context (were it knowable), whereas classification of it as a “list enumerating various materials” does not aid in its interpretation. In the case of a group of ten tablets that Niedorf categorizes as “lists of grain loans” (nos. 432.1–10, discussed on pp. 93–95), he provides a precise analytic description of the texts, which record grain to the debit of (UGU) individuals enumerated under rubrics having the form “Men of GN₁, who received emmer from GN₂, from the house of PN, *ana pūhi*.” That anyway is the formulation in full, to which one text adds the specification that PN is the mayor of Uniga. It is through examining the texts together – as a coherent dossier, *not* as members of a sub-genre or examples of a type – that Niedorf is able to interpret them and to show that here *pūhu* means not “exchange” but “loan” (as in Middle and Neo-Assyrian – perhaps originally Mittanian – usage, according to his commentary on ALT 81 [no. 351.1], p. 347). The word *pūhu* serves as the diagnostic feature of this sub-genre, he says (p. 95). What circumstances accounted for drawing up these lists? Why did many men of many towns borrow grain disbursed by the mayor of Uniga? Does this group of records represent a singular occasion or a recurring practice? Classification and description of the texts as a sub-genre (one peculiar to Alalah IV) does not help answer such questions. If “the true purpose of the genre-critical method is the determination of the socio-cultural context, the so-called ‘*Sitz im Leben*’” in which the text was produced (p. 32), the method does not attain its objective.

That is no less true with regard to the category of texts that is the focus of Niedorf’s study, the legal documents. No type of legal document is especially abundant in this small corpus, so the abstraction of “generic” features can seldom be conceptually differentiated from the description of particular texts. (This does not prevent Niedorf from devoting separate sections to generic and particularized descriptions of the same texts, category by category.) Sometimes the determination of a document’s genre is problematic, as in the case of ALT 88 (no. 32.2), a bequest from one woman to another. Niedorf raises the question whether or not this document should be classi-

¹² For attestations and discussion see *State and Society*, Appendix II (pp. 404–5, 462), and page references in the Index of Names (pp. 565, 569).

¹³ See von Dassow, Archives of Alalah IV in Archaeological Context, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 338 (2005), 24, 47 (hereafter Archives of Alalah IV), and *State and Society*, 321–23.

fied as a testament along with ALT 87 (no. 32.1), the only (other) document of that type from Alalah IV (p. 155).¹⁴ Similar questions should also be raised about other documents, and not only because it is impossible to define what is “typical” about texts that are each one of a kind – that is, what defines a text’s putative genre rather than what defines the particular text. No standard formula can be established for marriage contracts at Alalah IV, Niedorf says, because most of the few extant examples of this type are poorly preserved (p. 158; also p. 291). Could it instead be because they are not truly “marriage contracts” (in the sense of being documents legally constitutive of marriage), rather, they are contractual agreements concerning the entailments and eventualities of marriage (such as the birth and status of children)? Moreover, does not the tablets’ very existence reflect the non-normativity of whatever they record, since normal procedure would have needed no special documentation – and therefore written documents concerning marriage and testamentary disposition and the like *by definition* cannot supply evidence of legal norms?

Niedorf poses questions of this nature, citing Raymond Westbrook’s exposition on the matter (pp. 165–66, with nn. 670 and 671), only to declare them unanswerable; he does not engage with their implications for either his method or his interpretation of the texts. Thus, although acknowledging their non-normative character, he treats the clauses attested in the extant Alalah IV marriage documents as the basis for abstracting norms and for generalizing about the social reality behind the texts (Ch. 3, § 6) – for instance, because certain stipulations seem to him favorable to the particular women involved, he posits that wives at Alalah in general enjoyed favorable legal status (p. 167).

Debt notes (Schuldscheine) are a category of documents that causes Niedorf difficulties in applying his typology. In the first place, they are “not really complete legal documents” (p. 197), for they lack most of the features that characterize legal documents according to his description of this genre (Ch. 3, § 3); notably, they lack witnesses and may even omit mention of the creditor. In the second place, as simple records of what is owed by an obligated party, they hardly differ in substance from the “lists of grain loans” (discussed above); one of them even contains the key term *pūhu* by which that category

is defined. The principal criterion Niedorf proposes for differentiating the debt notes, as legal documents, from such lists, which he describes as “administrative notices about debt-relationships,” is that the former record one entry apiece whereas the latter record numerous entries (p. 198). One versus many is a curious basis for making a categorical distinction! What is more, the category thus distinguished is represented by just four tablets (nos. 351.1–4) that are not only laconic – together they bear a total of 20 lines of text – but heterogeneous. Two of them (ALT 393 and 408 [nos. 351.3 and 351.4]) record debts without naming the creditor, just like the lists of grain loans, and each does so in the same brief form as an entry on such a list; they differ only in recording debts of silver or copper rather than grain. Because the creditor is not identified, Niedorf assumes it must be the palace, same as in the lists of grain loans (p. 198), an inference he acknowledges could also be drawn from the tablets’ findspot (p. 199, n. 873). Thus in substance these two “legal documents” are of the same kind as single entries on the “administrative” lists of debts. A third tablet, ALT 81 (no. 351.1), records a debt of silver owed to the king by an individual who took the sum *ana pūha*, “as a loan” (with the Hurrian essive ending *-a*), and it is impressed with the royal seal. Niedorf repeatedly mentions that the statement *ana pūha ilqe* specifies the basis of the debt and in effect converts this debt note into a loan document (pp. 192, 197, with n. 865, and 199, as well as in the commentary on the text, p. 347). Nowhere does he discuss why the king sealed the record of a debt owed to him.

The fourth tablet categorized as a debt note, ALT 344 (no. 351.2), resembles the other three only in recording obligations in the form “x UGU (debtor).” The object of the obligation is half a dozen oxen that the sons of Pit-ḫuwana owe “as compensation” to the *zarate*-troops(?);¹⁵ of this sum three oxen have been paid and for the other three a woman resides in the house of Azira, besides which they owe six sheep to the people of Šetṭabaḫe. What occasioned these obligations – did the sons of Pit-ḫuwana perpetrate some wrong against the groups of people indicated, which they are obliged to set right by compensating them in cattle? What is the relation of Azira, holder of the security, to either party? Whose record was this tablet, given that it identifies two different parties as creditors? What was it doing in the palace?

¹⁴ On these tablets, Kabiya’s testamentary document and ¹Nayaš’s bequest to ¹Ummi-Išḫara, see also *State and Society*, 272 and 293–94 (where I accidentally transposed the names of the women in ALT 88). Niedorf makes the attractive suggestion that the *-š* ending of ¹Nayaš may be the Hurrian ergative ending (p. 264).

¹⁵ The six oxen are qualified as *mu-la-u*, which Niedorf convincingly explains as a *purās* form *mulā’u*, “compensation” (or “damages”; p. 349). On ALT 344 (no. 351.2), see further below, under “Remarks on individual tablets.”

Niedorf neither poses nor addresses any of these questions. One might conjecture that the palace was the arbitrator of a dispute that was settled by ordering the sons of Piṭḫuwana to pay six oxen and six sheep to the offended parties. Hence the tablet was kept in the palace – not in the hands of any of the parties – and was sealed with the royal seal as well as another seal, perhaps Azira's. But this sort of hypothesis seems to be unavailable within the framework of the genre-critical approach, inasmuch as that approach treats the text as the primary object of analysis and neglects to treat the physical carrier of the text, its properties, and its location as elements fundamental to interpretation.

The role of writing, place, and the interpretation of written records in context

The texts this book treats exist not only in time but in space – particular spaces – as attributes of documents that materialized the transactions, events, and relationships they recorded, in the form of tablets. Location is essential to the written record's function: inscriptions are placed in view of an intended audience, legal documents are held by those whose rights (or quittance of obligation) they attest, and letters are conveyed to their addressees. Yet writing itself is not essential, for the message could be communicated or the transaction accomplished with or without a text. Therefore, besides taking into account findspot, textual content, sealings, and so on, the interpretation of written records also requires considering who did and did not use writing for what purposes and under what circumstances. At Alalāḫ during the Late Bronze Age – unlike contemporaneous Nuzi, for example, and more or less like Ugarit – the distribution of written records indicates that writing was seldom of any use to anyone outside the spheres of institutional administration.

It is known to Niedorf that transactions were conducted orally in the ancient Near East (as he remarks on p. 142), and that the location of written records signifies whose interest they serve (as is evident in his discussion of find contexts, pp. 126–33). He does not put these axioms together, nor apply them in a holistic interpretation of the Alalāḫ tablets in their archival context. Instead – and he is hardly alone in this – his understanding of what the findspots of tablets mean in relation to their contents is essentially tautological. For him, the finding of people's "private" documents in the palace must mean

that those people were either members of the royal family or palace officials, and in the latter case that there was a fusion of private with "public" affairs (as if this conceptual binary were demonstrably applicable to the society of Alalāḫ). The foregoing interpretation is supposed to be supported by the observations that some of the people whose documents were found in the palace also were present to witness other documents, and were moreover members of the *maryanni* class, thus the elite (pp. 129–32). On this logic it follows that Ilmilimma, son of Tuttu, whose documents were found in the palace, must have had an official position, so that – although no "official" documents of Ilmilimma's are known – he kept both his official and private documents there, as the officials Ewriḫuda and Irkabtu did (p. 130; also p. 319). It follows, likewise, that the building adjoining the palace where Kabiya the priest stored his personal documents (and no others) must have been his workplace (not residence as I have suggested; p. 128). Meanwhile, parties unaffiliated with the palace whose contracts were drawn up and stored in the palace must have kept their own copies in their own archives, Niedorf says, although none has yet been found at Alalāḫ (p. 129). The non-finding of "private" archives outside the palace and castle area is not given any weight. It should be: excavations at Tell Atchana (under Woolley and now Yener) have extended to enough areas that some trace of such archives should have turned up if they existed.

Not only were they all found in the palace and adjoining buildings, almost all the legal documents found at Late Bronze Age Alalāḫ were drawn up before the king and sealed with his seal. From these facts Niedorf draws the further conclusion that the king exercised control over the kinds of transactions attested, indeed, that "without the consent of the king, evidently, hardly any of the documented transactions (testaments, marriage, purchase of slaves ...) could be undertaken" (p. 140). This is a blatantly nonsensical interpretation of the evidence.¹⁶ Considering that a) transactions were accomplished orally, and written records were supportive but not dispositive, b) documents were produced and kept by the party whose interests required a written record, c) virtually all legal documents found at Alalāḫ were kept in the palace

¹⁶ Niedorf's observation that there do exist legal documents that were not drawn up under royal oversight (he points to ALT 105 [no. 352.7] and no. 37.8 [previously unpublished]) should have told him that his reasoning was invalid, not that the conditions under which transactions could be carried out without royal involvement are hidden from us (p. 141). See the discussion of ALT 75 [no. 341.7] and ALT 51 [no. 352.6], as well as ALT 105, under "Remarks on individual tablets" below.

and castle, and d) very few such documents were found altogether, one would have to draw the following conclusions. First, the particular transactions of which written records are extant were ones that affected the interests of the royal administration, or in some instances the interests of its members, like Ewriḥuda and Irkabtu. In other words, documents of Ilimilimma and others were kept in the palace because they touched the king's interests. Second, most transactions did not interest the king or his administration, and were not recorded in writing at all. With occasional exceptions, writing was evidently employed only by and for the royal administration¹⁷ – even the temples of Alalāḥ seem not to have produced any written records during the Late Bronze Age.

I regret to cite an article of mine that was published after Niedorf's book for an elaboration of the argument given here in outline (What Did Archives Mean in Mitanni? The Case of 15th-century BCE Alalāḥ, *Journal of the Canadian Society of Mesopotamian Studies* 5 [2010], 37–53). The evidence was already available, however, as were principles to guide interpretation of archival records. In my 2005 study of the archaeological contexts of the Alalāḥ IV tablets, which Niedorf utilizes (see especially pp. 132–33), I interpreted the findspots of documents along somewhat the same lines as he does. Like him, I assumed that “the people and their activities occupied the same space as their documents,” and I pointed out the evidence indicating close relationships linking members of the élite with the ruler's household and administration, suggesting that this would explain why dossiers of “private” documents were found in the palace.¹⁸ In discussing the same material in my 2008 book, I changed a key premise of interpretation: instead of assuming that written records occupy the same space as the people and the activities generating them (this is the tautological element), I assumed an alignment of the document's location with the interests it was produced to

serve. Obviously a contract interests the parties to it, and on that basis one would expect Ilimilimma to keep, for example, tablets recording loans he made (until repayment). But that begs the question why the palace kept them instead, to which question the proposition that Ilimilimma worked or dwelt in the palace is actually the least compelling answer.¹⁹ Rather, I proposed, “the fact that the transactions recorded by these tablets took place in the king's presence and required his seal, together with the tablets' findspot in the palace, implies that they did affect the king's interests even though the documents do not explicitly indicate how” (*State and Society*, 297).

Subsequently, I identified what it likely was that interested the king in at least some of these transactions: the status of persons, or more specifically, the rights of the state in relation to its subjects and vice versa (What Did Archives Mean, 45). The best-preserved of the marriage documents, for example, was drawn up for the principal purpose of stipulating that the bride and her future children are “maryanni (and) clear (zakû)” (ALT 91:10–11, 16).²⁰ Maryanni status entailed certain privileges, perhaps including freedom from distraint as well as exemption from labor service, hence – evidently – membership in this class was regulated by the state in the person of the king (*State and Society*, 270–80). Meanwhile, loans in antichresis, such as were made by Ilimilimma, son of Tuttu, brought the debtor or his dependents into conditional or potential servitude with the creditor, whose rights over the affected persons thus displaced the rights of the king.²¹ Some debts would be re-

¹⁹ *Contra* my own suggestion to this effect in my dissertation (Social Stratification of Alalah Under the Mittani Empire [Ph.D. diss., New York University; Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms 1997], 302, with n. 85), which Niedorf cites (p. 363) in correcting the reading of ALT 47:9 (no. 352.2) that gave rise to the suggestion of G. Bunens on which it was based. According to Niedorf's reading, the debtor and his wife are to dwell in Ilimilimma's house in Alladḫe, not Alalāḥ. Even if the text specified Alalāḥ (as I read the toponym in *State and Society*, p. 295), it would not imply that Ilimilimma's house in Alalāḥ was the palace.

²⁰ The findspot of ALT 91 (no. 33.1) is unknown but it was almost certainly found in the palace as other marriage documents were. My reading of this tablet (*State and Society*, 277–80) differs on important points from Niedorf's; see below (p. 185), under “Remarks on individual tablets.”

²¹ Ilimilimma, son of Tuttu, obtains the labor of his debtors in lieu of interest in ALT 47 (no. 352.2), ALT 48 (no. 352.3), and 49 (no. 352.4). While ALT 47 and 49 record loans for which the debtor (with or without a family member) enters the creditor's house, ALT 48 obliges the debtor to supply 200 turtledoves annually, or risk imprisonment. Since the debtor Ba'lāya and his family are identified as immigrants from Canaan, presumably they would not have been subjects of the king whom he could have conscripted. Nevertheless

¹⁷ See now W. van Soldt's remarks to similar effect, in Why Did They Write? On Empires and Vassals in Syria and Palestine in the Late Bronze Age, *Theory and Practice of Knowledge Transfer: Studies in School Education in the Ancient Near East and Beyond*, ed. W. S. van Egmond and W. H. van Soldt (PIHANS 121; Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2012), 110.

¹⁸ Archives of Alalāḥ IV, 50. It should however be noted that to say there was “no functional distinction between personal and official activities, or ‘private’ and ‘public’ spheres” (as I wrote there) is not the same as saying there was a fusion or entanglement (Verquickung, Verschränkung) between public and private, a proposition that presupposes that the two concepts and a categorical distinction between them existed in the society under discussion. On this point I certainly did not reach “demselben Ergebnis” as Niedorf (cf. his remarks on p. 132).

solved through the enslavement of (a) person(s) over whom the debtor had rights (including ultimately himself), a process that could take written form in documents recording the creditor's purchase of such persons.²² While those in debt bondage were deprived of their freedom, the king was deprived of his subjects, hence transactions that could lead to this result were concluded before the king and recorded on tablets that were sealed by the king and kept in the palace. The question why, in that case, more such tablets were not found in the palace would present itself no matter what explanation for the finds were proposed; my hypothesis that the archives were moved elsewhere, so that what we have are essentially discards (Archives of Alalah IV, 51–52), remains just a hypothesis, as Niedorf observes (p. 133). The interpretation delineated in the foregoing paragraphs explains why tablets recording ostensibly “private” transactions were in the palace to begin with.

They were not there to serve the interests of the transacting parties, in the first instance. This is evident not only from where the tablets were found but from the length of time they were left there, and above all from the absence of dates. How could a creditor collect interest on an undated loan? Two tablets record transactions of Ilimilimma's father Tuttu, specifically his issuance of a loan (AIT 46 [no. 352.1]) and his purchase of oxen (AIT 74 [no. 342.3]), both done before Niqmepa and sealed by him. Neither tablet could have been of any use to Tuttu's son Ilimilimma more than a generation later, when the palace was destroyed during the reign of his royal namesake Ilimilimma. But they could hardly have been much use to Tuttu in the first place. The loan was to accrue interest if not repaid by a certain month, but the tablet does not say in which year. The record of purchase is prefaced with the remark “from this day” (*ištu ūmi annīm*), and it does not identify the day. Contrary to what Niedorf writes (pp. 133, 139–40), the “Inkraftsetzungsvermerk” *ištu ūmi annīm* does not stand in place of a date; it is altogether different from a date. Moreover, although it provides no actual information, this phrase is an interpretable element of the documents, when these are not

atomized into component formulae but seen as instances of patterns that account for their existence.

Tablets were not merely the material carriers of information. Legal documents in particular could have other capacities, even unto the capacity to create new realities *de jure*. At Alalah in the Late Bronze Age, they were tangible signs of the acts or facts they recorded, signs that – once having been produced – called forth those facts atemporally (“from this day”).²³

Remarks on individual tablets

Taking together all types of evidence, including what information the tablets do not provide as well as what they do record, in what locations, under whose seal (and so on), helps toward ascertaining how they functioned in their original context. My criticisms of Niedorf's approach might be summed up by describing it as insufficiently synthetic and overly (and redundantly) analytic. He does take account of sealings, findspots, and the physical properties of tablets, while focusing his study on the texts. Indeed, he devotes considerable attention to the seal impressions on the documents he edits; this close attention to detail yields, for example, the observation that one newly-published tablet, no. 33.5, has the impression of a garment hem on its left edge, the first attestation of a practice previously unknown for Alalah IV (p. 139). The multifarious observations about individual tablets, the texts they bear, and their distribution at the site are not, however, adequately integrated with each other so as to develop a theoretical framework for interpreting the corpus. In the meantime, the exacting precision with which Niedorf examines the tablets bears fruit in the text editions.

Here follow remarks on selected texts, in the order he presents them.

No. 31.3 (AIT 17): Many paragraphs of commentary include a few improved readings, two of which are corrections to witnesses' names. Niedorf argues that LÚ-ia in l. 23 should probably be read Zitiya, taking the logogram as Luwian *ziti*, instead of Agiya or Taḥeya (p. 255). He rejects my restoration *A-kit₁₀*-[^dIŠKUR] = Agi-[Teššub] in l. 19, on the grounds that there is blank space between the second sign and the break, so the second sign must be the last, and that *kit₁₀* is a late and rare value for BU, so this witness's name must be *A-bu*. Accordingly, he also rejects my reading ¹*A-kit₁₀-te-šub* = Agi-Teššub in AIT 89:4 (no. 38.1), reading this name instead as Abu-Teššub (p. 254). The name Abu-Teššub is otherwise unattested in

they would have been under his jurisdiction as resident aliens, and he could have acquired their labor himself. On this tablet see also below, p. 187.

²² Among Ilimilimma's tablets, AIT 66 (no. 341.1) and 70 (no. 341.5) each record the purchase of a woman, in the second case for an extraordinarily high price from six sellers altogether. These transactions could represent the resolution of debts, rather than attesting the operation of a market for human chattel in the capital city as Niedorf deduces (p. 183, with n. 773; also p. 191, with n. 829). On AIT 70 (no. 341.5), see further below, p. 186–7.

²³ For the theory of written record as *sēma*, “sign,” with particular application to the Alalah IV tablets, see What Did Archives Mean, 46.

the Alalah IV corpus, and a man named Abu appears only in the restricted context of the lists of grain loans (discussed above, p. 180, under “Gattungskritik und Archives”). The name Agi-Teššub, on the other hand, is quite well attested, and *gīd/t* is not a rare value for BU.²⁴ Even if Niedorf’s reading of the first witness’s name in ALT 17:19 as *A-bu* is correct, the man who transfers persons to the palace official Ewri-ḥuda in ALT 89 is likely to be Agi-Teššub, perhaps the temple administrator by that name (see remarks below, on nos. 33.5, 341.2 [ALT 67], and 38.1 [ALT 89]).

No. 33.1 (ALT 91): This tablet records that Agap-taḥe, son of Šemarana, took ^fAgap-kiaše, daughter of Taguḥule, as wife, and through this marriage ^fAgap-kiaše and her offspring acquired *maryanni* status. The text bristles with difficulties, starting with the erasure of the bride’s name in l. 3. Having concluded that *kallatu* in the Alalah tablets must mean “daughter-in-law” (not “bride”; see p. 250, commentary on ALT 17: 4 [no. 31.3]), Niedorf renders the phrase ^fAgap-kiaše *maryanni kallatu* (ll. 5–6) as “Akapkiaše ist (somit) eines Marijannu Schwiegertochter,” explaining the preposed genitive with reference to Hurrian syntax (p. 269). This is well and good. However, he then severs from this phrase the next one, *u mār-assu ša bīti*, and takes it to apply to ^fUmmidura, whose name follows. Appositives normally follow that to which they apply, whether in Akkadian or in Hurrian (unless for poetic reasons they precede), and while *u* may begin a sentence it typically coordinates elements within a sentence (as in l. 14). On what I believe to be the more natural reading (confirmed by ll. 17–18; see below), both phrases are predicated of ^fAgap-kiaše: she is *kallatu* of a *maryanni* and daughter of the house, that is, of the family into which she is marrying. This would be ^fUmmidura’s house, if *É* is in construct with ^fUmmidura, as I took it to be (*State and Society*, 278). Niedorf takes ^fUmmidura as the subject of a new sentence stipulating her status and that of her offspring (ll. 6–11), and proceeding from this sense division he takes the document to contrast the status of ^fAgap-kiaše with that of ^fUmmidura, upon whose departure from the household for her own marriage (ll. 11–13) ^fAgap-kiaše will take her place and her status (ll. 14–16). The condition on which ^fAgap-kiaše and her offspring will be “*maryanni* and clear” is stipulated by the clause in ll. 11–13, which Niedorf reads thus: “*ša*²⁵ [i-n]a *u₄-mi* (12) *mi-im-ma mi-šu-ti₇ be-lam* (13) ^{m<f}*Um-mil-d[u]-ra* [T]UKU, correcting the previous reading *mi-in-de₄* to *mi-šu-ti₇* and *be-el* to *be-lam*. The latter correction is clearly right but the former is dubious (although on Niedorf’s copy the middle sign is indeed ZUM rather than IN) inasmuch as it yields a rare word of uncertain meaning. He translates, “An dem Tage irgendeiner *Wenigkeit* (?), an dem Ummidura einen Herrn bekommen wird,” without resolving what might be this *Wenigkeit* or its relation to ^fUmmidura’s acquisition of a *bēlum*; moreover, his interpretation relies on taking *bēlum* to mean “husband” (p. 271).

The more persuasive interpretation is that of M. Dietrich and W. Mayer, which I followed (*State and Society*, 278) and Niedorf rejects: *bēlum* means a creditor and, whether or not the preceding word is *mišūtu*, the clause refers to ^fUmmidura’s potential indebtedness. The point is to indemnify the new bride and her future offspring against the consequences of debt encumbering the family of which she is now part. If ll. 8–10, “together with her children and grandchildren she is *maryanni*,” apply to ^fAgap-kiaše (as I read it) and not ^fUmmi-

dura (as Niedorf reads it), the stipulation protecting her from debt incurred by ^fUmmidura provides reason to repeat it: “then ^fAgap-kiaše together with her children is (still) *maryanni* and clear” (ll. 14–16). If it is ^fUmmidura and her offspring whom ll. 8–10 describe as *maryanni*, this clause could be understood to stipulate ^fUmmidura’s present – unencumbered – status, which would cover the new member of the family (or at least pose her no risk).²⁵

The last clause before the witness list (ll. 17–19) stipulates that ^fAgap-kiaše, as daughter of the house and *kallatu* of the house of Agap-taḥe, *ú-ul i-ni[-i]r-ru-[ub]*. Niedorf, who reads the sentence somewhat differently, takes the verb to be *nērubu*, “flee,” against Dietrich and Mayer’s interpretation of it as an unattested N-stem form of *erēbu* (p. 273). Why it should have been necessary to stipulate that the bride may not flee the household into which she marries, and in which she obtains high status, is hard to imagine (and hard for Niedorf to support). Here again Dietrich and Mayer’s interpretation is preferable: the clause stipulates that she will not be pledged as security, using a passive form of the verb in its juridical meaning “enter (someone’s house) as pledge” (see Hurritica Alalahiana [I], *UF* 28 [1996], 187). Akkadian *erēbu* may not have an N-stem form, but West Semitic *ʿrb*, “stand surety,” does.²⁶ The scribe has produced a verb form meaning that ^fAgap-kiaše will not be entered as security for debt.

No. 33.2 (ALT 92): This fragmentary tablet records Iri-Ḥalba’s acquisition of ^fNaidu as wife. He has another one, for whom Niedorf supplies a possible name, ^fŠa²-ša²-du, but ^fNaidu’s firstborn will outrank hers even if she gives birth first (ll. 17–20). This stipulation is supplemented by a clause that has mystified previous interpreters: *a-yi-id-din DINGIR-lam* (l. 20), which Niedorf takes to mean that Iri-Ḥalba’s son by ^fNaidu may not give away the (cult figure of the) ancestral deity (to any other heir; p. 282). These lines feature grammatical problems that, uncharacteristically, Niedorf merely mentions and does not try to explicate: the son of ^fNaidu, construed in the accusative (DUMU-ra), is to be the eldest, in the abstract (GAL-bu-ti). It should also be noted that who shall not give the deity to whom is not self-evident in the text. Nevertheless Niedorf’s interpretation of this clause as reflecting the firstborn’s responsibility for maintaining the familial ancestor cult is persuasive. He relates it to the statement in the inscription on Idrimi’s statue that Idrimi entrusted just such duties to his son Addu-nērārī, as well as adducing comparative evidence from Emar, Nuzi, Ugarit, and the Hebrew

²⁵ The reinterpretation of this tablet presented by J. Justel (The Marriage Contract ALT 91 (Alalah) and Marriage Adoption in Late Bronze Age Syria, *SEL* 25 [2008], 37–46) and recently elaborated by M. Yamada (AT 91 (= ATMB 33.1): Marriage vs. Matrimonial Adoption, *N.A.B.U.* 2014/4, no. 92) diverges from both Niedorf’s and mine in regard to grammar and sense division. For the nonce, suffice it to say that Justel’s interpretation requires introducing assumptions unwarranted by the text, while relying on flawed readings, and yields a contorted, improbable translation. Yamada, however, offers an improved restoration of l. 11: [šuma-ma i]-na [EGI]R *u₄-mi*, which fits the traces as well as the sense of the stipulation: “If in the future ^fUmmidura acquires a creditor ...” (ll. 11–13).

²⁶ See G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartín, *Diccionario de la Lengua Ugaritica* (2 vols.; Aula Orientalis Supplementa 8; Sabadell: AUSA, 1996–2000), vol. II, 316, s. v. *nʿrb*; cf. Dennis Pardee, Review of Josef Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik* (AOAT 273; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000), *Afo* 50 (online version, 2003/2004), 268.

²⁴ Cf. *State and Society*, 288, with n. 74. In that work I transliterated *kit₁₀* rather than *git* on account of vacillating between a conventional and a (more) phonologically accurate representation of Hurrian.

Bible (pp. 282–83). A second instance of the clause may occur in no. 33.5 (previously unpublished; see p. 299, comment on l. 17). To uncover evidence of a custom that every family at Alalāḥ must have followed, just by reinterpreting two words, serves to illustrate how scant and lacunose is the knowledge of society and culture that one can glean from the surviving tablets alone.

No. 33.3 (AIT 93): Herein Ida-Addu takes ^fZunzuri, daughter of Ililimi(mma), as *kallatu*, and moreover he seals the tablet where usually the king, before whom the transaction takes place, would seal. Niedorf gives a copy and reading of the seal caption, [NA₄.KIŠIB ^m]d-a-ad-du, and finds it remarkable that despite collation it had not previously been read (p. 285). Indeed it is – to my chagrin; I had copied the caption into my notes when collating the tablet in 1992, then overlooked it!²⁷ Niedorf's reading of the seal caption substantially advances the interpretation of this document, or what little remains of it.

Ililimi(mma), father of ^fZunzuri, could be the son of Niqmepa or his namesake Ililimma, son of Tuttu. If the former, the mention of the palace in the fragmentary l. 12 would need no explanation (cf. p. 288). The name of the king before whom Ida-Addu took ^fZunzuri as wife is missing; the difficulty with identifying the woman's father as Ililimma, son of Niqmepa, would be that either Ililimma had a daughter of marriageable age already during his father's reign, or a transaction to which he was party was drawn up before him (presumably for this reason Niedorf assumes that ^fZunzuri is daughter of Ililimma, son of Tuttu, p. 286). Niedorf's determination that *kallatu* always and only means “daughter-in-law” is confuted by the clause stipulating that if ^fZunzuri does not give birth within 7 years, “he shall take another wife” (ll. 8–9): who but Ida-Addu is the subject of this sentence, as he is of the preceding two?

No. 33.4 (AIT 94): As restored and interpreted by Niedorf, the obverse of this tablet records [Šarmit]hama's acquisition of a *kallatu* whom [Ta]du-Teššub (or Tadu-Addu) marries, and whom he may supplement with another wife if within seven years she bears no children; the second wife's children will then count as those of ^fBitamalki, whose marriage with Tadu-Teššub is the subject of stipulations on the lower edge and reverse. The reason Niedorf does not suppose ^fBitamalki is the woman named in the first clause is that this name cannot be restored from the half-sign visible at the end of l. 3, where the *kallatu*'s name should appear according to his reconstruction of the text (p. 291). The resulting incongruity should prompt reconstructing it otherwise, though an alternative that suits the traces is not self-evident.

No. 33.5: With the identification and publication of this fragmentary document Niedorf has added considerably to the prosopography of Alalāḥ during the period of Level IV, as well as to our knowledge of documentary practice, for this is the tablet that bears a hem impression. The tablet records someone's acquisition of ^fHebat-sikilti as bride of Agi-Teššub (Aki-Addu in Niedorf's reading). It is the bridegroom's father, named in l. 3, who acquires her as [*kallatu*], according to Niedorf's reconstruction. There would however appear to be room enough to restore ^mA-ki-^dİŠKUR DUMU at the end of l. 2. His father's name, ^mNĠG-NĠ[G-m]a², is uninterpretable albeit preserved essentially in full. In any case the bridegroom is clearly not Agi-Teššub, son of Iqdur-Adda (? *Ig-du-ra-ta*), member of the *maryanni*-class (AIT 128:10 [no. 414.1]), whom I took to be the

same as the Agi-Teššub who appears repeatedly in the Alalāḥ IV tablets in various roles including the office of *sukkallu* (*State and Society*, 287–89) – a title that now turns out to be an incorrect reading (see immediately below).

No. 341.2 (AIT 67): This tablet records the purchase of a woman by Ewri-ḥuda, a well-attested official and one of the few persons whose own dossier may be identified the Alalāḥ IV corpus.²⁸ To this dossier Niedorf adds one new fragment (no. 343.1, discussed below). The attestations of Ewri-ḥuda, itemized on p. 308, include one instance in which Ewri-ḥuda is titled *šatam šarri*, “royal administrator,” and two others identifying him as a “palace official” (LÚ or DUMU É.GAL).

Among several improvements to the text of this tablet, Niedorf corrects the title of the witness Agi-Teššub (l. 13), who is ^L0SANGA, not ^L0SUKKAL as it appears on Wiseman's copy (*The Alalakh Tablets* [London: The British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1953], Pl. XIX). Agi-Teššub is also identified as ^L0SAN[GAL] in no. 37.7, a previously-unpublished fragment of a legal document; in both instances the sign in Niedorf's copy is unambiguously SANGA. In no. 37.7, the witness list includes Agi-Teššub and an unnamed ^L0UGULA li-i[m], “commander of a thousand,” a title borne by one Agi-Teššub in an administrative record (AIT 172 [no. 411.6]). Whether or not the commander of a thousand who witnessed no. 37.7 was the one named Agi-Teššub, the evidence of this fragment together with no. 33.5 and the corrected reading of AIT 67:13 indicates that there were at least two men by this name who were involved with the court of Alalāḥ: the one who married ^fHebat-sikilti (no. 33.5, above) and the son of Iqdur-Adda (AIT 128), either – or neither – of whom could be Agi-Teššub the temple administrator, or Agi-Teššub the commander. In addition, a still-unpublished list of persons twice records Agi-Teššub, son of Tarkišrawe (AIT 169: 3, 23 [no. 411.3]);²⁹ no information is available to indicate whether he too was an important personage, or can be excluded from candidacy for SANGA or UGULA *lim*. In sum, my judgment that almost all instances of Agi-Teššub must attest one and the same holder of high office (*State and Society*, 287) was clearly wrong.

Since Agi-Teššub is identified as temple administrator twice when listed as a witness, it is likely to be the same Agi-Teššub who is attested without title in other witness lists. It may be he who transferred persons to Ewri-ḥuda, the royal official, under seal in AIT 89 (no. 38.1, discussed below); in that case it was also he who sealed AIT 160. Assuming that Agi-Teššub the commander was a different man, it was probably he who is recorded as the patron of two *eḫellena*, an oxherd and a chariot-driver, in AIT 131 ... but to go further is only guesswork. Ascertaining which Agi-Teššub should be equated with which, and attributing the attestations to the right one, would require yet more evidence.

No. 341.5 (AIT 70): According to this tablet, Ililimma, son of Tuttu, acquired a woman from seven sellers for the incredibly high price of 1,000 shekels of silver. Niedorf, rightly arguing against taking the price to be a scribal error (as previous interpreters had

²⁷ His reference to my dissertation (Social Stratification at Alalāḥ, 301, n. 84) may be updated to refer to *State and Society*, 296, with n. 94.

²⁸ For discussion of Ewri-ḥuda and his dossier, see Archives of Alalāḥ IV, 45; *State and Society*, 146–48, 281, 283; and What Did Archives Mean, 43–44.

²⁹ His father's name is corrected by Niedorf: ^mA-ki-^dİŠKUR DUMU Tar-ki-iš-ra-we (p. 298, commenting on no. 33.5:11); cf. *State and Society*, 287–88, n. 72, where I gave this Agi-Teššub's father's name as Tagiṣṣuwe based on Wiseman's reading.

tended to do), suggests that the woman in question had characteristics making her worth this much to the purchaser (p. 320). Suppose Ilmilimma were ransoming her from the sellers? Or suppose she originally belonged to Ilmilimma's household and somehow fell into the hands of the septet from whom he now redeems her? In such a case one would expect the woman to be named. Nevertheless, an explanation along these lines could account for the extraordinary price, as well as perhaps for the fragmentary security clause (l. 15), which as Niedorf observes is unexpected in a purchase document.

A female personal name determinative has previously been read at the beginning of the sixth seller's name, which Niedorf reads as ^m*El-la-al-le* instead. One of the reasons he gives for not reading a woman's name here is that there is no proof that women were fully capable of undertaking legal transactions at Alalah, as they were in the ancient Near East generally (even while he notes other instances of women as parties to transactions; p. 319). The claim requiring proof would be that Alalah was exceptional in this respect.

No. 341.7 (AIT 75): This fragment records the purchase of personnel from Tewatti, who sealed the tablet, along with (at least) the first witness, Parrata. Almost reluctantly, Niedorf concludes that it was probably not a royal document, while yet suggesting that the transaction may have been undertaken by an official representing the king (p. 330), as he supposes was the case of no. 352.6 (AIT 51; see below). This supposition is prompted only by the theory that all transactions were under royal control. It is more straightforward to take AIT 75 and the few other documents not drawn up before the king for what they manifestly are, documents drawn up between parties on their own behalf without royal involvement.

For the purpose of ascertaining whether the document was drawn up independent of the palace, it would be useful to consider its findspot, which unfortunately is unknown. Wiseman recorded Palace Room 33 as the findspot of AIT 75, for which he gave the excavation number ATT/8/73 (*Alalah Tablets*, 52). This is incorrect, however, because the field card for ATT/8/73 gives a description and measurements that do not match AIT 75 (see Archives of Alalah IV, 58). Therefore, while it is reasonable to attribute the tablet to Level IV, there is no reason to assume it derives from or has anything to do with the palace.

No. 343.1: In this previously unpublished fragment Niedorf identifies the only document recording the sale or purchase of real estate so far known in the Alalah IV corpus. Ewri-ḥuda purchased a garden plot ([GIŠ²].SAR) from another party, in a binding acquisition (*ša-ma-[ad]*); the remains of these words suffice to be fairly certain of the nature of the transaction, though Niedorf nonetheless qualifies his identification as probable (p. 342). The tablet was no doubt kept with Ewri-ḥuda's other documents in the fortress (see above, under no. 341.2 [AIT 67]).

No. 351.2 (AIT 344): This tablet recording an obligation to pay six oxen is discussed above (pp. 181–2, in the section “Gattungskritik and Archives”). Niedorf reads l. 3, which apparently identifies the party to whom the sons of Piṭḫuwana owe the oxen, as *ša ERĪN.MEŠ za-ra-te-š[u-n]u*, taking *šunu* as a pronominal suffix. If this reading were correct, *šunu* should instead be the independent pronoun, thus: “they [= the oxen] belong to the ERĪN.MEŠ *za-ra-te* (who or what these people may be Niedorf discusses inconclusively, pp. 349–50). However, the signs in his copy do not look like *š[u-n]u*: for the first, which rather resembles GIŠ, compare ŠU in ll. 4 and 7; the second resembles BU (compare BU in l. 5). The graphemes may spell a 3mpl. predicative verb form.

No. 352.1 (AIT 46): Two men borrow 26 talents of copper from Tuttu (father of Ilmilimma); if they repay the money in the month of Ḫiyari, they shall give silver : *na-ri-ia-te-ni(-ma)*, and if they go past the month of Ḫiyari, the copper will accrue interest. Given the contrast between the two alternative stipulations, clearly the Hurrian word marked with a gloss mark indicates the amount to repay without interest, but this does not make its analysis self-evident.³⁰ Niedorf adopts the proposal of Dietrich and Mayer (Hurritica Alalahiana [I], 181–82) to analyze the word into the following elements: *nari-* “five,” *-(y)at(t)-* “hundred,” and an adjectival morpheme *-enni*, thus “one five-hundredth,” an interpretation that would yield a reasonable silver-to-copper ratio. On this interpretation Niedorf builds conjectures about market conditions for the circulation of both metals, before acknowledging that the analysis is uncertain, inasmuch as the Hurrian word for “hundred” is unknown and it is questionable whether fractions were formed with the adjectival morpheme *-enni* (p. 359) – a morpheme that does not however exist. He then considers the competing proposal of Ignacio Márquez Rowe, who analyzes the word as follows: the weight measure *nari-*, known from Nuzi as a measure of about 150 shekels' weight, followed by the suffix *-ade-* that is used to form abstract nouns from numbers, especially units of measure, then the relator *-ne*.³¹ This interpretation, which would also yield a reasonable silver-copper ratio, Niedorf finds improbable because the weight-measure *nari-* is known only from Nuzi and only as a measure of wool and textiles, while at Alalah silver is given in shekels and minas (p. 360). Against these objections (anticipated by Márquez Rowe) it may be pointed out that restricted attestation in surviving records need not imply restricted usage in antiquity and that whatever measure weighed one commodity could equally weigh another. Meanwhile, Márquez-Rowe's analysis is linguistically superior to that of Dietrich and Mayer; it requires but one or two refinements. Although analysis of the word does not require that *nari* be the Hurrian word for “five,” let us suppose that it is. A weight called *nari* could be five of some lower weight, whether in one system at Alalah or in another at Nuzi. The word is formed of the stem *nari-* with the noun-formation suffix *-(a)di-* (> *-ade-*) followed by the individualizing suffix *-ni* (not the relator *-ne*), “a *nari*-weight,” or “a fiver” (five times a lower unit) of silver.³²

30 The KÙ.BABBAR to be paid *nari=ade=ni* is indeed silver, because it is called *šarpu* (on which see Niedorf's comment on AIT 93:6 [no. 33.3], p. 286); that is, “silver” is not being used to mean “money,” rather, this clause does specify that the loan of copper is to be repaid in silver, therefore the key term must specify the quantity.

31 Márquez Rowe, A Number or a Measure? The Hurrian Gloss in AIT 46, ZA 87 (1997), 247–57.

32 See also von Dassow, Gloss Marking and the Language of the Alalah IV Texts, *Palaeography and Scribal Practices in Syro-Palestine and Anatolia in the Late Bronze Age*, ed. Elena Devecchi (PIHANS 119; Leiden: NINO, 2012), 207–208. For the suffixes *-(a)di-* and *-ni* see Gernot Wilhelm, Hurrian, *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages*, ed. Roger D. Woodard (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2004), 102–103, with several examples of words for numbers of things formed with *-(a)di-*. How to translate the resultant words depends on what they denote; *nari=ade* could mean a quintet, “fiveplex,” or, borrowing from colloquial American usage, “fiver” (for a 5-dollar bill).

No. 352.3 (AIT 48): Herein Ba^calaya, a bird-catcher from Canaan, takes out a loan for which he must pay 200 turtledoves as annual interest to his creditor, Ilmilimma, son of Tuttu. Should our Canaanite Papageno fail to fulfill this interest payment, he (the creditor) will put him in prison. Niedorf raises the question whether this prison could have been operated by the palace, i.e., the state, adducing the mention of imprisonment in the treaty AIT 2 (no. 1.1), but he considers it more likely that the creditor would keep the defaulting debtor in private custody (p. 373). That judgment is questionable, for the treaty specifies the king's prison as the place to detain people, and this loan document was found in the palace. The crown's interest in the transaction could include the potential acquisition of a prisoner (see also above, p. 7, n. 21). While in the present case the purpose of prison is detention, Niedorf is not quite correct to state that prison is not known as a means of punishment in the ancient Near East. The hymn to Nungal that was included in the Decad describes prison as precisely that, and as a correctional institution, too.³³

No. 352.5 (AIT 50): One Eḫli-Teššub (or Eḫli-Addu) borrowed silver from the king, who is not named, in a transaction that was not witnessed, and Irkabtu sealed the tablet. High in status as he is, for Irkabtu to seal a record of the king's transaction is an unusual inversion of roles.

No. 352.6 (AIT 51): Yašemu and Tura borrowed copper from the sons of Zaziya, and the terms differ depending on whether repayment is made by a certain month (as in AIT 46 [352.1], above), according to a series of poorly-preserved clauses the first word of which is *ge-el-lum-mu* (l. 4). Niedorf's interpretation of this word as a Hurrian infinitive in *-umme* of *kel-*, "to be/make well/whole," carrying the same meaning in this context as Akkadian *šullumu*, "pay in full," is surely right. How the syntax of the clause might be reconstructed is hard to guess: perhaps, using the same construction with *epēšu* attested at Nuzi, *ké-el-lum-mu* ⁽⁵⁾ [URUDU.ĜI.A] *i-na* ^{III} *Ni-qá-lī* ⁽⁶⁾ [*i-ip-pu-šu ù šum-ma*] *e-dā-nu i-it-ti-iq-ma* ⁽⁷⁾ [...], "they shall make full payment of the copper in (the month) Niqali, or if the appointed time passes by, then [...]" (notwithstanding the Semitic nominative ending on *kell=umme*, and the mystery of the double l).

Among other improvements to the reading of the tablet, Niedorf adds the four fragmentary lines on the reverse, containing the list of witnesses, which were omitted in the original edition. Four sealings are preserved on the fragment: one at the top of the obverse with the caption "Sealing of the ^{LÜ}ĜIR, the scribe," two at the bottom of the reverse and lower edge with captions naming Azira and Kibla, and one on the left edge without caption, unless Niedorf is right to associate with it the name Šukku floating on the lower edge. As he observes, the latter three sealings must be those of witnesses (though none of the names match what remains of the witness list) and perhaps one of the borrowers. Because the first sealing, that of the unnamed scribe who is also a ^{LÜ}ĜIR – a title otherwise unknown at Alalah – occupies the space where the king would usually seal, Niedorf supposes that this official serves as the king's representative (p. 384). This weakly-founded supposition is not strengthened by pointing to the seal legend's identification of

its (original) owner as "servant of the storm-god." Instead of reading into the evidence assumptions that it does not warrant, as in the case of AIT 75 (no. 341.7) above, this tablet should be understood as a document drawn up independent of royal authority – that is why witnesses and the scribe seal it instead of the king.

No. 352.7 (AIT 105): In this case, the debtor alone seals the tablet, and does so at the top of the obverse, as the scribe does on AIT 51 (no. 352.6, above). No king is involved, nor anyone identifiable as an official. Warad-kubi borrows copper and his sons will inherit the debt, according to a closing stipulation the reading of which Niedorf advances as far as the poorly-written signs allow (p. 389). As already mentioned, this fragment was not found in Level IV (above, p. 179, under "Old finds and new excavations"; see also p. 182, with n. 16). Like AIT 75 (no. 341.7), another record of a transaction undertaken independent of royal authority, it may not derive from Level IV either.

No. 353.1 (AIT 82): This tablet, though intact, had been rather incomprehensible based on Wiseman's publication. Niedorf restructures the reading of the text in a brilliant – and in retrospect obvious – stroke, by identifying the fifth line down the obverse as l. 1: "Before Niqmepa the king." As he explains the matter, the scribe started writing below the space he meant to leave for the king's seal, then got to the other side of the tablet where he found the seal already impressed, so he could do naught but continue the text over the upper edge and onto the blank space he had left (p. 393). As a result the last four lines of the document appear at the top of the obverse. Now, reorganized according to sense, the text records the following series of secured guarantees: ^fPabanella is guarantor for Eḫli-Teššub, from Arrapḫe; with one woman, a boy, (and?) Araya she has entered as surety with Irkabtu; and Ḫeršu, the mayor, is guarantor to Irkabtu on behalf of ^fPabanella. The text closes with the statement ⁽¹⁴⁾ ... ù 3 MUNUS.LÜ-*tum* ⁽¹⁵⁾ 1 šu-ḫa-ru a-na É.GAL aš-bu, "And three women, one boy reside in the palace." Niedorf understands these to be four more people whom Ḫeršu provides to secure his guarantee on behalf of ^fPabanella (p. 396). However, the last sentence could be understood to sum up the dependent persons entering as *qātātu*: ^fPabanella, the unnamed woman and boy, and Araya, who could be a woman (the determinative lies in the tablet's only break) although Araya is normally a man's name.³⁴ That they enter as surety with Irkabtu but dwell in the palace would indeed indicate that in this case Irkabtu acts in his official capacity, rather than obtaining security for some transaction of his own. One can only speculate why Eḫli-Teššub was required to provide multi-layered security for himself: was he a wanted man? One whose extradition to Arrapḫe was pending? Ḫeršu's involvement arises from

³⁴ The women are designated MUNUS.LÜ-*tum*, a word to which Niedorf devotes substantial discussion, along with other logographically-written words for females (LÜ.MÍ-*tum*, MUNUS NITA(MEŠ), MUNUS.UŠ(MEŠ)); unfortunately his investigations into the use of these words are tucked away in notes on their occurrence in individual texts, where they can easily escape notice (AIT 66:2 [341.1], pp. 301–2; AIT 75:7–9 [341.7], pp. 328–29). His general conclusion that women so designated were slaves seems somewhat facile. While they may have been dependent, or subject to the disposition of another, such women were not therefore necessarily enslaved. A man could exercise rights over females as well as males belonging to his household, persons who were not chattel, but whose legal freedom was limited by his authority.

³³ See Jeremy Black, et al., *The Literature of Ancient Sumer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 339–42; and for the Sumerian text, the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/>).

his role as *hazannu*, “mayor,” for he was responsible for fugitives in his jurisdiction, an axiom that is reflected in treaty stipulations such as ALT 2 § 5 (no. 1.1).

No. 353.4 (AIT 85): The lower edge and reverse of this tablet were omitted from publication by Wiseman, so the entire text is here published for the first time. Niedorf restores *aš-šum* at the beginning of l. 1, so that the document would record that Tuttu, a man from Tayae, is guarantor to Ewri-ḫuda on behalf of his wife. Perhaps instead, restoring *qa-du*, Tuttu enters as surety together with his wife (the document need not say for what the security is required). As Niedorf frequently observes, at Alalāḫ IV pledge and guarantee are both covered by the one term ŠU.DU₈.A = *qātātu*.

No. 37.7: Of this previously-unpublished tablet hardly anything remains but the witness list, the preserved part of which includes well-known members of the Alalāḫ court: Agi-Teššub the temple administrator, along with an unnamed “commander of a thousand” (see above, no. 341.2 [AIT 67]), as well as Erḫadal, probably the father of members of the *maryanni* class, and Abiratta, himself *maryanni* (see *State and Society*, 149-50, 306, plus references in Appendix II and in the index of names).

No. 38.1 (AIT 89): Niedorf classifies this tablet and four others as Aktenvermerke, which are a type of legal document according to his system (3.8). Yet he states that they are “administrative documents that exhibit merely some features of legal documents” (p. 228), and on this basis he omits to provide editions of them. This is a dubious rationale for a somewhat arbitrary decision (contrast his treatment of debt notes [type 3.5.1], discussed above, p. 181). As is his wont, he nevertheless presents more or less extensive, albeit rather abstract, descriptions of each document in this category, including improved readings (pp. 228–30). His reading of ALT 89:8–10 accords with my 2008 collation of this tablet, which goes as follows:

(1) ¹Pi-²il-zu²[-x] (2) *qa-du* MUNUS.UŠ.MEŠ-šu (3) *ša* ^{URU}Aš-ta-te
(4) ¹A-gīt-te-šub (5) *a-šar* ¹Eb-ri-ḫu-ta (6) LÚ É.GAL (7) *it-ta-din* (8)
ma-am-ma[-an] (9) *i-na* UGU-šu-n[u] (10) *lu-ú la i-qar-ri-b[a]*

“Agi-Teššub handed over Pil- [...], together with his women, of Aštate, to Ewri-ḫuda, man of the palace. No one shall lay claim to them.”

For the reading of the name Agi-Teššub, see remarks on no. 31.3 (AIT 17), above. According to my copy the second sign in l. 5 is ŠAR, but, unsure what *a-šar* would mean in this context, I have translated as if the word were *a-na*. I should like to know what Niedorf reads here, as well as in l. 2, where he apparently sees one woman only.

Conclusion

Niedorf’s thorough and careful work will long remain essential to research on the Alalāḫ tablets. Study of the legal documents, in particular, at last has a solid foundation in his editions. However, these are just 49 out of 606 tablets and fragments found at Late Bronze Age Alalāḫ, or one-twelfth of the corpus, by his count (see above, p. 178, under “Old finds and new excavations”).

The scrutiny that every line and every sign receive yields massive, dense commentary – ten pages on a single text (e.g., ALT 91 [no. 33.1]), sometimes several pages focusing on a single word (e.g., *balṭumma*, in ALT 47:16 [no. 352.2]), for an average of around a page for every three lines – and that’s only Ch. 4, the same texts having also been treated extensively in Ch. 3! At this rate, how many volumes will it take to re-edit the entire Late Bronze Age corpus of Alalāḫ tablets? In practical terms, regardless of its quality, to produce discussion in excess inhibits progress as much as accomplishing it, if only on account of the time involved. The world of scholarship can hardly absorb, or the smallish Alalāḫ corpus bear, such an overburden of commentary (to which I have now added a layer), multiplied according to the number of texts.

Meanwhile, Niedorf’s detailed survey of the corpus in Ch. 2 discloses glimpses of gems still waiting to be mined in the unpublished tablets from Alalāḫ IV. There is, for example, a “tablet of the troops of the land of Mukiš” (no. 414.15). Among the tablets Wiseman catalogued that remain unpublished, ALT 169 (no. 411.3) lists men who belonged to the *maryanni* class, as Niedorf deduces from comparing the names with those in other texts (p. 51, n. 194). There are two more fragments (nos. 414.12 and 414.17) to add to the dossier of rosters recording *ḫabiru* troops (on which see *State and Society*, 201–209), another of which (ALT 161 [no. 414.3]) is still only partly published. Even as he gives out morsels of their content, Niedorf describes texts such as these in a roundabout way, because they are unpublished (see, e.g., his remarks on ALT 161, p. 73, n. 275; and ALT 193 [no. 412.10], p. 59, n. 216). To read about texts that are withheld is frustrating. For the author to discuss and analyze texts to which he has access, without making them available to his readers, is a procedure of dubious value: surely it would have been more efficient simply to present transliterations of the texts in their entirety! Finally, the tablets under consideration are those deriving from Woolley’s excavations. The current excavation project, now nearing its 15th anniversary, has not to date yielded substantive additions to this corpus, and it seems possible that there are no more archives to find in the later levels of Tell Atchana. Regardless of the potential for new finds, reliable editions of the tablets from the old excavations, especially the many unpublished ones, are overdue.

For this purpose the photographic archive of the Alalāḫ tablets that Dietrich and Loretz assembled is indispensable. It is to these scholars’ great credit that they undertook the work of photographing all the Alalāḫ tablets and fragments they could, at the time they did, for the material will inevitably have deteriorated somewhat

over the decades since. Moreover, they have generously granted scholars (including myself) access to their photographs, copies, and notes, kept in the Ugarit-Forschungstelle at the University of Münster. Would it not make sense, at this time, to have all the photographs scanned and uploaded into a digital archive? It is difficult for scholars to obtain funds to spend months in Münster studying photographs of cuneiform tablets – only to Assyriologists is the value of such work evident – and even

more difficult to obtain funds plus the requisite permissions to study the originals in Antakya. But grants for digital humanities projects can be relatively easy to come by, and could support one or a few students performing the tasks necessary to make the photographs housed in Münster available on line. Then we would not need to await eleven more Niedorfs to work through the other 550 tablets and fragments found at Late Bronze Age Alalah eight decades ago.