actually founded a dynasty which soon became vassal to the Hittites. Granted that Aziru's submission to the Hittite empire was undertaken with a measure of compulsion; nonetheless, the historical introduction to the treaty of Suppiluliumas and Aziru[307] pictures Aziru as taking the lead in establishing friendly relations with the Hittites, while other lands much closer to the Hittite homeland were still hostile toward the Hittite intruder. W. Helck points out the intriguing fact that Abdi-Ashirta and Ba'aluja, his son who succeeded him, bore Semitic names, whereas his second son to reign, Aziru, and the following six rulers (as far as the line can be traced), bore recognizably Hurrian names.[308] This seems to imply that Abdi-Ashirta regarded it as politic (assuming that it was he who named his son Aziru from the start) to identify his line with the Indo-European/Hurrian stratum whose princely families carried royal claims. This act may be understood as an assertion of sociopolitical pretensions which were in the end more basic to the man and his program than the pseudo-egalitarian rhetoric with which he urged Rib-Addi's subjects to revolt and come over to his side. At most, the impression of widespread revolt, conveyed both by Rib-Addi's alarm and by the quoted propaganda of Abdi-Ashirta, suggests the nucleus of a broad anti-Egyptian alliance of the sort that had rallied to Megiddo against Thutmose III a century before. Yet, in a letter from the pharaoh to Aziru chiding him for his hostility toward Rib-Addi, the Egyptian does not seem to regard Aziru as the real center of intrigue in southern Syria, but rather a certain "man of Kadesh" (Etakkama?; EA 162:15–29), who is elsewhere charged with treason by four princes of the region in separate (but commonly dictated?) letters to the pharaoh (EA 174—176; 363).[309]

In my judgment, the named dynasts, although often stigmatized as *'apiru* or accused of collaborating with *'apiru,* were not fundamentally challenging the feudal order. They were seeking greater elbow room for themselves by loosening the Egyptian imperial grip and by seeking advantages at the expense of their neighbors. But appeals such as those made by Abdi-Ashirta to the subject peoples of another city-state, when read in the light of the hysteria marking the Amarna references to the *'apiru,* strongly indicate that these dynasts made effective tactical use of lower-class resentments against the feudal order. The trick was to exploit the resentments of subjects against rival dynasts, while transferring and redirecting their energies toward allegiance to the new dynast. Thus, when a rebel sought to grasp the throne within his own city-state, or when one king sought to overthrow or take over the territory of another king, he deliberately stirred up and capitalized upon the general discontent and opposition toward the authority who was his prime personal target of attack. Implicitly or explicitly, the new contender for power claimed that his rule would offer an improvement in the subjects' conditions. We easily recognize that this hope was so often disappointed that subjects grew cynical; nonetheless, even the hope of marginal improvement spurred many an uprising and many an inter-city state conflict.

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The *'Apiru* Adaptation in Amarna Canaan

While there is growing consensus that *'apiru* and Hebrew are linguistically related,[310] there is no certainty as to the language (NW Semitic, Hurrian, etc.) or the verbal root from which the sociopolitical technical term was originally drawn. Our grasp of the sort of social group(s) called *'apiru* must depend on categorization and comparison of the traits of *'apiru* attested in numerous texts widely distributed over the ancient world in the period 2000 to 1200 B.C.[311] The distinguishing generic trait of the *'apiru* turns out to be sociopolitical rather than ethnic or economic, although there are economic features that follow systematically from the dominant sociopolitical factor.[312] *'Apiru* cannot be characterized as ethnically homogeneous in any one location, much less throughout all the regions where they appear. Nor are the *'apiru* engaged in any single economic activity throughout the Near East, although in particular locales there is often a tendency toward one or another form of economic specialization.

The one trait that best comprehends all the *'apiru* appears to be that of the *outsider status* they occupy vis-à-vis the regnant social and political order. The term "outlaw" conveniently catches the double nuance of the *'apiru* as those who stand recognizably outside the prevailing order, both as "fugitives" or "refugees" who *flee from the dominant order* and as "robbers" or "rebels" who *prey upon or threaten the dominant order.* But "outlaw," except as broadly redefined, tends to miss the many grades and variations of adaptation of which the *'apiru* "outsiders" were capable vis-à-vis the dominant social order. While standing distinguishably apart from the existing order, they also relied upon it insofar as their livelihood was dependent upon the wider society, for which they often worked either as individual "contract laborers" or as hired groups of soldiers, agricultural laborers, or construction gangs.

It seems advisable to maintain a distinction between the individual occupations of *'apiru* before they departed from the prevailing order and the occupations they engaged in as hired laborers or mercenaries once they became members of *'apiru* communities. For example, in the Alalakh texts from fifteenth-century northern Syria, settlements of *'apiru* are recorded in forty-three places, where they appear as state-supported warriors. In a few instances the former occupations of *'apiru* are listed. They include a thief, a slave or servant, priests, and even what appears to be an ex-governor or ex-dynast *(ḫazannu).*[313] How the past experiences and

skills of the individual *'apiru* would be deployed as a member of an *'apiru* community, if at all, seems to have depended in part upon the particular services in which the *'apiru* band to which he attached himself had come to specialize and in part upon the kinds of services which the ruling classes in the area were in need of hiring.

In Amarna Canaan, the *'apiru* appear mainly, perhaps exclusively, as military mercenaries or as renegade robbers. This picture of their occupations, it must be admitted, may be slanted by the diplomatic correspondence in which they are mentioned. Since Egyptian texts refer to *'apiru* as vintners, stone cutters and haulers, and temple servants (as well as in the role of auxiliary infantry), and since these same *'apiru* were reportedly captured in various military campaigns in Syria-Palestine,[314] it is altogether possible that the *'apiru* of Canaan engaged in a wider variety of economic activities than appears in the Amarna letters. The prominence of their military or freebooting activity may be a skewing effect of the Amarna texts with their political-military bias. In terms of their primary reported involvement in Canaanite society, *'apiru* operated as armed groups semi-independent of the feudal structure, available for hire as auxiliary troops or resourceful in carrying on freebooting, either on their own or at the instigation of one city-state against another.

The *'apiru* appear in the context of struggle between the feudal city-states, being enlisted as auxiliaries in the service of one city-state against another and in some instances even settled on land, doubtless partly in payment for their services and partly as a way of keeping a close watch on their activities. Their well-organized skill in banditry was a career they could practice on their own, directed at whatever targets were at hand, or it could be subsidized by one city-state against another as a form of paramilitary harassment. Because they were armed bands, only loosely integrated into the general society, the *'apiru* constituted an uncertain factor which every dynast had to watch, even as he employed them. So far as we can see, however, these bands by themselves could not and did not overthrow dynasts. The aristocratic chariot forces held the upper hand militarily. But in the contest of city-states, the *'apiru* could tip the balance of power one way or another.

The extent to which the *'apiru* of Canaan were skilled as charioteers is a matter of some dispute. EA 87 (from Rib-Addi of Byblos to Amanappa, high Egyptian official) states that "Batruna went over to him [i.e., to Abdi-Ashirta]. And (now) a SA.GAZ[315] army and chariots are stationed in [its] midst, and they do not move from the gate opening of Gubla [i.e., Byblos]."[316] This is sometimes understood to mean that the SA.GAZ/*'apiru* army had a chariot contingent, but the simplest sense of the passage is that the SA.GAZ were infantry who were supplemented by a chariot force provided by Abdi-Ashirta. EA 197 (from Biryawaza, royal deputy in Ube near Damascus, to the Egyptian king) seems much more explicit on first reading:

> Your servant was/is in the land of A [bi (=Ube) . . .]. Its horses and its chariots [*they have given*] to the SA.GAZ; they have not *g*[*iven them*] to the king, my lord. When Biridashwa saw this deed, he stirred up the city of Yanuamma against me and closed the gate behind me. Then he took chariots from Ashtarte and gave them to the SA.GAZ; he did not give them to the king, my lord. And Arzawiya went to Qadesh and took the army of Aziru. He seized Shaddu and gave it to the SA.GAZ; he did not give it to the king, my lord. See! Itatkama has caused the loss of the land of Qadesh, and behold, Arzawiya with Biridashwa have caused the loss of Abi.[317]

The plain sense of the text appears to be that horses and chariots from Ube and chariots from Ashtarte were given to the SA.GAZ/*'apiru,* along with the town of Shaddu. There is, however, ground for suspecting that the formula "to give to the SA.GAZ/*'apiru*" may here be used in the broad sense in which the idiom occurs in many letters, i.e., as a general reference to surrender of land and populace to a hostile city-state. In that case, the expression may mean that the chariots were given to the rebel, i.e., anti-Egyptian, side (as defined by Biryawaza) without any intent of specifying that SA.GAZ/*'apiru,* in the strict sense of mercenary components of the rebel army, were outfitted with horses and chariots. That is the extent of our knowledge about possible *'apiru* chariotry in Canaan.

In the Alalakh census lists of armed SA.GAZ/*'apiru* there is more precise information. AT 180 refers to two charioteers among 29 men, AT 182 mentions 7 charioteers among 29 men, and AT 183 and AT 226 speak of 80 charioteers among 1,436 men.[318] Thus, while the great majority of armed *'apiru* at Alalakh were infantry, a significant minority were charioteers. Given the general social disdain in which *'apiru* appear to have been held, and the fact that they are listed separately from the upper classes, it is doubtful that these Alalakh *'apiru* charioteers were members of the military elite. It is probably more accurate to think of them as former feudal aristocrats, *maryannu,* who, as fugitives from other city-states, brought their skills in chariotry to Alalakh and were hired to drive chariots owned by local aristocrats. The *'apiru* captives from Canaan who are mentioned in Egypt, however, are never associated with chariots; when they are described as warriors, they are infantrymen and clearly distinguished from the *maryannu* chariot-warriors.

Our conclusion is that the *'apiru* of Canaan were overwhelmingly armed infantry. Insofar as some of their recruits may formerly have been skilled in chariotry, they could on occasion operate chariots, but it is not at all certain that they did so in Amarna Canaan. There is no reason whatsoever to believe that they formed large enough chariot units to be any match for the professional aristocracy of the city-states. Their military effect consisted in their adroitness in combat in rough terrain and in the extra punch they could deliver as auxiliaries to the elite chariotry and the local infantry. In Canaan the *'apiru* warriors probably had learned to specialize in guerrilla-like tactics, and by shifting their services to each new arena of hostilities they had the great advantage of more or less continuous

battle experience, compared with more lackluster local infantry who would have to be drawn periodically off the land in order to mount campaigns of offense or defense. Thus, the reputation of the *'apiru* mercenaries seems not to have resided in their equipment or in their superior firepower, but in their hardiness, versatility, and ready availability as full-time professional fighters.

It is obvious, however, that the strict sense of SA.GAZ/*'apiru* does not account for many, probably not even for a majority, of the references to them in the Amarna letters. Two social characteristics of the *'apiru* contributed to a wider and looser pejorative usage of the term with meanings such as "outlaws," "traitors," "conspirators," "enemies." For one thing, the *'apiru* were regularly hired or encouraged by city-state dynasts to fight for them or to harass other city-state dynasts. Very likely a dynast would most often hire *'apiru* auxiliaries when he was mounting an attack against another dynast. The activation of units of *'apiru* would be a warning signal that a local dynast was planning aggression. It was, therefore, an obvious extension of the term to label the dynast who hired the auxiliaries as "chief of the *'apiru*" or "GAZ-man." Secondly, the *'apiru,* by standing apart from the social order with a measure of independence, were conceived as an incipient threat to city-states which were under stress from within and attack from without. It was known that the *'apiru* bands were recruited from discontented and deprived fugitives of the social order. In stable times, the *'apiru* could be contained and their services employed to the mutual advantage of the ruling class and of the *'apiru* themselves. But they were also clearly perceived as a restless, volatile, threatening element. Thus, any person or group perceived as threatening the stability or vital interests of a person in authority could easily be viewed as "acting the part of an 'outlaw,' " as indeed an *'apiru,* rather analogous to the pejorative and hysterical use of the epithet "Communist" for any person threatening capitalist societies. At times all limits on the use of the term seem to have burst, and the writers of the Amarna letters savagely label anyone who opposed and threatened them as traitorous, conspiratorial, reprobate, rebellious *'apiru*—or, in effect, *'apiru* fellow travelers.

Not only are city-dynasts opposed to a correspondent often called *'apiru,* or identified with *'apiru,* but even an Egyptian commissioner in EA 286 can be reprimanded with the accusatory question, "Why do you favor the *'apiru* but hate the governors [i.e., local dynasts]?"[319] Moreover, the rebellious underlings in a city-state, who give no evidence of having been previously organized as *'apiru,* can be so stigmatized when they attempt to throw off feudal authority. In EA 271, Milkilu of Gezer implores the pharaoh, "Let the king, my lord, rescue his land from the hand of the SA.GAZ. If not, let the king send chariots to take us, that our servants not smite us."[320] And in EA 288, ER-Heba of Jerusalem exclaims, "See! Zimrida—the town(smen) of Lachish have smitten him, servants who have become *'apiru.*"[321] The term translated "servants" in both these letters, *ardūtu,* may

also be rendered "slaves"; it does not tell us the specific form of servitude or obligation. The fact that these *ardūtu* are equated with "townsmen of Lachish" (lit., Lachishites) may in fact suggest that the term is a broad label for feudal subjects, equivalent to "citizens subject to the dynastic ruler." In rebelling against authority by murdering Zimrida, these people of Lachish have rejected the feudal obligation under which they stood. They have "become *'apiru*" by rejecting and overthrowing established feudal authority. There is no sign, however, that these rebellious Lachishites then withdrew from the city as fugitives to join existing *'apiru* bands or to form a band of their own. Their assassination of Zimrida was apparently successful and the rebels held the town, so that when the same letter says "the *'apiru* capture the cities of the king," the seizure of Lachish by feudal subjects within the city, rather than by *'apiru* mercenaries from without, seems to be conceived by ER-Heba as an *'apiru* action. Nor is there any indication that after the revolt Lachish was organized nonfeudally. Here the *'apiru* designation refers to a conspiratorial rebellious state of mind and mode of action rather than to a specific social formation known beforehand as *'apiru* or even subsequently organized as *'apiru.*

Yet the tendency to tar all opponents with the *'apiru* brush may well bear in many cases, if not in all, some connection with a concrete sociopolitical reality. It is plausible that city-states were expanding their control over their neighbors, not only by making use of *'apiru* auxiliaries and bandits, but also by settling them in their own undeveloped territories or in captured territories. Indeed, the settling of *'apiru* in conquered territories may have been one of the chief means of payment for their services, since the cost would not have had to come out of the resources of the hiring dynast. At the same time, the potentially troublesome *'apiru* could be removed some distance from the capital city and their threat to the dynast thereby decreased. For example, in EA 287 ÈR-Ḫeba charges that "this deed is the deed of Milkilu [of Gezer] and the deed of the sons of Labaya [of Shechem] who have given the land of the king to the *'apiru.*"[322] Greenberg notes that in EA 289, ÈR-Ḫeba puts this land seizure in another way, "See! Milkilu never parts from the sons of Labaya and from the sons of Arzaya in order to acquire the land of the king for themselves,"[323] which leads him to suggest that these two claims can best be reconciled if we understand "giving the land to the *'apiru*" in either of two possible senses,

> as giving them a free hand to do as they pleased in the land, or as assigning them quarters in various localities. (Similarly Achish, king of Gath, assigned the city of Ziklag to his Israelite renegade retainers; note that in I Sam. 27:6 the verb *natān* [i.e., "to give"] is used exactly as *nadnu* here.)[324]

Thus, to summarize, the term *'apiru* in the Amarna letters ranges variously, from (1) an original denotative reference to circumscribed bands of armed "outsiders" loosely related to the feudal system as auxiliaries or brigands, through

(2) extended application to those in the city-state system who use these bands, and (3) finally to loose metaphorical applications to all those who threaten a dynast, including his own subjects, an opposing dynast and his forces, or an Egyptian official. I believe it is a methodological error to attribute the conscious organized unity of the primary *'apiru* bands to the looser senses of the term. And it is equally erroneous to assume a unity of consciousness and explicit anti-feudal strategy among all *'apiru* bands. Deserving of closer attention is the question of whether some of the apparently metaphorical applications of *'apiru* may in fact be more literally based, such as the identification of a ruler as *'apiru* because he settled *'apiru* in captured territory or the identification of Lachishites as *'apiru,* not merely because they acted rebelliously against authority, but also possibly because they were inspired or led by *'apiru* mercenaries. The texts that provoke these questions, however, are so terse and cryptic that for the present no confident answer can be given.

I have gone to some pains to indicate the range and ambiguity of data about the Canaanite *'apiru* in order to underline my earlier claim that, in spite of all the restiveness in Amarna Canaan, we meet no clear articulation of an egalitarian social movement that directly challenged the feudal system of Canaan. The seeming severity of this conclusion, however, should be carefully qualified or conditioned in the following ways:

TREND TOWARD IMPERIAL-FEUDAL DECLINE. Whatever the lack of conscious intent to overthrow feudalism and whatever the absence of an organized alternative to feudalism, it is certainly true that the cumulative attacks and counterattacks among the city-states, criss-crossed as they were with internal power struggles and complicated by varying loyalty-defection patterns toward Egypt, seriously ate at the foundations of the Egyptian imperium, which in turn eroded the supports of the city-state feudal structure. This deterioration of the imperial-feudal interlock tended to strengthen whatever residue of free-citizen populism survived in the cities and to enlarge the freedom and power of the *'apiru* bands and of the village-based agricultural/pastoral communities (more about this *'apiru*-peasant cooperation below). As centralized power weakened, those resisting it had more "breathing space," and a favorable climate was developed for the later emergence of a consciously organized social egalitarian movement.

TREND TOWARD *'APIRU* CONSOLIDATION. The *'apiru* bands were not strong enough to unsettle the old order by themselves. This was in large measure because in the Amarna Age they showed no signs of operating as a united force but remained splintered in their support of various feudal states or factions. As combined circumstances led to the gradual decline of centralized Egyptian and city-state power, however, the relative independence of armed and organized *'apiru* bands tended to weigh as an increasingly important power factor, especially in those hilly regions where centralized power was "thinnest" in its territorial

coverage. About 1310 B.C. Seti I tells of deploying the Egyptian army against *'apiru* who were operating out of a base in the mountains in the vicinity of Beth-shean.[325] *'Apiru* grown stronger relative to declining feudal power and weakened Egyptian control could disrupt and plunder trade, seize crops, and occupy land, without feeling any obligation to render service to dynasts too weak to coerce them. Such seems to have been the trajectory along which the precariously balanced feudal system moved during the century following the Amarna Age, a period known to us from regrettably few Egyptian sources and thus one whose sociopolitical developments must be reconstructed largely by extrapolation forward and backward from better-documented periods.

'APIRU-PEASANT COOPERATION. We are left to conjecture about the possibility of these *'apiru* bands providing nuclei for an anti-feudal social order in those regions of Palestine where Egyptian and city-state power had receded in the post-Amarna Age. We have already noted that *'apiru* bands were regularly fed by a stream of fugitives fleeing the established order. Doubtless the degree of "openness" of *'apiru* communities to newcomers varied considerably, depending upon the demographic composition and economic marginality of the *'apiru* group, as well as on the skills that the newcomers brought. The destitute who gathered out of Israel to join David as freebooters indicate how an *'apiru* group could recruit and assimilate large numbers of newcomers around a strong band leader (I Sam. 22:1). As the Canaanite cities weakened, they lost their grip on some regions while tightening it on others. To escape taxation in kind and corvée, peasants would rebel, remaining in place if possible, fleeing if necessary. To make up for the loss of human and natural resources, the cities would have to increase the burden they placed upon those who remained under their control. This in turn would increase the flow of fugitives. An enlarged flow of newcomers to the existing *'apiru* bands would reach a point where the assimilation of newcomers was no longer possible. New "outlaw" communities would form, composed of nuclei of refugees from the same city, village, or former status. They would be primarily dependent on their own resourcefulness, but *'apiru* groups of longer standing provided them with counsel and adaptive models of social, military, and economic organization.

Whether the expanding bands and communities of escapees from Canaanite feudalism characteristically or uniformly called themselves *'apiru* is a moot point. In fact, since all the references to *'apiru* in the Near East are by officials in the dominant order, we do not know how extensively, if at all, people in that social stratum accepted the term *'apiru* for themselves, even in more stable situations than post-Amarna Canaan. As entire "outlaw" communities sprang up, without any previous *'apiru* tradition, they may have resisted employing a term so freighted with negative judgment by the society they had abandoned. If "Hebrews" as a self-designation of the Israelites is an equivalent to *'apiru,* the decided limitation of the name to very restricted contexts (e.g., in talking to foreigners) may indicate an

aversion to the label *'apiru* among many of the rebels as they broke loose from feudal dependence.

Moreover, as Mendenhall has stressed, this "withdrawal" from Canaanite feudalism must not be seen solely as physical flight. The "withdrawal" entailed the strengthening of the village agricultural/pastoral complex against the urban-dominated latifundist-agricultural and trading complex.[326] Groups "withdrawing" would not necessarily flee from their homes. In fact, resistance on their familiar home ground would have been the preference of the rebels. Depending on the defensibility of the location, the attrition of central power, the local self-organization, the availability of *'apiru* allies, and other such factors, the village units could develop autonomy on their home ground. If forced out, they could fall back into more inaccessible areas and begin the reconstruction of their former economy and social organization, with such alterations as changes in natural environment or political-military exigencies required, drawing as needed on the growing fund of *'apiru* experience in making such adaptations.

In other words, I am suggesting that the line between *'apiru* as organized military and brigand bands and the village agriculturalists and pastoralists was probably a rather indistinct one in many cases, becoming less and less distinct as central authority crumbled. In certain respects, once relieved of Canaanite feudal domination, the two ideal types would tend to move toward one another. *'Apiru,* no longer receiving regular supplies from a dynast, would tend to settle and cultivate land as their own. Villagers, openly or covertly resistant to the authorities, would tend to develop local defense measures. Each group had something to learn from the other. At some hypothetical point in this expansion and slow convergence of nonfeudally organized peoples, the preconditions for a wider unity developed. In such a setting early Israel took its rise.

LACK OF ANTI-FEUDAL SOURCES. Finally, we must also remember that what we know about the Amarna Age developments comes exclusively from the dynasts and ruling circles in control of the city-states, or from the Egyptian court. We do not have material from the *'apiru* bands or from the serfs or semi-free peasants. As we have noted, we are not even certain that *'apiru* was a term used by the people so labelled by the established order. Both *'apiru* and depressed peasants and pastoralists may have been much more anti-feudal than we now have any way of knowing. The content of their daily experience was such as to have ingrained in them the hardships and injustices of the feudal system, but how widely they generalized from that experience, how articulate they were in their grievances and acts of protestation, and how united they felt themselves to be with others in similar situations remain unknown. At any rate, the reported conduct of the rebellious and warring victims of feudalism in the Amarna texts does not indicate an explicit anti-feudal consciousness and strategy of action. Helpful at this point is an analysis such as Eric Hobsbawm's treatment of robbers as an ideal type (actually

a series of types), in which he delineates the many levels of sociopolitical consciousness and practice among organized robbers, ranging from the random indulgence of self-interest to very explicit revolutionary consciousness.[327]

That a large measure of anti-feudal sentiment existed among some of these groups is suggested by the kind of social revolutionary propaganda Abdi-Ashirta manipulated for his own Machiavellian purposes. But it is only in the literature of early Israel that the revolutionary consciousness of the Canaanite underclasses finds an articulate voice. Only with early Israel did the diffuse anti-feudal sentiment of Canaan become a highly charged cultural, socioeconomic, and military-political revolution. But it may also be true that we would be able to detect signs of the gathering revolutionary consciousness at earlier points had we any direct testimonies from the pre-Israelite lower classes in Canaan. Egalitarian social-revolutionary consciousness—as distinct from ruling-class appropriation of aspects of egalitarian sentiment—first receives full literate expression in the Near East with early Israel. That in itself is of great significance: the underclasses of Canaan who joined in early Israel decided that writing was too valuable a tool to be left to the ruling class; they seized upon the alphabetic script as a simple instrument of expression that could serve an egalitarian community instead of aiding a ruling elite to control and manipulate the populace.