The identification of the members of the western coalition who fought Shalmaneser III at the battle of Qarqar has engaged Assyriologists since the 19th century. Among the more elusive members of the alliance has been Ba-ṣaʾsa maʿar Ruḥu-bi kūr A-ma-na-a-a, listed in the Monolith Inscription, column II, line 95. The majority view holds that the toponym A-ma-na-a-a refers to Ammon, the small state located in Transjordan = biblical ʾammôn (Gen. 19:38, etc.). This identification originated among late 19th and early 20th century scholars, is repeated in more recent works, and appears in standard translations.

The minority view was first offered by E. Forrer, who identified the word with Amana, the mountainous region of southern Syria, more specifically the

1. For the original, see H. C. Rawlinson, *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia* (London, 1870), 3: plates 7–8.
Anti-Lebanon range = biblical ²āmānāh (2 Kgs. 5:12Q, Song 4:8). This opinion has also gained wide acceptance, especially among Israeli scholars.⁶ The main points raised by the proponents of this theory are as follows: a) the spelling of A-ma-na-a-a, with single m, contrasts with other Akkadian spellings of Ammon with geminated m; b) the reference lacks bit, which is usually prefixed to other references of Ammon; and c) the patronymic Ruhubi refers to the small Aramean state Beth-rehob (1 Sam. 8:3), in which case mār means “citizen of.”⁷

A curious compromise position is offered by two scholars, E. Honigmann and G. M. Landes. Both agreed that Ba²-sa was king of Ammon, though the former noted that his country “gehört der Dynastie von Bet-Rehob an,”⁸ while the latter referred to Baasha as “the ‘son’ of Ruhubi (i.e., Beth-rehob).”⁹ Still other scholars appear too cautious even to venture a guess as to which area is meant by A-ma-na-a-a.¹⁰

As the title of the present article indicates, I propose to argue anew for the majority position. The three points raised to bolster the identification of A-ma-na-a-a with Amana shall each be reviewed; then we shall offer some further arguments.

First, the spelling A-ma-na-a-a with single m is obviously ambiguous. The single m can stand for either simple m, as in the biblical spelling ²āmānāh, or for geminated m, as in biblical ²ammôn. Moreover, the Akkadian orthography gives us no clue as to whether the initial consonant is West Semitic ²aleph, as in ²āmānāh, or ²ayin, as in ²ammôn. But to return to the writing of the single m, let us examine the data more closely. Not only is “Ammon” consistently spelled with double m, e.g., Am-ma-na, Am-ma-na-a-a, Am-man-a-a, etc.,¹¹ but so is “Amana,” to wit, Am-ma-na (1x), Am-ma-na-na (4x).¹² Accordingly, the evidence from the Akkadian scribal

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7. For this meaning of mār see CAD, M/1:315. The usage “citizen of” is attested in the Neo-Assyrian period.


10. Thus the following two sources do not attempt an identification, though given the scope of their surveys one might be expected: M. Elat, “The Campaigns of Shalmaneser III against Aram and Israel,” IEJ 25 (1975), 25–35; and A. K. Grayson, “Assyria: Ashur-Dan II to Ashur-Nirari V (934–745 B.C.),” in CAH, 3/1:261. Technically, there is still another opinion concerning the identification of A-ma-na-a-a. R. Borger in K. Galling, ed., Textbuch zur Geschichte Israels, 3rd ed. (Tübingen, 1979), 50, equates it with the Amanus Mountains, but one must agree with Cogan, “From the Peak” (above, n. 6), 259, n. 25, in calling this view eccentric.

11. S. Parpola, Neo-Assyrian Toponyms (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970), 76.

tradition is neutral in this regard. Furthermore, there are numerous analogies to occasional monoconsonantal spellings amidst numerous biconsonantal spellings. Thus, from Neo-Assyrian sources we can cite two cases of A-rap-ḫa/u among several dozen examples of Ar-rap-ḫa,\(^{13}\) one case of Ḥa-laḫi vs. eight cases of Ḥa-laḫ-ḫa/i/u,\(^{14}\) and five instances of A-šur among hundreds of Aš-šur spellings.\(^{15}\) Lastly, as H. Tadmor has emphasized, the inscription was “copied rather carelessly by some local—not very experienced—scribe”; it “contains over fifty scribal errors, omissions, and mis-spellings”; “the names of foreign countries are often mis-spelt”; and “in the passage dealing with the battle of Qarqar (rev. 90–102), there are about ten mistakes”; e.g., the spellings Gu-a-a for Gu-bala-a and Ši-za-na instead of Ši-ana, the omission of the city determinative before U-sa-na-ta-a-a, etc.\(^{16}\) Accordingly, too much should not be made of the spelling A-ma-na-a-a.

Fluidity in Assyrian scribal practice also can be used to explain the second point mentioned above. Various places are consistently referred to as Bit-X, though occasionally we note the absence of bit. Thus, e.g., Bit-Bunakki is once written simply URU Bu-na-ku,\(^{17}\) Bit-Zamānī appears once as KUR Za-ma-a-ni,\(^{18}\) and even Ammon is recorded once as KUR Ba-an-am-ma-na-a-a (cf. biblical bēnē ‘ammōn) without bit.\(^{19}\) Furthermore, the Monolith Inscription is the first reference to Ammon in Assyrian literature. Subsequent references do not begin until more than a century later, during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III.\(^{20}\) In Shalmaneser III’s day, it is possible that the writing Bit-Ammān had not yet become fixed in Assyrian scribal tradition. Therefore, just as too much emphasis should not be placed on the spelling with single m, the same holds for the omission of the expected bit in our reference.

On the third point little can be said, because it is a moot issue whether Ru-ḫu-bi is to be taken as a toponym, i.e., Beth-rehob, or as an anthroponym. But it should be noted that Solomon’s son and successor, Rehoboam, was born to Naamah of Ammon (1 Kgs. 14:21, 31), suggesting the possibility that the element ṣb was used in Ammonite names.

In sum, there is nothing in the statement Ba-²-sa mār Ru-ḫu-bi KUR A-ma-na-a-a which a priori suggests that Amana is the intended country. The passage is essentially ambiguous. However, collateral information, culled from our increased knowledge of the Ammonites in recent years, appears to sway the debate in favor of the equation of A-ma-na-a-a = Ammon. Two additional points may be raised in this respect.

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13. Parpola, Toponyms, 32.
14. Ibid., 142.
15. Ibid., 41–54. Neo-Assyrian texts include additional attestations of the spelling A-šur referring to the deity, e.g., ND 1120 obv. 8, 12, 14, 24, for which see G. van Driel, The Cult of Aššur (Assen, 1969), 200–3.
17. Parpola, Toponyms, 79.
18. Ibid., 91.
19. Ibid., 76. I admit, however, that the absence of bit here is probably due to the inclusion of ba-an-, which may have been seen as its functional equivalent. On the other hand, a second instance of bit-less Ammon may occur in URU Am-ma-a-(na), for which see Parpola, Toponyms, 16.
20. This has been noted previously by Mitchell, “Israel and Judah” (above, n. 6), 478, n. 272.
First, regardless of which side one takes in the controversy concerning A-ma-na-a-a, all are agreed that the royal name Ba-²-sa corresponds to West Semitic alphabetic b’ṣ₂? , "Baasha."²¹ This name is known to us, of course, from the Bible, where it appears as the royal name of an Israeli²² king from the tribe of Issachar (1 Kgs. 15:16, etc.). Important for our present purposes is the presence of this name in the Ammonite onomasticon. Specifically, it appears as b’ṣ[²?] in Heshbon ostraco 4, line 6, as the name of an Ammonite dignitary c. 600 B.C.E.²³ In light of our scanty knowledge of personal names from the Amana region (Hadadezer in 1 Sam. 8:3 would be one example), it may be unfair to exploit our greater knowledge of the Ammonite onomasticon. Nevertheless, it may be significant that among the approximately one hundred attested Ammonite names²⁴ appears b’ṣ[²?] = Assyrian Ba-²-sa.²⁵

Secondly, we should take note of where A-ma-na-a-a appears in the list of the western coalition members. I do not refer to its placement as the last of the eleven allies, for clearly its number of troops—the exact figure cannot be determined due to a break in the text,²⁶ but it is at least 1,000 and probably more—exceeded the contingents of other allies mentioned earlier in the list (Byblos, Arvad, Usnu). Instead, I assume that the mention of Ba-²-sa the A-ma-na-a-a²⁷ immediately after Gi-in-di-bu’ KUR Ar-ba-a-a is significant. The other countries in the list are collocated for good reason: Damascus, Hamath, and Israel, apart from being generally close geographically, may be labeled "the Big Three"; Byblos and Egypt are mentioned together because of the traditional relationship between them;²⁸ and Arqa, Arvad, Usnu, and Shiana are all northern Phoenician city-states.²⁹ Thus, the placement of the last two allies should be intentional.


²³. F. M. Cross, "Ammonite Ostraca from Heshbon: Heshbon Ostraca IV–VIII," AUS 13 (1975), 2–3; and K. P. Jackson, The Ammonite Language of the Iron Age (Chico, CA, 1983), 51–52 (the latter refers to this inscription as Heshbon ostracon 1). It is true that the final letter must be restored, but all are agreed that šaleph is to be supplied.


²⁵. Elsewhere the name is attested in two Neo-Punic inscriptions, spelled b’ṣ² in KAI 166:2 and b’ṣ² in KAI 145:37.

²⁶. Consult the original in Rawlinson, Cuneiform Inscriptions (above, n. 1), rev., end of line 94.

²⁷. Note, parenthetically, that A-ma-na-a-a is a gentilic form.

²⁸. On the identification of Gu-a-a = Byblos and Mu-u-ṣ-ra-a-a = Egypt, see Tadmor, "Que and Musir" (above, n. 16), 143–50; and Tadmor, "Azriyau" (above, n. 6), 245.

²⁹. On the identification and location of these cities see the literature cited by Elat, "Campaigns" (above, n. 10), 26–27, n. 7.
The juxtaposition of Ba-hsa the A-ma-na-a-a with Gindibu of Arabia is understandable if the former is identified as an Ammonite king. For as all who have studied ancient Ammon have noted, no other people in greater Canaan had such intimate contacts with the peoples of the Arabian peninsula. The evidence is of two types, linguistic and archaeological. The linguistic evidence stems mainly from the Ammonite onomasticon which includes a large percentage of Arabian elements. On the archaeological side, there is evidence of the Ammonite involvement in the substantial caravan trade from Arabia northward with a concomitant Arabian influence on the Ammonite material culture. The following quotation from G. M. Landes summarizes the relations between Ammon and Arabia rather succinctly: “As may have already been gathered, the existence of Ammonite names, or name-elements, showing a north Arabic provenance is now clearly recognized, and fits well with what we know of Ammon’s long-standing close relationship with the desert and of Ammonite political custom reflecting nomadic practice. For throughout their organized political history the Ammonites maintained a more intimate contact with the desert than did either of their southern neighbors, Moab or Edom.”

These last two points raised, viz., the presence of the personal name bṣ-[?] in an Ammonite inscription, and the contacts between Ammon and Arabia, have not been taken into account in the debate as to the identification of Ba-hsa mār Ruh-bi KUR A-ma-na-a-a. If they are given due consideration, it would seem that the scales have been tipped and that we should affirm the majority opinion recognizing “Baasha of Ammon.”

30. By Arabian I mean Thamudic-Safaitic-Lihiyanic, Arabic, and Epigraphic South Arabian.
33. Landes, Ibid. 84.