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Canaanite in Cuneiform

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It has become a truism that Akkadian, the principal Semitic language of ancient Mesopo-
tamia, was the *lingua franca* of the Near East during the second millennium B.C.E. This is
stated, more or less in so many words, in any number of works on the ancient Near East,
which usually offer the Amarna letters, the trove of correspondence between Egypt and other
states that was found at the site of Akhetaten (Tell el-Amarna), as the parade example of
Akkadian as *lingua franca*.[1] But is the truism true?

The idea that Akkadian was in common use as a written language throughout the ancient
Near East, Egypt included, tacitly assumes the exact identity of writing with language: it
assumes, that is, that what people write represents at face value the language in which they
mean to communicate. According to this theory, if a scribe in Ḫatti or Egypt, Canaan or
Cyprus, writes in cuneiform using sign sequences that spell Akkadian words, he means to
write in the Akkadian language, regardless of whether what he writes exhibits features of
his own or another language as well as errors in Akkadian. But this idea conflates the mo-
dality of encoding linguistic expression with linguistic expression itself. It need not be the
case that the signs with which a text is written directly represent the language in which it
is written, and to assume that this is the case is inherently problematic when the writing
system in question is one such as cuneiform, which tends to employ a variety of frozen
graphic sequences (e.g., logograms) dissociated from language-specific referents. When such
a writing system is borrowed from one language community into another, the assumption
that the language of a text is directly represented by the writing of the text becomes so prob-
lematic that it should be treated as a proposition requiring demonstration rather than an axiom
to be taken for granted.

1. To give just a few sample citations from recent secondary literature, such a statement is made by Nadav
Na'aman, in his entry on the Amarna letters in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York:
Doubleday, 1992), 1: 175; by Amélie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000–330 B.C.E.* (London: Routledge, 1995),
1: 346–47; and by several contributors to *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (New York:
Scribners, 1995), the index of which helpfully includes an entry under "languages" for "lingua franca, Akkadian as"
(to the references indexed, add H. Vanstiphout's mention of the international use of the Babylonian language as well
as cuneiform, in "Memory and Literacy in Ancient Western Asia," 4: 2186).

With regard to the ostensible use of the Akkadian language, written in cuneiform, outside of Mesopotamia, in many instances the evidence offers reason to jettison the assumption that writing is a face-value representation of language, and to consider alternative possibilities. The present article develops an alternative hypothesis concerning one such instance, which involves a subset of the Amarna letters that are usually cited to illustrate Akkadian-as-*lingua-franca*, namely the use of cuneiform by Canaanite scribes during the Late Bronze Age (c. fifteenth–thirteenth centuries B.C.E.).

The language that Canaanite scribes used for correspondence in cuneiform during the Late Bronze Age has been an object of scholarly attention since the discovery of the Amarna tablets over a century ago. This language, that is, what the Canaanite scribes wrote, appears to be a hybrid produced by grafting the scribes' native Canaanite onto their borrowed Akkadian. The resulting Canaano-Akkadian hybrid, which was initially thought to incorporate proto-Hebrew forms into a barbarized Akkadian dialect, is considered in current scholarship to be an autonomous dialect with its own linguistic system and its own rules of morphology and grammar.[2] Recently, many features of this dialect have been catalogued and analyzed by Anson Rainey in his four-volume work *Canaanite in the Amarna Tablets*. The description of Canaano-Akkadian that can be abstracted from Rainey's work reveals a strange composite: in texts written in this hybrid, sentences composed of Akkadian words are arranged in Canaanite syntax; Akkadian words are made to function according to the rules of Canaanite grammar; Akkadian words are provided with Canaanite affixes; Akkadian words and morphemes are recombined to produce otherwise nonexistent forms; and Canaanite words, besides being deployed as glosses, are used alongside Akkadian ones. Such a peculiar array of features (detailed in specific terms below) prompts asking what kind of language salad was this; who used it with whom, and how?

In this article, I propose that the hybrid of Canaanite and Akkadian in which Canaanite scribes wrote was not a language of any kind, but an artifact of these scribes' use of cuneiform, and furthermore, that the language underlying their communication in cuneiform was not Akkadian but Canaanite. The Canaanite use of cuneiform would then be an instance of alloglottography, to borrow a term from Ilya Gershevitch, who defined it as "the use of one writable language for the purpose of writing another language": the Canaanite scribes used Akkadian words, spelled in cuneiform, to write Canaanite.[3] In order to elucidate the basis

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2. A lucid and theoretically well-grounded statement of such a view is A. Gianto's explanation of Canaanized Akkadian as an "interlanguage," a product of the language-learning process which, instead of being superseded through continued learning, became fossilized; see Gianto, "Amarna Akkadian as a Contact Language," in *Languages and Cultures in Contact*, ed. K. Van Lerberghe and G. Voet (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 123–32, esp. 127 and 131. Another theory of the Canaano-Akkadian hybrid as an autonomous dialect is propounded by S. Izre'el, "The Amarna Glosses: Who Wrote What for Whom? Some Sociolinguistic Considerations," in *Language and Culture in the Near East*, ed. S. Izre'el and R. Drory (Leiden: Brill, 1995), esp. 101–5; "Vocalized Canaanite: Cuneiform-written Canaanite Words in the Amarna Letters: Some Methodological Remarks," *Dutch Studies—Near Eastern Languages and Literatures* 5.1–2 (2003): esp. 13–15 (repeated almost verbatim from "Amarna Glosses") and 28–30; and "Canaano-Akkadian: Some Methodological Requisites for the Study of the Amarna Letters from Canaan," forthcoming in *In the Footsteps of the Hyksos*, ed. M. Bietak and O. Goldwasser, esp. §§1.1, 1.4–5, 3.1–2, and 4.1. I am grateful to Shlomo Izre'el for providing me with a copy of the last article, hereafter referred to as "Methodological Requisites," in advance of publication; this article is currently available on line, courtesy of its author, in an earlier version titled "Some Methodological Requisites for the Study of the Amarna Jargon" (originally submitted for publication in *Tell el-Amarna, 1887–1987*, ed. B. J. Beitzel and G. D. Young), at *http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/semitic/izreel1987.rtf*). On the nature of Canaano-Akkadian, see also W. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1992), xviii–xxii, and Rainey, *CAT* II: 1–16, with a survey of earlier literature.

3. Gershevitch's coinage and definition of the term "alloglottography," which he invented for the writing of Old Persian by means of Elamite, are found in "The Alloglottography of Old Persian," *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1979: 138. I owe this and other references to Gershevitch's work to Matthew Stolper.

for my hypothesis, I shall first survey some of the features of the Canaanite scribes' usage that appear to be symptoms of their "hybridization" of Canaanite with Akkadian. Second, I shall address the question whether this hybrid was a language or a means of writing one; third, proceeding on the theory that the Canaano-Akkadian hybrid is the Akkadographic writing of Canaanite, I shall outline a model to explain how the Canaanite scribes' use of cuneiform might have worked; and last, I shall explore the question of how the Canaano-Akkadian writing system might have developed, based on the evidence of cuneiform texts found in Canaan, in particular those that may reflect writing instruction.

The texts under consideration in this inquiry consist mainly of those Amarna letters that were written by scribes from Canaan, with the addition of the few extant letters addressed *to* Canaanite rulers, and these Amarna letters are supplemented by a diverse assortment of roughly 50 tablets and fragments written by Canaanite scribes and found at sites in Canaan.[4] The tablets and fragments found in Canaan span about three centuries as well as numerous different sites, and many of them are fragmentary or barely legible. Only at a few sites, notably Taanach and Kumidi, have remnants of what were clearly archival groups turned up, comprising letters along with other kinds of texts. Thus the assemblage of Late Bronze Age cuneiform tablets found to date in Canaan provides rather little material that is directly comparable with the fairly coherent assemblage of Canaanite letters found at Amarna, although it is of great importance for studying the use of cuneiform in Canaan (on which see the final section of this article). The relative paucity of tablets found in Canaan, and of Canaanite tablets from periods preceding and following the Amarna period itself (mid-fourteenth century), somewhat constrains the scope and approach of investigation; the principal focus is necessarily on the Amarna tablets, and the perspective is for the most part synchronic.

Prior to commencing the discussion, it is important to observe that designations such as "the Canaanite scribes" and "the Canaanite-Akkadian hybrid" are convenient simplifications. Study of the tablets written by scribes from Canaan suggests that there were as many Canaanite cuneiform idiolects as there were Canaanite cuneiform scribes, and the work of

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4. The Amarna tablets (EA) are cited on the basis of J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln*, pt. 1: *Die Texte* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915), supplemented by Rainey, *El Amarna Tablets 359–379*, 2nd ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978); references to copies of the tablets are found in these works. Improved readings of various passages are given in numerous sources, especially Moran, *Amarna Letters*, and Rainey, *CAT.*

Tablets and other artifacts inscribed in cuneiform which have been found at sites in Canaan, from all periods, are now conveniently catalogued in W. Horowitz, T. Oshima, and S. Sanders, "A Bibliographical List of Cuneiform Inscriptions from Canaan, Palestine/Philistia, and the Land of Israel," *JAOS* 122 (2002): 753–66. Within their total count of eighty-nine items, the number of cuneiform tablets and fragments dating to the Late Bronze Age is about forty, coming from a dozen sites located in Canaan. Their list omits, however, tablets found at sites outside present-day Israel and Palestine but within ancient Canaan, in particular Pella and Kumidi (Kamid el-Loz), as well as tablets "found" in private collections or on the antiquities market which, though lacking archaeological provenience, can with high probability be attributed to sites in Canaan. At Kumidi, the seat of an Egyptian commissioner during the Amarna period, seven Amarna-period tablets have been found, including two letters sent from Egypt; see G. Wilhelm, "Die Keilschrifttafeln aus Kāmid el-Lōz," in *Frühe Phöniker im Libanon: 20 Jahre deutsche Ausgrabungen in Kāmid el-Lōz*, ed. R. Hachmann (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1983), 40–42. Two more tablets attributable to Kumidi have surfaced outside of the excavations; in publishing the latest of these two, J. Huehnergard, "A Byblos Letter, Probably from Kāmid el-Lōz," *ZA* 86 (1996): 98, provides a convenient bibliography of the Kumidi tablets. At Pella, whence two Amarna letters were written (EA 255 and 256), two Late Bronze Age tablet fragments have been found; they are published by J. Black, "Two Cuneiform Tablets," in A. W. McNicoll et al., *Pella in Jordan* 2 (Sydney: Meditarch, 1992), 299–301. Finally, a tablet recently found in a private collection which, on the basis of its language as well as its sender, must originate from within Canaan, is the letter published by D. Arnaud and M. Salvini, "Une lettre du roi de Beyrouth au roi d'Ougarit de l'époque dite 'd'El-Amarna,'" *SMEA* 42 (2000): 5–17. Adding all these to the list assembled by Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders would raise the total to about fifty tablets and fragments from Late Bronze Age Canaan.

William Moran and his successors has shown that these scribes did not constitute a unitary group, either linguistically or in terms of their training.[5] Unitary designations are employed here as shorthand, for the sake of efficient expression, but are not meant to collapse the differences among various text groups, scribes, and their uses of written language. Another prefatory note is that when speaking of Late Bronze Age Canaanite, we are speaking of a largely unknown language, the characteristics of which must be inferred on the basis of contemporary Ugaritic, later Hebrew and Phoenician, and the very same array of Canaanite glosses and "Canaanizations" in the cuneiform tablets written by Canaanite scribes which are the object of investigation; when describing these Canaanizations, therefore, it is often necessary to draw on Western Semitic languages generally, rather than Canaanite specifically.

FEATURES OF "HYBRIDIZATION"

Cuneiform texts written by Canaanite scribes exhibit, besides the outright substitution of Canaanite words for Akkadian ones, a variety of features that blend Canaanite and Akkadian morphology and grammar. Many of these features, which tend to be somewhat inconsistent and variable, involve (1) employing Akkadian words and morphemes according to the rules for their Canaanite counterparts, (2) collapsing Akkadian grammatical distinctions that did not exist in Canaanite, and (3) grafting Canaanite morphology onto Akkadian words. The following paragraphs survey examples of such features, with references to Rainey, *CAT* I–III, where text citations supporting the description of each feature are found.[6]

(1) The Akkadian negatives *ul* and *lā* were sometimes interchanged and employed in accord with the rules for their West Semitic (functional) counterparts *lā* and *ʾal*, rather than in accord with Akkadian rules (*CAT* III: 209–26). Similarly, the Akkadian interrogative pronouns *mannu* and *mīnu*, "who" and "what," were sometimes interchanged, so that the word chosen sounded like the appropriate Canaanite interrogative: thus, Akkadian *mīnu* was used to mean "who" and *mannu* was used to mean "what," in accord with the vowelling of their Canaanite counterparts *mīya* and *mah(/man(nv))* (*CAT* I, ch. 6, esp. pp. 105, 111–12). Akkadian prepositions were sometimes employed in functions that they did not perform in Akkadian, but that were appropriate to their Canaanite equivalents. For instance, Akkadian *ana*, "to, for," was occasionally used where West Semitic languages would use *l-* while Akkadian would use *ina*; conversely, Akkadian *ina*, "in, from," was used in the functions of West Semitic *b-* as well as in its standard Akkadian functions (*CAT* III: 12–14, 21, 31–35). The Akkadian temporal conjunction *inūma* was employed for the functions of the West Semitic subordinating conjunction *kī*.[7] And, while the Akkadian coordinating conjunction -*ma* was completely ignored, the conjunction *u*, which in Akkadian expresses only simple coordination, was employed for all the functions of West Semitic *w*: it was used to express both simple and logical coordination, as well as serving as the so-called "*waw*-consecutive"

5. Pioneering work in the study of distinct corpora within the Canaanite Amarna tablets was done by Moran in his 1950 dissertation, "A Syntactical Study of the Dialect of Byblos as Reflected in the Amarna Tablets," now conveniently reprinted in Moran, *Amarna Studies: Collected Writings*, ed. J. Huehnergard and S. Izre'el (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 1–130. In addition to the Byblos letters, those from several other cities in Canaan have received separate treatment; references to such studies can be found in Rainey, *CAT* II: 1–16, and Izre'el, "Methodological Requisites," §1.2.

6. These examples largely recapitulate those given in my article reviewing Rainey, *CAT* (cited above); see pp. 198–203 of that review. When writing it I was unaware of Izre'el's thorough and concise description of Canaano-Akkadian in a book by that title (*Canaano-Akkadian* [Munich: LINCOM Europa, 1998]), which treats most of the features discussed in this section.

7. See *CAT* III: 74–94, and cf. my review thereof, 202.

(*CAT* III: 97–108). The occasional Akkadian noun whose Canaanite equivalent had the opposite gender could be construed according to the gender of its Canaanite counterpart rather than its gender in Akkadian.[8]

Also under this rubric comes the Canaanite scribes' usage of the Akkadian particle *umma*, which in Akkadian is used to introduce direct speech and therefore introduces the sender in the opening formula of letters. This particle was employed only in the latter function by Canaanite scribes; moreover, the introduction of the sender with *umma* was not always properly concluded with enclitic *-ma*, and the name or designation of the sender followed *umma* in the genitive case, not the nominative as in Akkadian; all of which leads to the conclusion that the Canaanite scribes treated *umma* not as a particle but as a noun, the equivalent of *taḫummu*, "message," in Ugaritic epistolary formula (*CAT* III: 174–80). In effect, *UM-MA* was an Akkadogram for a noun meaning "message."[9]

(2) The Akkadian dative pronominal suffixes were ignored, having no equivalents in Canaanite, and the dative was instead expressed either with accusative suffixes, or by means of the preposition *ana* followed by oblique personal pronouns, in conformity with Canaanite grammar. Other distinctions in the Akkadian paradigms for pronominal suffixes were similarly collapsed in accord with the corresponding Canaanite paradigms: a single set of 3mpl. and 3fpl. suffixes, *-šunu* and *-šina*, and a single 3fs. suffix, *-ši*, were employed on both nouns and verbs, and all Akkadian 1cpl. suffixes were ignored in favor of native Canaanite *-nu*.[10]

(3) The strangest feature of Canaanite cuneiform texts is the scribes' habit of creating hybrid Canaanite-Akkadian verb forms by supplying inflected Akkadian verbs with Canaanite prefixes and suffixes.[11] They would take an Akkadian 3ms. form as a base, either an *iprus*, *iparras*, or *iptaras* form, and apply Canaanite affixes to it. The Akkadian form that served as the base did not determine the tense of the resulting verb, rather, tense as well as person and mode were determined by the Canaanite affixes. Thus, for example, the Akkadian 3ms. present-future form *illak* was provided with the Canaanite 3ms. prefix *yi-* and preterite zero suffix, producing the form *yi-la-ak*, which functioned as a preterite, meaning "he went"; likewise, applying the Canaanite 3ms. prefix *yi-* and preterite zero suffix to

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8. *CAT* I, ch. 7, esp. pp. 126–29; for the explanation of this phenomenon, see W. van Soldt, review of Rainey, *CAT*, in *JAOS* 118 (1998): 596.

9. P.-R. Berger likewise explains *UM-MA* as an Akkadogram for Ugaritic *taḫam* in the letters from Alašia found at Ugarit, which date about a century later than the Amarna letters, in "Die Alašia-Briefe Ugaritica 5, Noug. Nrn. 22–24," *UF* 1 (1969): 217–21; the implicit postulate that Ugaritic, or a relative, was used by scribes of Alašia deserves comment! See also W. G. E. Watson (to whom I am grateful for supplying references to his and Berger's articles), "Delimiting Ugaritic *thm*: A Brief Report," *UF* 30 (1998): 745–49. Berger's explanation of *UM-MA* seems to have been ignored by Z. Cochavi-Rainey in her reedition of the letters from Alašia, *The Alashia Texts from the 14th and 13th Centuries B.C.E.* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2003), for it goes unmentioned in the book, although Berger's article appears in the list of references (p. 121; the letters from Alašia to Ugarit are presented on pp. 43–49, the particle *umma* is briefly surveyed on pp. 101–2, and the introductory formulae on pp. 113–15). Huehnergard objects to explaining *UM-MA* as an Akkadogram for *thm* in texts from Ugarit on the grounds that *umma* is also followed by the genitive in Western Peripheral Akkadian texts from other areas, therefore the construction *umma* + genitive probably "reflects a common WPA tradition in which the original nature of *umma* . . . had been misunderstood"; but his reference to *UM-MA* alternating with *A-WA-AT* in the Hittite texts would actually seem to support the idea that *UM-MA* functioned as an Akkadogram standing for a noun meaning "message" or "word," however it acquired this function and however widespread the construction became (*The Akkadian of Ugarit* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989], 144–45, n. 112; I am obliged to John Huehnergard for directing me to this citation).

10. *CAT* I, ch. 4; see further my review thereof, 198.

11. The system of creating "hybrid" verb forms is described and exhaustively illustrated by Rainey in *CAT* II, ch. 1: 13–15, and ch. 4; their use according to the rules of the West Semitic verb system is discussed in ch. 10.

the Akkadian present-future *iqabbi* produced *yi-qa-bi*, which functioned as preterite meaning "he did [not] say."[12] The Akkadian 3ms. preterite form *iṣṣur* was provided with the Canaanite 1cs. aleph prefix (zero, in cuneiform) and present-future suffix *-u*, producing the form *iṣ-ṣú-ru*, which functioned as a present-future, meaning "I am guarding"; similarly, applying the Canaanite 3ms. prefix *yi-* and present-future suffix *-u* to the Akkadian preterite *ikšud* yielded *yi-ik-šu-du*, which functioned as a present-future meaning "he arrives."[13] And the Akkadian 3ms. infixed-*t* preterite form *ilteqe* was provided with the Canaanite 3ms. prefix *yi-* and present-future suffix *-u*, producing present-future *yi-il-te-qú*, meaning "he takes"; the same form plus the Canaanite volitive suffix *-a* produced volitive *il-te$_9$-qa*, meaning "may he [not] take."[14]

This kind of hybridization was applied to Akkadian verbal adjectives as well: Akkadian *paris* forms served as bases to which the suffixes of the Canaanite suffix conjugation (usually termed perfective) were added, yielding forms such as *na-ṣir-ta*, meaning "you guard," composed of the Akkadian verbal adjective *naṣir* plus the Canaanite 2ms. suffix *-ta* (EA 112: 9, cited in *CAT* II: 287). The paradigm of the Canaanite suffix conjugation was even grafted onto prefixed Akkadian verb forms, resulting in even more peculiar creations, in which both Akkadian and Canaanite suffixes might be employed: for example, the Akkadian present-future *ibašši* plus the Akkadian 1cs. suffix *-āku* were combined into *i-ba-aš-ša$_{10}$-ku*, meaning "I am," and the Akkadian preterite *izziz* plus the Canaanite 1cs. suffix *-ti* were combined into *iz-zi-iz-ti*, meaning "I stood" (or, "I was stationed"; see *CAT* II: 284 and 319–23 for citations of these and related forms). Here is a table illustrating the formation of such "hybrid" verb forms:

	syllabic spelling		Can. prefix	Akk. base	Can. suffix	form intended
a.	*yi-la-ak* (EA 197: 26)	=	*y-* +	*illak* (3ms. pres.-fut.)	(+ 0)	3ms. preterite
b.	*iṣ-ṣú-ru* (EA 220: 15)	=	*ʾ-* +	*iṣṣur* (3ms. pret.)	+ *-u*	1cs. present-future
c.	*yi-il-te-qú* (EA 254: 25)	=	*y-* +	*ilteqe* (3ms. infixed-t pret.)	+ *-u*	3ms. present-future
d.	*il-te$_9$-qa* (EA 84: 34)	=	{*y-* +}	*ilteqe* (3ms. infixed-t pret.)	+ *-a*	3ms. volitive
e.	*ti-iš-mu-na* (EA 82: 11)	=	*t-* +	*išme* (3ms. pret.)	+ *-ūna*	3mpl. present-future
f.	*na-ṣir-ta* (EA 112: 9)	=		*naṣir* (verbal adj. base)	+ *-ta*	2ms. suffix conjugation
g.	*iz-zi-iz-ti* (EA 296: 28)	=		*izziz* (3ms. preterite)	+ *-ti*	1cs. suffix conjugation

Along with these invented forms the Canaanite scribes also wrote both normal Akkadian forms, like 3mpl. present-future *ippušū*, "they do," and 1cs. predicative *marṣāku*, "I am sick," and real Canaanite verb forms, like *ia-ti-na*, "may he give," and *ia-ṣa-at*, "it (fem.)

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12. These two verb forms occur in EA 197: 26 and 234: 16, respectively, and the passages are cited in *CAT* II: 223 and *CAT* I: 116.

13. EA 220: 15 and 227: 15, cited in *CAT* II: 229 and 54, respectively. Moran also remarks on durative (present-future) *yi-ik-šu-du* in EA 227: 15, in *Amarna Letters*, 289, n. 8.

14. EA 254: 24–26 and 84: 34–35, cited in *CAT* II: 99–100.

went forth."[15] All these diverse verb forms, Akkadian, Canaanite, and hybrid, tend to be placed not at the end of the clause in accord with standard Akkadian verb-final word order, but instead where Canaanite syntax would demand, often in first position in the clause.

HYBRID LANGUAGE OR AKKADOGRAPHIC CODE?

This array of composite forms and usages prompts asking who could have communicated using this hybrid of Canaanite and Akkadian—could it have been spoken, or was it used only in writing? If anyone spoke it, who could have understood what he was saying?

On practical grounds the postulate that this Canaano-Akkadian hybrid was used in speech seems as unlikely as it is unnecessary. Consider the practice of applying Canaanite affixes to already-inflected Akkadian verbs, yielding composite forms that existed in no one's own language. These and the multitude of other features characteristic of Canaano-Akkadian combine to make nonsense in terms of either Canaanite or Akkadian; how could speakers of either language have interpreted words like *yi-il-te-qú* and *iz-zi-iz-ti*, and disentangled the mix-up or misusage (at first blush haphazard) of negative particles, pronouns, prepositions, and conjunctions? What the Canaanite cuneiform scribes wrote would have been unintelligible to speakers of Canaanite, hardly comprehensible for native speakers of Akkadian, and difficult at best for the Canaanite scribes' colleagues from Egypt and elsewhere, who, like them, used Akkadian for writing in cuneiform.[16] Spoken Canaano-Akkadian would surely have sounded as absurd as it was obscure in the ears of each of these groups. The creation of such a hybrid language is not impossible, for spoken hybrid languages having similar characteristics are indeed known (see further below); but who needed to speak a hybrid of Canaanite and Akkadian? Considering that Canaanites and Egyptians, in particular, had interacted directly with each other for centuries, while any Akkadian speakers in Canaan would have to have been competent in a local language as well, it is much simpler to suppose that these people communicated orally using each other's languages, through interpreters when necessary, rather than positing that they compromised on the question of whose language to speak by blending them.[17]

If it was not spoken, could Canaano-Akkadian have been a language invented for use in writing only? But again, who needed it, for communication with whom?

The Canaano-Akkadian hybrid was written almost exclusively by Canaanite scribes. With occasional significant exceptions, discussed below, no one outside Canaan who wrote letters addressed to Canaanite rulers wrote them in Canaano-Akkadian; in other words, Canaanite scribes did not *read* tablets that were written in the same hybrid language in which they themselves *wrote*. Meanwhile, letters the Canaanite scribes wrote could not have been read as written. No scribe reading such a letter, whether to Pharaoh or his staff, to a local Canaanite ruler, or to any other addressee, would have read out loud what was actually written on the tablet; certainly he would not have read those hybrid verb forms out loud, unless perhaps for comic effect! He would necessarily have rendered what he read into the

15. These four verb forms occur in, respectively, EA 287: 19, 106: 23, 83: 31, and 227: 11; the passages are cited in *CAT* II: 218, 283, 68, 288.

16. Moran's assessment is similar; *Amarna Letters*, xxii.

17. D. O. Edzard observes, à propos of this very issue, that the story of Wen-Amun mentions an interpreter only upon the protagonist's arrival in Alašia. He poses the question whether Wen-Amun could get by with Egyptian up to that point, or whether he knew a little Canaanite too; "Amarna und die Archive seiner Korrespondenten zwischen Ugarit und Gaza," *Biblical Archaeology Today* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985), 254.

language appropriate for his audience. Thus, no matter who read a Canaano-Akkadian letter to whom, it was not read in Canaano-Akkadian. In sum, this hybrid was not used for mutual communication even in writing.

The hybrid combining Canaanite with Akkadian was not, therefore, really a language, but an artifact of writing in cuneiform. It looks as if it were Canaanized Akkadian, because the sign sequences usually spell Akkadian words, just as some Mesopotamian texts would look as if they were written in Sumerian, were it not for an occasional Akkadian suffix or word.

These paragraphs will provoke the objection that situations of language contact have in fact given rise to a multitude of diverse mixed languages, including ones that structurally resemble Canaano-Akkadian in at least some features, and that therefore Canaano-Akkadian falls readily into a class of contact languages and should be understood as one. The socio-linguistic situation of Egyptian-ruled Canaan, where Akkadian had already attained currency as a written language in the Middle Bronze Age and Hurrian was introduced in the Late Bronze, would appear to have been an excellent locus for development of a contact language, and other known hybrid languages would seem to provide good analogies on the basis of which to explain Canaano-Akkadian. However, the existence of a particular type of analogy is not by itself sufficient to show that this analogy is valid for the case under discussion, and the explanation of Canaano-Akkadian on the contact-language model is flawed in several respects.

First, the circumstances of language contact in Late Bronze Age Canaan do not really fit the typical parameters for mixed-language genesis very well, and to the extent that they may fit, the kind of mixed Canaano-Akkadian language ostensibly represented in writing is not the kind of contact language that is likely to have emerged under those circumstances. In a recent survey work on the subject of language contact, Sarah Thomason provides a typology of contact languages (or mixed languages).[18] She classifies such languages into three main types, pidgins, creoles, and bilingual mixed languages, and she defines each of these types and delineates the typical circumstances of their genesis (with the caveat that the diversity of real mixed languages resists conforming to types), as follows. Pidgins and creoles arise in situations involving groups who speak two or more different languages, do not share a common language, and need to communicate with each other; for various reasons, they do not fully learn each other's languages and instead develop a new language, usually deriving most of its vocabulary from the language of one of the groups in contact and deriving its grammar, through a process of "negotiation," from all of the languages in contact. The

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18. *Language Contact: An Introduction* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Univ. Press, 2001). This typology is introduced on p. 60 and explained in chs. 7–8; my summary of Thomason's definitions of contact-language types and their genesis is drawn principally from the discussion on pp. 159–60, 174–78, and 197–98. The same typology is employed in structuring a collection of case studies edited by Thomason, *Contact Languages: A Wider Perspective* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), and, with some variation, in J. Arends, P. Muysken, and N. Smith, eds., *Pidgins and Creoles: An Introduction* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995). It should be noted that terminology, classification, and definitions remain matters of debate (as Thomason repeatedly cautions) and are handled rather differently by different scholars in the field. For example, the editors of the last-cited book as well as the contributors to another collection of case studies, P. Bakker and M. Mous, eds., *Mixed Languages: 15 Case Studies in Language Intertwining* (Amsterdam: IFOTT, 1994), use the term "mixed language" to denote only the type that Thomason calls bilingual mixed languages, and distinguish this type from the category "contact language" (see, e.g., Bakker and Mous's introduction to *Mixed Languages*, pp. 1–11); however, the structure of classification and definition remains largely similar.

distinction between a pidgin, which is no one's native language, and a creole, which is the native language of a group of speakers, hinges on the circumstances of their development and use: the former emerges when a common language is needed only for limited purposes, for communication among the groups in contact but not within any group, and therefore it develops limited lexical and structural resources; the latter emerges when a common language is needed for all purposes, not only among but within (one of) the groups in contact, and therefore it develops a full range of expressive resources (pidgins may, of course, become nativized and develop into creoles). The third type of contact language, a bilingual mixed language, is the creation of persons fluent in both of the source languages who develop a new language, using the lexical and structural resources of both source languages, as a manifestation of distinct ethnic identity. Thomason emphasizes that all mixed languages of this type share the sociolinguistic feature that they are "symbols of their speech communities—either badges of retention of part of a formerly more independent ethnic identity, or indicators of a newly independent ethnic identity" (*Language Contact*, 218). Pidgins and creoles develop in situations where groups who need to communicate with each other have no shared language, and bilingual mixed languages develop as the in-group languages of ethnically distinct bilingual communities.

How does Canaano-Akkadian fit into this typology? The circumstances of its emergence and use appear to resemble most closely those under which pidgins emerge, insofar as Canaano-Akkadian was used for limited communicative purposes, among groups speaking different languages, and never became anyone's native language. Yet it does not partake of the nature of a pidgin, in that its lexical and structural resources are not intrinsically limited (albeit some scribes were more capable of using these resources than others).[19] Moreover, the situation in which Canaano-Akkadian emerged can hardly have been one in which the groups in contact had no shared language, which is one of the conditions for pidgin/creole genesis. As pointed out already, it is unlikely that, over the course of centuries of interaction, Canaanites, Egyptians, and other participants in the Late Bronze contact situation generally failed to learn each other's languages (only some, not all, members of each group need have learned the languages of other groups to violate the condition indicated). Structurally, Canaano-Akkadian most closely resembles bilingual mixed languages, but it does not share the sociolinguistic character of such languages: certainly Canaano-Akkadian was used almost exclusively by members of a distinct group, namely, Canaanite scribes, but they did not use it as a symbol of their distinctive identity, simply as their job. Thus, the circumstances under which Canaano-Akkadian came into being are not such as to have produced Canaano-Akkadian. Considered as a contact language, it appears to be a typological oxymoron. What is more, whereas other mixed languages, of all types, are attested as spoken languages, Canaano-Akkadian is attested only as a written medium of communication. That is of course practically a tautological statement when speaking of an extinct language. But to state the obvious fact that there exists direct evidence only for the writing of Canaano-Akkadian, not for speaking it, is to point out a fundamental difference between it and the contact languages to which it has been compared: contact languages develop as spoken languages. No known pidgin, creole, or bilingual mixed language has been developed and used

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19. Izre'el discusses the question of how to classify Canaano-Akkadian, and likewise determines that it is neither a pidgin nor a creole; he explores other terms and classifications as well (in particular "interlanguage," suggested by Gianto [see above, n. 2], which Izre'el rejects), and settles on describing it as a "mixed language" ("Methodological Requisites," §1.5).

exclusively as a written language.[20] Therefore, in order for the analogy explaining it as a contact language to be valid, Canaano-Akkadian would have to have been a spoken language.

And indeed S. Izre'el argues at length for the proposition that Canaano-Akkadian was spoken, as well as for analyzing it as a mixed language, in a forthcoming article ("Methodological Requisites"). In favor of the proposition that it was spoken, he argues that certain spelling outputs must reflect the phonology of Canaano-Akkadian speech, and that examples of morphological creativity in the verb system are evidence that Canaano-Akkadian was a living, spoken language (§2). Regarding the nature of this language, he claims that the Canaanite scribes thought of it as a dialect of Akkadian, supporting this claim on the basis of their use of fixed Akkadian formulae, "Akkadianisms," i.e., standard Akkadian forms within an otherwise Canaano-Akkadian text, and forms he identifies as pseudo-corrections. In addition, he adduces their practice of marking entirely Canaanite words with the gloss mark, as evidence that these scribes regarded words in their own language as foreign to the language they were writing (§3). Furthermore, he emphasizes that "variation is an inherent characteristic of the language of the Amarna Canaanite scribes," as it often is in situations involving two different linguistic systems (§1.5), and he devotes much space to describing and proposing rules for such variation within Canaano-Akkadian (§§4, 5, and 6). On this and other criteria, according to Izre'el, Canaano-Akkadian is structured the same way as spoken mixed languages (§1.5); being fully analogous to other known mixed languages, it must have been one.[21]

While Izre'el's arguments merit serious consideration, many of them appear to me to be logically flawed. Those that are predicated on spellings and morphological creativity are best addressed in specific terms in the context of elaborating my own hypothesis, below (in the section titled "How They Wrote Canaanite in Cuneiform"); for the nonce, let the following points suffice. First, the arguments for spelling reflecting phonology entail postulates about the phonology of the substrate Canaanite dialects spoken by the scribes who wrote Canaano-Akkadian. That is to say, they are circular and rely on unknowns, since those Canaanite dialects are contemporaneously attested only through the medium of the alleged Canaano-Akkadian mixed language. Second, those of Izre'el's examples that cannot be accounted for equally well by orthographic mechanisms are simply too few to sustain the case in favor of Canaano-Akkadian having been spoken. As to the arguments concerning the nature of Canaano-Akkadian which are based on the use of Akkadianizing forms and Canaanite glosses, these rely on debatable assertions about those features. Glosses in Canaanite may function rather to indicate the language of reading, as discussed further below

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20. Among the approximately 500 entries catalogued by N. Smith, "An Annotated List of Creoles, Pidgins, and Mixed Languages," in Arends et al., eds., *Pidgins and Creoles*, 331–74, the only mixed language that is identified as "possibly only a written form of language" is Amarna Akkadian, which is entered together with "Amarna Akkadian-Hurrian Pidgin" under the category "mixed jargons/pidgins" (363). Otherwise, all of the several hundred pidgins, creoles, and mixed languages that Smith catalogues are or were spoken languages; none was developed for use in writing only. Canaano-Akkadian is the only example of a mixed language exclusively used in writing that is discussed in *Mixed Languages*, ed. Bakker and Mous; it is treated in a brief contribution to that book by M. Kossmann ("Amarna-Akkadian as a Mixed Language," 169–73), who doubts that it was spoken (171). Thomason observes that, until recently, pidgins and creoles have been universally unwritten languages (*Language Contact*, 162).

21. The foregoing two citations to §1.5 of "Methodological Requisites" are to the second of the subsections so numbered in the copy of this article with which Izre'el graciously provided me in advance of publication. Considerations of space compel me to drastically abridge Izre'el's arguments, as well as my own counter-arguments; while this necessitates simplification and omission of detail, I hope to have avoided misrepresenting the points he articulates.

in this section, while the appearance of "Akkadianisms," properly-spelt Akkadian words, and Akkadian formulae within Canaano-Akkadian texts is more simply explained as the outcome of scribal training—letter-opening formulae, in particular, would have been phrases for which fixed conventional spellings were learned. In general, if the features in question can be efficiently accounted for as products of scribal practices and spelling conventions, such a theory (predicated on what we know to have occurred, i.e., cuneiform instruction) is preferable to the fairly complicated theory (predicated on the proposition to be demonstrated, i.e., Canaano-Akkadian speech) involved in accounting for them as products of speaking Canaano-Akkadian.

The complications multiply when Izre'el develops rules to account for variation within Canaano-Akkadian, considered as "the language of the scribal community of Canaan" (§4.1). He posits that the letters these scribes wrote "form a continuum of lectal varieties" (ibid.), and describes the corpus of texts they wrote as the "community" (or, many interrelated communities, presumably one per Canaanite town; see §5.2.1, referring to the corpus of Byblos letters). Treating texts in a corpus as if they were analogous to members of a speech community is methodologically dubious, but even if it were actually the scribes, rather than the texts, who are considered to constitute the community (as sometimes appears from the discussion in subsections of §5), the implicit proposition that a scribe would choose among different lects each time he set stylus to clay, when in every instance "the sociolinguistic situation was one and the same" (§4.1), is problematic: inasmuch as the context of communication varied little, why shouldn't lectal variation be expected within texts as well as among them? If the equation of letters with lects multiplies entities beyond necessity, the rules proposed to govern lectal variation do so to a greater degree. In addition to being optional (§4.2.2), so that their inconsistent application tends to entail making more of them, these rules do not appear to account for the observable data very well, and the process of inferring what they are appears to involve circular logic. If the rules inferred from attested spellings provide that, for instance, the same spelling of the 1cs. form of *epēšu* is yielded both by (Akkadian) prefix *a* + stem *īpuš* and by (Canaanite) prefix $\emptyset$ (for ') + stem *īpuš*, so that the "underlying prefixes" can only be determined through "knowledge of their attribution to a specific lect" (§5.2.2.1), then the postulated lects and variation among them are required to serve as premises for the interpretation of the very data adduced as evidence in support of lectal variation.

Furthermore, after extensive investigation of 1cs. verb forms in the Byblos letters has resulted in identifying "two lect-dependent variants of the 1SG prefix," on the basis of which Izre'el divides the letters into two groups according to this lectal feature, it turns out that about half of the letters cannot be included, "either because there are no 1SG forms in them or because all occurring 1SG forms are ambiguous with regard to their prefix" (§5.2.3). A model that accounts only for rather more than half of the available data does not seem to possess adequate explanatory power. It is not especially strengthened by Izre'el's repeated admonitions to the effect that the operation of the rules he has inferred may be imperceptible, or even that the observable data may be misleading in relation to the rules supposed to govern them[22] —how can one ascertain the validity of rules whose operation does not have

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22. Such statements are made in, for example, §§6.2 and 6.4; e.g., "the surface structure of verbs with either of these two variant prefixes may be similar or identical" (§6.2)—the analogy from a modern spoken language (n. 34), in which the phenomena can actually be tested, is applicable only on the assumption that Canaano-Akkadian was spoken the way it was written—and "it may well happen that a text using one of these variant prefixes would appear to be using the other" (§6.4).

regular and discernible effects? The principle of lectal variation begins to look rather like a rationale for the failure of the data to conform systematically to the rules proposed under that model. A theory involving the availability of different acceptable spelling conventions would account for the observed variation in the spelling of 1cs. forms more efficiently than Izre'el's theory of lectal variation operating on verb inflection in spoken Canaano-Akkadian. Altogether, I find the proposition that Canaano-Akkadian was a spoken mixed language to be poorly supported by the evidence and arguments adduced in its favor, while the objections raised earlier to identifying it as a mixed language, spoken or written, still stand.

But if they weren't writing in Canaanite-accented Akkadian, what *were* the Canaanite scribes writing in cuneiform? They peppered their tablets with clues, of which the most obvious, besides the Canaanite garb in which verbs tend to appear, are words spelled out syllabically in Canaanite, in particular the glosses.[23]

In the tablets written by Canaanite scribes, syllabically spelled Canaanite words, typically signalled by a gloss mark, may follow and translate ("gloss") either a logogram or a syllabically spelled Akkadian word, as well as occurring independently without translating anything.[24] Hurrian glosses are similarly employed in some of the Amarna letters from Syria; meanwhile, among other more-or-less contemporary examples of the use of glosses, Ugaritic glosses occur in Akkadian tablets written at Ugarit, and both Hurrian and West Semitic glosses occur in the tablets found at Alalaḫ Level IV.[25] That such glosses attest to the native language of the writers of these texts has been considered self-evident. But the reason

23. P. Artzi surveyed the phenomenon of "glosses" in Levantine cuneiform texts, distinguishing among different practices involving the use of the "gloss wedge," in "The Glosses in the El-Amarna Documents," *Bar-Ilan* I (1963): 24–57 (Hebrew). Artzi criticized the term "gloss" as an inappropriate descriptor for most cases (24, n. 1; 49); it remains, however, conventional to denote as "glosses" words that translate or explain other words (or graphic sequences) in a local language, as well as words in a local language that are identified as such by the "gloss wedge."

24. Izre'el provides a list of all "extra-systemic" Northwest Semitic words, including glosses, found in the Amarna letters and related tablets from Canaan, in "A New Dictionary of Northwest Semitic and the Amarna Glosses" (review of J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling's *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* [Leiden: Brill, 1995]), in *Past Links: Studies in the Languages and Cultures of the Ancient Near East*, ed. S. Izre'el et al. (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 421–29; the characterization "extra-systemic" and the categories of items included in the list are explained on p. 423. See also the glossary in D. Sivan, *Grammatical Analysis and Glossary of the Northwest Semitic Vocables in Akkadian Texts of the 15th–13th C. B.C. from Canaan and Syria* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), which includes, however, words within proper nouns as well, and collects words occurring in the texts from Alalaḫ and Ugarit in addition to those in the Canaanite Amarna letters.

25. On Ugaritic glosses at Ugarit, see J. Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), esp. 5–10 and 204–8. Hurrian glosses in the Alalaḫ IV tablets, as well as other features of linguistic "interference," have recently been discussed by I. Márquez Rowe, "Notes on the Hurro-Akkadian of Alalaḫ in the Mid-Second Millennium B.C.E.," in *Past Links* (see n. 24), 63–78, esp. 67 (with previous bibliography). West Semitic words and glosses occur sporadically in the Alalaḫ IV corpus, and some of these are noted by D. Arnaud, "Le dialecte d'Alalah: un examen préliminaire," *AuOr* 16 (1998): 143–86.

One example of a form that has been understood as West Semitic, or West-Semitized, is *wa-šar-šu*, "he released him," in AlT 15: 4, which I have taken to be a West Semitic perfective ("Social Stratification of Alalah Under the Mittani Empire" [Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1997], 287, n. 61, with references to earlier literature; so also Arnaud, "Le dialecte d'Alalah," 180); however, Márquez-Rowe interprets this form instead as an Akkadian permansive employed under the influence of Hurrian grammar ("Hurro-Akkadian of Alalaḫ," 76), while J. Huehnergard emends it to ‹ú-›wa-šer₉-šu (personal communication). If M. Dietrich and O. Loretz's readings and derivations are correct, the treaty AlT 2, between Alalaḫ and Tunip, contains both a West Semitic gloss, *up-sú-qà*, "are cut off" (dual), and a Hurrian gloss, *ḫa-at-ḫa-ar-ri*, "breach," as well as the West Semitic verb form *yu-dá(-šu)*, "recognized (it)"; see the notes on ll. 30, 33, and 50 in their re-edition of this text, "Der Vertrag zwischen Ir-Addu von Tunip und Niqmepa von Mukiš," in *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons*, ed. G. D. Young et al. (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1997), 211–42.

for writing the glosses has not; indeed, the question why glosses in Canaanite or Hurrian were employed in letters addressed to Egypt has prompted some curious theories. Recently, Izre'el has argued that the scribe who wrote the tablet would sometimes serve as the messenger who carried it to its destination and read it to its addressee, and according to his argument the glosses are evidence of this, for they would have served as the scribe's notations to himself to indicate the correct reading of what he had written.[26] A contrasting explanation is offered by K. van der Toorn, who has suggested that the Canaanite glosses were meant to facilitate the reading of the letter to the Canaanite ruler by a scribe other than the one who wrote it, in order that the ruler sending the letter could check its contents before it was dispatched (the same explanation would presumably apply to Hurrian glosses).[27]

Both of these explanations rest on the assumption that scribes competent in Canaanite and Hurrian were not normally employed at the Egyptian court. Both, furthermore, lack general applicability, solve part of one problem at the price of raising new problems, and are practically impossible to test or refute. It might occasionally have happened that the scribe who wrote a letter also served as its courier and read the letter to its addressee and it might well have been useful for a scribe encoding words in a foreign language, using polyvalent signs, to leave himself clues to the interpretation of his own handwriting. But Izre'el's proposal fails to account for (among other things) the use of Canaanite glosses in letters provided with postscripts addressed to Pharaoh's scribe, which were therefore clearly expected to be read by a scribe employed at the Egyptian court.[28] Alternatively, it might have been the case that every minor Canaanite ruler employed two or more scribes in order to have the one check the other's work when taking dictation from the ruler, although this scenario would imply an improbably large scribal employment rate for Canaan;[29] but it seems odd that glosses intended to aid the local Canaanite letter-checker were, as a matter of course, simply left to clutter the text for an Egyptian reader who, according to van der Toorn, could not use such Canaanite glosses. While either Izre'el's or van der Toorn's explanation for the use of glosses could perhaps be true of particular cases, both are somewhat improbable and problematic, and neither accounts for the general practice of using words in a local language to gloss texts putatively written in Akkadian, including not only letters but texts written for local use (e.g., legal and administrative documents at Ugarit and Alalaḫ).

I would explain the Canaanite glosses otherwise, in a way that could also apply to corpora other than the Canaanite cuneiform texts. A general explanation for the use of glosses rendering logograms and Akkadian words in a local language may proceed from the assumption

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26. Izre'el, "Amarna Glosses," esp. 106–9, 115–18.

27. K. van der Toorn, "Cuneiform Documents from Syria-Palestine. Texts, Scribes, and Schools," *ZDPV* 116 (2002): 104–5.

28. In particular, the postscripts of the Jerusalem letters, EA 286–89. This problem has not escaped Izre'el's attention, although he passes over the presence of glosses in these letters in favor of using the postscripts to argue that the addressee would not read the letters himself, but would hear them recited by someone who could read Akkadian ("Amarna Glosses," 107; here Izre'el's line of reasoning, unless I mistake his meaning, seems quite strange, for it is hard to imagine that anyone ever thought Pharaoh would actually read his own mail, much less that he could read Akkadian or cuneiform). A further problem affecting Izre'el's proposal, as regards his example of a letter from Amurru containing a Hurrian gloss (EA 170), is the logical difficulty inherent in arguing that (in this case) Hurrian glosses of Akkadian words would help the scribe remember what he was putatively expected to read in Akkadian.

29. About 100 scribes, reckoning from van der Toorn's estimate of fifty urban centers between Ugarit and Gaza (which therefore includes some cities outside of Canaan), each with its own administration employing someone able to read and write; op. cit., 99.

that such glosses were written in order to assist in the reading of the cuneiform text, whether the reader worked in the same administration as the writer (even perhaps being identical to the writer) or in a different one. Therefore, the language chosen as the medium of glossing was one mutually understood by writer and reader (at least, the writer assumed a reader who shared the language of glossing). This does not mean that all scribes at the Egyptian court, for example, knew all the languages their correspondents might use, but it does mean that the Egyptian court would have employed, among its cuneiform scribes, some who knew Canaanite and some who knew Hurrian. Those of their correspondents whose native language was Hurrian would gloss in Hurrian, expecting that the scribe who read their letters would be one with the appropriate competence; similarly, those whose native language was Canaanite would gloss in Canaanite, and so forth (obviously Babylonian and Assyrian correspondents neither needed to gloss, nor, perhaps, could).

The long Hurrian letter from Mittani, EA 24, implies that Hurrian could be read in Egypt, and the capacity to write as well as read Hittite is indicated not only by the Hittite letter from Arzawa to Egypt, with its explicit request that correspondence be conducted in Hittite (EA 32), but by Pharaoh's letter in Hittite to Arzawa (EA 31). It follows that the Egyptian court—and probably most of its counterparts—conducted international relations, in some part at least, in the language of the other party to the relationship.[30] Meanwhile, the assumption stated above, that glosses were intended to facilitate the reading of the cuneiform text through the medium of a shared language, has another corollary: readers of cuneiform texts in the area under discussion, Egypt and its empire in the Levant, could generally be expected to require some assistance, by means of translations into a local language, in interpreting those logograms and Akkadian words.[31]

Applying the foregoing propositions to the letters that use Canaanite glosses, the reason for writing such glosses would have been to assist the reader, by means of a Canaanite translation, in the interpretation of the cuneiform text. That is, these glosses are evidence that the reader was expected to understand the text in Canaanite! For why would the scribe in Beirut think it useful to gloss the logogram SAḤAR with the Canaanite word *ʿaparu*

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30. Here I wish to thank my colleague Bernard M. Levinson for raising the question whether the cuneiform scribes of Egypt adjusted the language they used for written communication depending on the language of the addressee (personal communication); as this paragraph makes clear, in my opinion the evidence shows that they did, at least to some extent (see also n. 35, below). The Egyptian use of Hittite to communicate with Arzawa was not perfectly fluent, according to Frank Starke, who argues that EA 31 exhibits features of Egyptian syntax as a result of having been translated into Hittite from an Egyptian original, in part word for word, in "Zur Deutung der Arzaụa-Briefstelle VBoT 1, 25–27," *ZA* 71 (1982): 221–31 (I am obliged to Gary Beckman for providing me with this reference). For the present discussion it is of interest that Z. Cochavi-Rainey's investigation of the Egyptian scribes' use of Akkadian verbs shows that only in EA 1, a letter from Pharaoh to the Babylonian king, are verb tenses used in accord with the rules of Middle Babylonian; in other Egyptian Amarna letters (and Boghazköy letters), the distinction between preterite and perfect disappears ("Tenses and Modes in Cuneiform Texts Written by Egyptian Scribes in the Late Bronze Age," *UF* 22 [1990]: 6). Cochavi-Rainey finds that Egyptianisms in the Akkadian of Amarna-period Egyptian scribes are few, but they increase in the next century ("Egyptian Influence in the Akkadian Texts Written by Egyptian Scribes in the Fourteenth and Thirteenth Centuries B.C.E.," *JNES* 49 [1990]: 57–65), while over the same time period, the incidence of West Semitisms in the Egyptian scribes' Akkadian decreases ("Canaanite Influence in the Akkadian Texts Written by Egyptian Scribes in the 14th and 13th Centuries B.C.E.," *UF* 21 [1989]: 39–46).

31. J. Krecher makes an observation along these lines with regard to the glosses in the Canaanite Amarna letters, in his entry "Glossen," *RlA* 3 (1957–1971): 438, when he says that "the need to compose international correspondence in Akkadian"—I would say in Akkadographic cuneiform—"prompted the scribes to supply the requisite Akkadian words of whose understanding they were uncertain with glosses in their mother tongue, for their own help and probably *also as a help for the addressees*" (emphasis mine).

unless he thought that the scribe who read his letter needed the word for "dust" in Ca-
naanite in order to interpret the logogram for "dust" in cuneiform? And why would the
scribe of Ḫazor gloss the Akkadian verb *liḫsus* with the Canaanite verb *yazkur*, unless he
thought the reader of his letter would know the Canaanite for "let him remember" better
than the Akkadian? Moreover, as mentioned already, besides being deployed as glosses,
Canaanite words are often incorporated freely into the texts. Surely the Jerusalem scribe (for
example) did not write Canaanite *la-qa-ḫu*, "they took," *la-qí-ḫu*, "they have been taken,"
among many other Canaanite words, in his letters to Egypt, without assuming his Egyptian
reader would understand them. Even Pharaoh is made to communicate in Canaanite, for a
letter from Tyre places a Canaanite imperative, *kûna*, "be ready," in Pharaoh's mouth, when
quoting his orders.[32]

Furthermore, one of the few extant letters from Pharaoh to a Canaanite vassal contains
both a Canaanite gloss and a Canaano-Akkadian verb form. The scribe who wrote EA 369,
addressed to Milkilu, ruler of Gezer, glossed the logogram GADA.MEŠ with the West
Semitic word *malbašu*, "clothing," and spelled the word for "he gave" as *yi-ta-din* (Can.
y- prefixed to Akk. *ittadin*; EA 369: 9, 28).[33] Other letters from Egypt to Canaan include

32. Here are the citations for the examples adduced in this paragraph: *a-pa-ru*, *ḫa-pa-ru* (*ʿaparu) gloss the
Sumerogram SAḪAR(.RA) in EA 141: 4, 143: 11, and 364: 8; *ia-az-ku-ur*(-*mi*) (*yazkur) glosses Akkadian *li-iḫ-
šu-uš*(*zmi*) in EA 228: 19; [*la-*]*qa-ḫu* and *la-qí-ḫu* occur in EA 287: 36, 56; and Pharaoh's imperative *ku-na* is
quoted in EA 147: 36. In the case of SAḪAR: *ʿaparu*, the gloss could be understood as specifying which reading
of the polyvalent cuneiform sign is intended, a function described by Artzi ("Glosses in the El-Amarna Documents,"
23–25), except that within the context of describing the vassal as "x of the king's feet" it is hardly likely that the
sign IŠ, representing "x," would have been mistakenly read with any value other than SAḪAR.

Gianto, treating the Canaanite scribes' practice of glossing as an element of their use of a foreign language
(Akkadian), develops a taxonomy of the glosses in the Byblos Amarna letters, in "Amarna Lexicography: The
Glosses in the Byblos Letters," in *The Lexicography of the Ancient Near Eastern Languages, SEL* 12 (1995): 65–
73. He distinguishes the following types: pronunciation gloss, equivalent gloss (i.e., translation), individuating gloss,
and intensifying gloss. All of his examples but one can be accounted for equally well using the assumption that the
glosses in Canaanite indicate the actual language of written communication. That one is the single instance of a
"pronunciation gloss" in Gianto's data set, DÙG.GA: TU.KA (EA 136: 28), in which the gloss appears to give the
pronunciation of the logogram (Gianto, op. cit., 67; see also Moran, *Amarna Letters*, 217, n. 5). This type of gloss
cannot be explained on the same theory as the Canaanite glosses no matter what the language of writing is assumed
to be, for logograms should not have been pronounced but read in that language; moreover, the reading of the logo-
gram DÙG.GA is not ambiguous. It would be conceivable to reinterpret this example as a translation gloss by read-
ing TU.KA as *ṭú-bùm*, which would indicate the Canaanite equivalent of DÙG.GA, were it not so unlikely that
in these texts KA should have the value *bu₁₇/bùm* (for which see R. Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*
[Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2003], 255, sign no. 24).

33. On the basis of these and other features of EA 369, Izre'el argues that it was Milkilu's scribe, not Pharaoh's
scribe, who wrote this missive from Pharaoh to Milkilu—and that the same scribe would then have read it to
Milkilu in Gezer ("Amarna Glosses," 115–18). Izre'el's interpretation of EA 369's peculiar features has its attrac-
tions; particularly convincing is his reconstruction of the process leading to the creation of a logogram denoting
"female cupbearer," something that existed in Egypt but not in the Mesopotamian cuneiform lexicon, and to the
glossing of this logogram by a syllabic Akkadian spelling, notwithstanding the nonexistence of a feminine form of
the Akkadian word. (N. Na'aman's objections to this proposal, in "Dispatching Canaanite Maidservants to the
Pharaoh," *ANES* 39 [2002]: 77–78, employ very weak arguments.) The scenario Izre'el reconstructs, however, is
even more convincing if the scribe inventing the spellings is thought to have been Egyptian. Meanwhile, the prop-
osition that the king of Egypt gave his vassal orders, formulated in the first person, through his vassal's servant
rather than his own seems quite improbable. The improbability is avoided, while Izre'el's analysis is largely retained,
by proposing instead that the same system for encoding the same language in cuneiform was used by the Egyptian
scribe of EA 369 as by his Canaanite counterparts. This proposal is not undermined by that scribe's use of a proper
Akkadian verb form in the same letter (EA 369: 23), alongside the Canaano-Akkadian form (cf. Cochavi-Rainey,
"Canaanite Influence in the Akkadian Texts Written by Egyptian Scribes," 40), since that is what he had been trained
to do.

another Canaano-Akkadian verb form, *na-ṣa-ra-ta*, "you guard" (Can. *qatal*-pattern suffix conjugation, with the 2ms. suffix attached by means of *-ā-* as in Akk.; EA 99: 8, 367: 4, and 370: 5). Meanwhile, the very same letter from Tyre that quotes Pharaoh speaking Canaanite includes not only several more Canaanite words, but Egyptian ones too: *ḫa-ap-ši*, "strong arm," glossing the logogram ZAG, and *a-ru-ú*, "happy," complementing Canaano-Akkadian *ḫa-ad-ia-ti*, "I rejoice" (EA 147: 12, 28). Other letters from Tyre also use Egyptian words and glosses, illustrating knowledge of Egyptian on the part of at least one Canaanite scribe.[34] Evidently, then, the scribes on Pharaoh's staff who wrote to his Canaanite vassals could and sometimes did employ the same system for encoding communication in cuneiform as the Canaanite scribes who wrote to Egypt, while the latter sometimes used Egyptian in their turn.[35] This stands to reason, and the sporadic use of Canaanite and Canaano-Akkadian by Egyptian scribes complements the argument developed on the basis of what the Canaanite cuneiformists wrote, for the two parties to the communication are shown to share the same code.

So, what language underlay that code, and how should the code be characterized? The Canaanite words and glosses, together with the features of "hybridization" surveyed above, indicate that the language the writers of these texts encoded in cuneiform was Canaanite, the same as the language in which their tablets were read by the recipient scribes.[36] Canaanite, not Akkadian, was the *lingua franca* shared by the scribes of Canaan and their counterparts in Egypt. The Canaanite cuneiform scribes used Akkadian not as a language but as a means of writing in cuneiform; in other words, they used cuneiform as an Akkadographic code for writing Canaanite.

If the Canaanite cuneiformists were not writing Canaanite-accented Akkadian, but writing Canaanite by means of Akkadian, their method of writing would be an instance of the phenomenon for which Gershevitch coined the term alloglottography. The term denotes, as he has put it, the use of an alien "glotta" for the "graphy" of one's own "glotta."[37] This is not

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34. The numerous Egyptian words and Egyptianisms in the letters of Abi-milku, ruler of Tyre, convinced W. F. Albright that Abi-milku's scribe was Egyptian ("The Egyptian Correspondence of Abimilki," *JEA* 23 [1937]: 196–203).

35. Of course the Egyptian scribes did not always use Canaano-Akkadian, certainly not when writing to countries outside of Canaan, and perhaps not normally when writing to Canaanites, although the extant sample seems too small to determine the norms for Egyptian communication with each of several different language communities among their correspondents. Edzard remarks that letters from Egypt tend to be free of Canaanisms ("Amarna und die Archive seiner Korrespondenten," 254), although they do occur, as shown by Cochavi-Rainey; especially notable is her identification of West Semitic influence on the use of the conjunction *u* in the Egyptian Amarna letters ("Canaanite Influence in the Akkadian Texts Written by Egyptian Scribes," 44–46). Meanwhile, Artzi observes that glosses occur in letters from Egypt to Canaan but not in Egypt's correspondence with other great powers ("Glosses in the El-Amarna Documents," n. 3).

36. The letter would of course have been read out loud to its addressee in his own language, thus, in translation if the addressee's language was not Canaanite, as pointed out toward the beginning of this section.

By arguing that Canaanite glosses in the Canaanite Amarna letters are evidence that these texts were to be read in Canaanite, I do not intend to imply that glosses in local languages always and everywhere indicate the language in which to read the text; in the case of the tablets the Canaanite scribes wrote, such glosses constitute one of several types of evidence pointing to that conclusion, and the absence of the remaining types of evidence in another corpus (e.g., Akkadian texts written at Ugarit) would inhibit extrapolating this argument thereto.

37. Gershevitch, "Alloglottography," 154, n. 65, where he distinguishes his new term from "xenography" as used by Maurice Pope in *The Story of Decipherment from Egyptian Hieroglyphic to Linear B* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 99. Pope described as xenography—"what is written is the foreign word, what is pronounced is the domestic one"—practices like the use of Aramaeograms in the writing of Iranian languages (on which see immediately below), which he compared to the use of Akkadograms and Sumerograms in cuneiform (ibid., 198, n. 10;

an altogether uncommon phenomenon when a writing system is borrowed from speakers of language A by speakers of language B. A writing system, as a method of encoding language, tends to be tightly associated with the particular language it is customarily used to encode: one learns to write in that system by learning sequences of graphemes that spell words in language A, therefore, should the same writing system be adopted to write language B, the language B writers may well continue to employ the same sequences of graphemes, but simply ascribe to them new language B values, while modifying or supplementing those graphic sequences so as to indicate the correct language B reading. Gershevitch introduced the term alloglottography to characterize the use of Elamite to write Old Persian in the Persepolis tablets; for, he argues, these texts, which are inscribed with cuneiform signs that ostensibly spell Elamite words, were actually written in Old Persian, spelled Elamographically.[38] When in later centuries the use of cuneiform to write Iranian languages was abandoned in favor of using the Aramaic alphabet, Parthian and Middle Persian texts were written Aramaeographically instead. A comparable case would be the adoption of the Chinese writing system to write Japanese, or, for that matter, the development of standardized Chinese to write diverse Chinese dialects.[39] A close analogy to the alloglottography of Canaanite by means of Akkadian, inasmuch as it similarly involves closely cognate languages, may be found in the writing of early medieval Romance dialects by means of Latin, according to the theory developed by Roger Wright, to wit: written Latin encoded spoken Romance throughout the Latin-language areas of the defunct Roman Empire in the early medieval period; diverse local Romance languages continued to be written using the fossilized spelling of the Imperial Latin from which they evolved, until the Carolingian orthographic reforms implemented in the ninth century (and thereafter) produced a medieval Latin pronunciation norm on the one hand, and Romance spelling norms on the other.[40]

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in the revised edition, *The Story of Decipherment from Egyptian Hieroglyphic to Maya Script*, published in 1999, the same note appears on p. 210). Neither term, alloglottography or xenography, seems to have gained widespread currency, for neither appears in the index to P. T. Daniels and W. Bright, eds., *The World's Writing Systems* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996).

38. The hypothesis of the Elamography of Old Persian which Gershevitch develops in "Alloglottography" is utilized in two more articles, "Extrapolation of Old Persian from Elamite," in *Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte der Achämenidenzeit und ihr Fortleben* (Berlin: Reimer, 1983), 51–56, and "Literacy in Transition from the Anshanian to the Achaemenian Period," in *Transition Periods in Iranian History: Studia Iranica*, Cahier 5 (1987): 49–57. Gershevitch's arguments are at least as entertaining as they are erudite, and they appear well-founded, but I am cautioned about the weaknesses of his theory by Jan Tavernier (e-mail communication), who points out that Persian verbs are not transcribed in Elamite and Persian suffixes are not attached to Elamite verb stems, unlike the case of the Aramaeography of Middle Persian (and unlike the Akkadography of Canaanite which I propose here). To my knowledge no critical discussion of Gershevitch's Elamographic hypothesis has yet been published.

39. The development and uses of the Chinese writing system, the Aramaeography of Iranian languages, and practically all other systems of writing (but not the Elamography of Old Persian), are surveyed in Daniels and Bright, eds., *The World's Writing Systems*; in particular, see the chapters by William G. Boltz, "Early Chinese Writing" (191–99); Janet S. Smith, "Japanese Writing" (209–70); and P. Oktor Skjaervø, "Aramaic Scripts for Iranian Languages" (515–35).

40. R. Wright, *Late Latin and Early Romance in Spain and Carolingian France* (Liverpool: Cairns, 1982). Wright's theory's development and its ramifications occupy the entire book, but the gist of it can be had from the introduction (ix–xii) and first chapter (1–44), as long as one does not miss the demonstration case involving a tenth-century list of cheeses (173–75; note the term "hybrid Latin," denoting the manner of writing). I am indebted to Piotr Michalowski for pointing me in the direction of Roger Wright's work, which, unlike Gershevitch's theory of alloglottography in Achaemenid Persia, has evidently found wide acceptance (see, e.g., Edward Tuttle, "Adaptations of the Roman Alphabet," in *The World's Writing Systems*, 633).

There may be many more cases of alloglottography, each differing from every other because each case concerns a particular writing system and particular languages, but it is not really necessary to search far and wide for analogies. After all, the use of cuneiform almost always involved the employment of sign sequences that spelled words in language A to write words in language B! Akkadian was written using Sumerograms alongside syllabic spellings of Akkadian words; not only Sumerograms but Akkadograms were employed at Ebla; the writing even of Sumerian employed graphic sequences that did not literally spell the words they stood for; Hittite was written using both Sumerograms and Akkadograms as well as syllabic spellings of Hittite words; and late dialects of Akkadian continued to be written using archaic, essentially Akkadographic, spellings, which bore little direct relationship to the phonology and morphology of the language they encoded.[41] In all these instances, an array of modifications to the writing system, including most obviously phonetic complements, was employed to indicate what to read, in what language—sometimes just one or two signs serve to indicate that the language of a text is, say, Akkadian rather than Sumerian.[42] Thus the proposal that Canaanite scribes should have encoded their own language by means of writing Akkadian, supplemented with some phonetic complements, occasional Canaanite glosses, and so forth, accords well with the norm for the use of cuneiform. Rarely, in fact, was cuneiform used in such a way that graphemes correspond directly and exactly to language. Therefore the burden of proof, it seems to me, rests on the one who would claim that in the case of the Canaanite Amarna letters, festooned as they are with Canaanite features, the graphemes do correspond exactly to language, which language must then be a hybrid of Canaanite and Akkadian—rather than that the *writing* of these texts graphically hybridizes Canaanite with Akkadian for the purpose of encoding Canaanite in cuneiform.[43]

HOW THEY WROTE CANAANITE IN CUNEIFORM

If these scribes were, on the whole, writing Canaanite by means of Akkadian, this means that in addition to using logograms based on Sumerian words they were using sign sequences that spell Akkadian words to encode Canaanite words. So, for example, just as

41. General discussion of the development, uses, and adaptations of Mesopotamian cuneiform for various languages is found in the chapters on this topic in *The World's Writing Systems*: P. Michalowski, "Origin" (33–36); J. Cooper, "Sumerian and Akkadian" (37–57); and G. Gragg, "Other Languages" (58–72).

Michalowski discusses the use of Akkadograms at Ebla, in an essay exploring the interrelationship between writing conventions, linguistic expression, and culture, "Language, Literature, and Writing at Ebla," in *Ebla 1975–1985: Dieci anni di studi linguistici e filologici*, ed. L. Cagni (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1987), 172. The complexity of the representation of language(s) through cuneiform writing is further brought out in Cooper's discussion of the ways cuneiform was developed in the mid-third millennium B.C.E., including the use of "Semitograms" alongside Sumerograms at Ebla, "Sumerian and Semitic Writing in Most Ancient Syro-Mesopotamia," in *Languages and Cultures in Contact*, ed. K. Van Lerberghe and G. Voet (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 64–73. The spelling of late dialects of Akkadian has recently been discussed by M. P. Streck, "Keilschrift und Alphabet," in *Hieroglyphen-Alphabete-Schriftreformen: Studien zu Multiliteralismus, Schriftwechsel und Orthographieneuregelungen*, ed. D. Borchers et al. (Göttingen: Seminar für Ägyptologie und Koptologie, 2001), 77–97.

42. M. Civil has introduced the analogy of the adaptation of Chinese writing to encode Japanese texts in order to further the understanding of the adaptation of Sumerian writing to encode Akkadian (or, implicitly, Eblaite), "Bilingualism in Logographically Written Languages: Sumerian in Ebla," in *Il Bilinguismo a Ebla*, ed. L. Cagni (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1984), 75–76.

43. Be it noted that the prevailing theory has not been subjected to proof, the first attempt to prove it, to my knowledge, being Izre'el's "Methodological Requisites," which is critiqued herein. On the contrary, the theory that what the Canaanite scribes wrote was a hybrid language should be considered disproven to the extent that it fails to survive attempts to falsify it, such as the arguments I have made above.

the signs *UM-MA* can be read as an Akkadogram standing for a Canaanite word akin to Ugaritic *taḫummu* (see above, under Features of "Hybridization"), the signs *A-NA* can be read as an Akkadogram for the Canaanite preposition *l-*, the signs *I-NA* as an Akkadogram for the Canaanite preposition *b-*, the signs *I-NU-MA* as an Akkadogram for the Canaanite subordinating conjunction *kī*, and so forth. This principle is readily applied to entire words—nouns, independent pronouns, prepositions, and other parts of speech—and it works just as well for isolated morphemes: for example, the sign *-ŠI* served as an Akkadogram encoding the Canaanite 3fs. pronominal suffix, probably *-ha*; the sign sequences *-ŠU-NU* and *-ŠI-NA* served as Akkadograms encoding the 3mpl. and 3fpl. pronominal suffixes, probably *-humu* and *-huna*. Canaanite words and morphemes could also be spelled syllabically instead of Akkadographically, and Canaanite prefixes and suffixes could be applied as phonetic complements to Akkadograms, just as Akkadian ones were often applied to Sumerograms. Thus, the Canaanite personal prefixes of verb forms, *y-*, *t-*, *n-*, and aleph, could be represented by prefixing syllabic signs to the chosen Akkadographic bases—for instance, *yi-* prefixed to the base *il-te-qe* yields *yi-il-te-qe*, hypothetically standing for the Canaanite 3ms. preterite **yiqqaḥ*. To the extent meaning remained unaffected, such signs for prefixes could optionally be omitted, like phonetic complements, as they sometimes were in the case of 3ms. forms.

But there is a difficulty. Through what paradigms did the scribes convert Canaanite words into strings of cuneiform signs that, read literally, combine Canaanite verbal inflections with Akkadian ones within the same graphemes? If, as I described in the first section, the Canaanite scribes did operate with a set of Akkadian *iprus*, *iparras*, *iptaras*, and *paris* forms, which they used as bases onto which to affix Canaanite prefixes and suffixes, but these bases were conceived as sign sequences rather than actual words subject to inflection, then in theory they should have added the Canaanite affixes without modifying the bases. It would have been intrinsically impossible for a cuneiform scribe to dismember the graphemes of which the bases consisted. That is, the graphemes of a sequence such as *il-te-qe* could not have been parsed so as to permit modifying the final vowel to *-a* in order to produce the sign sequence *il-te-qa*, standing for a Canaanite volitive **yiqqaḥa*; similarly, it would not have been possible to parse *iš-me* in order to modify the final vowel to present-future *-u* while adding the 3ms. prefix *yi-*, and thereby produce the sign sequence *yi-iš-mu*, standing for a Canaanite 3ms. present-future **yišmaʿu*.

This difficulty presents a problem for my hypothesis, but it was not a cognitive or practical problem for the Canaanite scribes whose system of writing the hypothesis seeks to explain. It is resolved by observing that these scribes probably did not operate with concepts of morphemes, stems, and the like, and therefore they did not—could not—conceptually separate prefixes and suffixes from the stems to which they were affixed; accordingly, they did not graphically separate Canaanite affixes from Akkadian bases.[44] The paradigms they

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44. The assertion that the Canaanite scribes did not utilize analytical concepts similar to those of modern linguistics can of course hardly be proven. However, as D. Gary Miller argues in *Ancient Scripts and Phonological Knowledge* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1994), knowledge of morphology and phonology, even on the part of fully literate, educated speakers, is normally implicit rather than explicit; Miller observes, for instance, that "literate adults, even when linguistically trained, have some difficulty separating" phonology and orthography (97). That is, conscious, analytical understanding of the structure of a language is not intrinsic to knowing the language but is developed through training. Thus it is *a priori* unlikely that Canaanite scribes developed such explicit, analytical knowledge, and the evidence that Mesopotamian scholars did so is not a sufficient basis for attributing it to their Canaanite counterparts. In his study of Babylonian grammatical treatises, Jeremy Black argues that grammar formed an important part of the Old Babylonian scribal curriculum, but this is correlated with the determination that Babylonian grammatical theory was developed as a pedagogical tool and that its mode of analysis is not congruent with

worked with were paradigms of spelling as much as of conjugation. Thus, in writing, they would modify an Akkadian (that is, Akkadographic) *spelling paradigm* in such a way as to indicate what Canaanite verb form was intended, unconcerned if a particular grapheme ended up representing part of the Akkadian base as well as the Canaanite affix. They were equally unconcerned if the resulting sign sequences did not literally spell any existing verb forms in either Akkadian or Canaanite.

Such a system of orthography will seem improbable, no doubt, because in an operation such as transforming *yi-il-te-qe* to *yi-il-te-qa* in order to spell **yiqqaḥa*, the scribe would have to choose a final sign that carried both an Akkadographic and a Canaanite element simultaneously. If Akkadian is considered as the encoding language and Canaanite the encoded language, then in this example the single sign QA must represent both an unpronounced phonetic segment belonging to the lexeme in the encoding language, and a pronounced one belonging to the morpheme in the encoded language. Would transformations involving signs so conceived not require too great mental gymnastics to be feasible? But this may seem less improbable upon considering that morphographemic spellings function in a somewhat analogous way. In the case of using morphographemic spellings within the writing of one language, that language's morphological structure could be considered to serve as the encoding language and its pronunciation as the encoded language. Take as an example the spelling *iṣ-bat-su*, representing *iṣbassu* ("he seized him"), in which the syllabic sign BAT conveys an unpronounced phonetic segment belonging to the word's morphological structure along with phonetic segments belonging to its pronunciation. Morphographemic spelling practices that more closely resemble the methods of spelling proposed here for the Akkadography of Canaanite occur with some frequency in Neo- and Late Babylonian. Among the morphographemic spellings enumerated by Michael Streck in his recent study of alphabetic influence on first-millennium cuneiform orthographic practices, one of many salient examples is the spelling *NI-DIN-it* representing *niditt* (< *nidintu*, "gift"), in which the sign DIN simultaneously conveys an unpronounced segment belonging to the lexeme's morphological structure and phonetic segments belonging to its pronounced realization.[45] In view of the orthographic operations manifest in this kind of spelling, the employment of spelling paradigms such as *yi-il-te-qe*, *yi-il-te-qa* (*vel sim.*) to represent **yiqqaḥ*, **yiqqaḥa* no longer seems beyond feasibility at all.

All the "hybrid" verb forms can, therefore, be analyzed not as hybrid Canaano-Akkadian forms, but as mixed Canaano-Akkadographic spellings, standing for actual Canaanite verb forms. So analyzed, the examples of "hybrid" verb forms given in the table presented in the first section (Features of "Hybridization") can be transliterated as follows, with their hypothetical Canaanite readings:

    a. *yI-LA-AK* (or *yv-LA-AK*), standing for **yalik*
    b. *IṢ-ṢÚ-Ru*, standing for **ʾaṣṣuru*

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modern linguistic analysis. Black emphasizes that "to impute the modern sort of speculatively descriptive analysis of grammar to the Babylonians is an anachronism" (*Sumerian Grammar in Babylonian Theory* [Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1984], 6). In any case, whether or not Canaanite scribes possessed comparable grammatical theory, they would appear to have possessed fairly sophisticated linguistic and graphological understanding in order to use the cuneiform writing system to encode Canaanite by means of Akkadian.

45. Streck, "Keilschrift und Alphabet," 84–87, §6, under the heading "Morphophonologische Graphien"; the term "morphographemic" applies to his examples, in that the words' underlying morphology is shown through the graphemes chosen. The example cited here appears in §6.2.3. With reference to the preceding note, it should be mentioned that explicit knowledge of morphemes is not necessary to produce morphographemic (or morphophonemic) spelling (see Miller, *Ancient Scripts and Phonological Knowledge*, 97–100).

    c. *yi-IL-TE-Qú*, standing for **yiqqaḥu*
    d. *ÌL-TE₉-Qa*, standing for **yiqqaḥa*
    e. *ti-ÌŠ-Mu-na*, standing for **tišmaʿūna*
    f. *NA-ṢIR-ta*, standing for **naṣarta*[46]
    g. *IZ-ZI-IZ-ti*, standing for, perhaps, **naṣṣabti*[47]

Equipped with flexible Akkadographic spelling paradigms which could be modified as necessary to accommodate whatever prefixes and suffixes were needed, the scribes of Canaan encoded texts written in their own language in cuneiform. Because their application of Canaano-Akkadographic spelling conventions is highly variable and individualized, the texts appear to be written in a variety of Canaano-Akkadian "idiolects," but through the mask of those spelling conventions the underlying language can be read as Canaanite.

    The theme of variation has been introduced above, in the discussion of whether Canaano-Akkadian could have been a hybrid language. Whereas I would explain variation in spelling as primarily an orthographic matter, Izre'el treats this variation as an intrinsic property of Canaano-Akkadian as a spoken mixed language (see "Hybrid Language or Akkadographic Code?" above). Having now articulated my hypothesis of the Akkadographic writing of Canaanite, I can return to Izre'el's argument, previously addressed only in outline, that certain spelling outputs (below, A) and examples of morphological creativity (B) are evidence that Canaano-Akkadian was spoken ("Methodological Requisites," §2). In what follows I discuss the observations on which Izre'el predicates this argument, in each case first summarizing the data he adduces and his interpretation thereof, then offering a counter-argument or alternative interpretation.[48]

A. *Spelling as evidence of pronunciation*

Izre'el assembles examples of several types of spellings which he considers to reflect actual pronunciation or phonological development in Canaano-Akkadian speech. I argue that these spelling practices are just that, not evidence for phonology.

    1. In the letters of one subcorpus, words spelled with an I-sign in standard Akkadian are spelled with an E-sign instead (e.g., *e-din* instead of *i-din*), and *Cv* syllables that would normally be spelled with a *Ci*-sign in Akkadian may instead be spelled with a *Ce*-sign (e.g., *e-ba-aš-še* instead of *i-ba-aš-ši*); such spellings "may reflect a phonemic or phonetic reality in the substrate dialect" (§2.2.1). They may well do so, if the scribes' hypothetical pronunciation of /i/ with an /e/ timbre in their native Canaanite speech (a phonological feature inferred only from the spellings it is meant to explain) led them to abandon distinguishing between I- and E-signs, which then prompted them to use *Ci*- and *Ce*-signs interchangeably as well. Arnaud and Salvini argue that the alternation among the signs I, E, and IA in some parts of the Levant does not represent phonetic reality, but that rather the three signs are "allographs" of each other ("Une lettre du roi de Beyrouth au roi d'Ougarit," 9). They

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    46. If the sign ṢIR is vowel-indifferent, the writing *na-ṢIR-ta* could be understood simply to spell the Canaanite verb form, rather than being considered a hybrid or Canaano-Akkadographic form.

    47. Although in the absence of confirmation from a contemporaneous Canaanite source it is risky to guess what Canaanite verb would have been translated by Akkadian *izuzzu*, the range of meaning of Biblical Hebrew √nṣb, in the N-stem, seems closer than √ʿmd; also, forms of the cognate root √yṣb may be identified in the Canaanite Amarna letters, according to Rainey (*CAT* II: 94). The original vowel pattern of the N-stem was *naqtal* in Canaanite as in Ugaritic; see J. Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000), 535.

    48. In summarizing Izre'el's interpretations, I paraphrase them in such a way as to make the alternatives more easily discernible, I hope without distorting the sense of the original thereby.

might have become allographs due to a phonological feature such as what Izre'el postulates, but even so, the spellings at issue would be the outcome of orthographic practices influenced by the substrate language's phonology, rather than evidence for the pronunciation of Canaano-Akkadian.[49]

2. The spelling *ti-e-te-pu-š* [*u-na*?], with an extra E-sign, is interpreted as a pseudo-correction on the part of a Byblos scribe (§2.2.2). This interpretation's usefulness to Izre'el's larger argument is vitiated by its reliance on *ad hoc* speculation about what went through the scribe's mind that led him to produce this single example, and on characterizing the very thing whose existence is to be demonstrated, viz., the phonology of Canaano-Akkadian.

3. In most Byblos letters (as well as early Amurru letters), verb forms that would be spelled with an initial E-sign in standard Akkadian are spelled with an I-sign instead (e.g., *i-pu-šu-na*, "I should do," with Canaanite energic suffix; in Akkadian, the 1cs. form would be spelled with initial *e*). Izre'el takes this to indicate that the phonology both of the substrate dialect and of the Canaano-Akkadian spoken at Byblos differed from Akkadian phonology (§2.2.3). More likely, such spellings reflect the orthographic convention of using the Akkadian 3ms. form as the base, to which Canaanite prefixes and suffixes were applied; so, just as zero (for ') plus *iṣ-ṣú-ru* yielded *iṣ-ṣú-ru* for the 1cs. present-future form (see item b, in the demonstration list above), zero plus *i-pu-šu* yielded *i-pu-šu*, likewise (this process could then analogically affect other forms from the same root).

4. Occasionally—only two examples are given—the spelling of a verb form omits its theme vowel (e.g., *ti-ir-bu* for Akkadian *tērubu*); according to Izre'el, "such forms do *prove* that [Canaano-Akkadian] was indeed a spoken reality" (§2.2.4; emphasis added). If such forms occur frequently or regularly, one possible explanation may be that they reflect a development in actual pronunciation, but if rare, each may be attributed to scribal error. A more interesting alternative is the possibility that the production of spellings like *ti-ir-bu* could have been influenced by knowledge of the consonantal alphabet, in a manner comparable to the influence Streck demonstrates for several types of first-millennium cuneiform spellings ("Keilschrift und Alphabet," esp. §5); this suggestion is unnecessary if examples occur seldom.

5. Some writings of energic verb forms with suffixes exhibit assimilation of the *-n-* of the Canaanite energic to the Akkadian suffix (e.g., *nu-ub-ba-lu-uš-šu < nubbalun+šu*). While assimilation of *n* occurs in both Canaanite and Akkadian, in these cases it occurs across the boundary between a morpheme belonging to one language and a morpheme belonging to the other, therefore it "is certainly a trait of a spoken language transferred to the written medium" (§2.2.5; see also Izre'el, *Canaano-Akkadian*, §1.3.1). This would be a strong argument, were it not that forms exhibiting such assimilation across a "trans-lingual" morpheme boundary are few, while comparable forms not exhibiting it also occur (examples

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49. The same statement would not necessarily apply with regard to Izre'el's much more fully elaborated argument concerning the phonology of *i* and *e* in the Akkadian written by the scribes of Amurru, in *Amurru Akkadian: A Linguistic Study*, vol. 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), §1.5. In that investigation he determines that "in the language of these scribes the phoneme /i/ had two different realizations, depending on length: it was pronounced [i] when it was either short or long and unaccented, [e] when it was long and unaccented" (72), reaching this conclusion on the basis of thoroughly analyzing a substantial amount of evidence (although the argumentation there, too, involves some circular or *ad hoc* reasoning, e.g., in the explanations proposed for why the same word was spelled both *ú-bá-an-ni-ši* and *ú-bá-an-ni-še* in successive lines, and why the spelling *ma-ti-e-mi* does not follow the inferred rule [86–87]).

are given in *Canaano-Akkadian*, §1.3.1); moreover, given that this kind of assimilation is a feature of both source languages, it could well have been imported into writing in the absence of speaking the hypothesized mixed language. A single feature exemplified by three forms cannot by itself sustain the case for Canaano-Akkadian having been spoken.

B. Morphological creativity

Adducing various types of inventions in verb formation, Izre'el claims that such creativity "must have occurred in a living, flexible language, representing unconscious processes within an underlying spoken reality" ("Methodological Requisites," §2.3). I argue that the apparent invention and transformation of verb forms can be explained instead as the result of orthographic practices employing Akkadographic bases.

1. The creation of the verb form *ya-ar-ḫi-ša*, "may he hasten," out of the Akkadian adverb *arḫiš*, "quickly," is presented as evidence for speaking Canaano-Akkadian, and analogous examples from modern Hebrew are adduced to support the proposition that a formation of this kind was generated unconsciously (§2.3.2). Why could it not have been generated consciously, and why should such creativity be limited to speech? Izre'el describes the manner of this verb form's creation as "a common procedure in which an Akkadian stem (i.e., root+pattern) is taken as an inseparable unit to serve as a lexical morpheme in the verb formation of Canaano-Akkadian" (ibid.). That is exactly the procedure described for the formation of hybrid Canaano-Akkadian verbs generally (see Features of "Hybridization"), which, as I have shown in this section, can be understood as an Akkadographic procedure. In the same way as *iš-me* (for example) would serve as the Akkadographic base for a verbal spelling paradigm, so *ar-ḫi-iš* could serve as a mutable Akkadogram, standing for some Canaanite verb, capable of taking Canaanite affixes in the form of phonetic complements.

2. The citation of two forms of a single verb in one letter which exhibit the prefix vowel *a* rather than the usual *i* (1cs. *aš-te-mu*, 2cs. *ta-aš-te-me*) is insufficient to demonstrate innovation in speech (§2.3.3) as distinct from diversity in available spelling conventions.

3. The use of *li-* as the prefix of two 1cs. precative verb forms repeated in three letters from Tyre, rather than *lu-* as in the Babylonian dialect of Akkadian, is presented as evidence for innovation in the local spoken dialect of Canaano-Akkadian (§2.3.4). Presumably the converse, *lu-* in place of *li-* for a 3ms precative (in a letter from Qadesh, EA 189: 19, cited by Rainey, *CAT* II: 212), would then require a similar explanation, but Rainey's suggestion that "the Tyrian scribe has simply used 3rd m.s. forms for first person" (ibid., 213) would readily account for the forms Izre'el cites. Rainey notes that 3ms. precatives occur with the greatest frequency by far (ibid., 212); one can imagine that a scribe might not remember, on the rare occasion when the 1cs. form was needed, whether it was supposed to begin with a sign different from the 3ms. form.

4. When the vocalic morphemes of the Canaanite present-future indicative (*-u*) and volitive (*-a*) are suffixed to Akkadian III-weak verb forms, which end in a vowel, the resulting hybrid forms are written with only one vowel (e.g., *y+ilqe+u* is written *yi-il-qú* rather than **yi-il-qe-ú*), indicating contraction of the Canaanite morpheme with the final vowel of the Akkadian stem. Izre'el finds it "hard to see such contractions occurring in a language that is not spoken at all" (§2.3.5). This is a strong argument in favor of treating the hybrid of Canaanite and Akkadian as an actual language, in which forms were susceptible to modification, but not necessarily as a spoken one. However, I have shown above (this section) that writings of this kind, too, can be produced by modifying Akkadographic spelling paradigms to take Canaanite affixes. Whether or not my own case holds, this, the soundest of

Izre'el's arguments under the rubric of morphological creativity, is not sufficient to sustain the case for Canaano-Akkadian having been spoken.

In conclusion, the argument that Canaano-Akkadian must have been spoken is predicated on slender evidence, all of which can be explained as the result of the Canaanite scribes' spelling practices, rather than as the manifestation of those scribes' Canaano-Akkadian speech, and most of which can be explained more simply that way. The hypothesis that the Canaanite scribes wrote in a Canaano-Akkadian mixed language that they also spoke entails various problems and complications, without explaining the available data efficiently; the proposition that they only wrote Canaano-Akkadian encounters many of the same problems, with the additional difficulty that mixed languages used solely in writing are otherwise unknown.[50] The hypothesis that the Canaanite scribes developed and used methods of writing Canaanite by means of Akkadian, on the other hand, can explain the data (albeit not altogether without difficulty) without entailing the problems and complications inherent in the alternatives. Ideally, having been scrutinized on the basis of logical criteria, each explanatory model should be subjected to experimental tests of some kind, to determine which is correct.

One way to test the hypothesis I have proposed would be to apply it to the texts the Canaanite cuneiformists wrote, as follows. Instead of reading these texts as if they were meant to be written in Akkadian, read them in Canaanite; that is, each sequence of graphemes that can be understood as a discrete word should be read as a Canaanite word, rather than an Akkadian one. If this procedure works, the hypothesis is to that extent validated (though not proven!). The obstacle, of course, is that Late Bronze Age Canaanite remains largely an unknown language, so implementing such a test involves guessing at the Canaanite words that may be encoded Akkadographically, guessing on the basis of Ugaritic, Hebrew, and the Canaanite glosses that occur in the very same texts. Notwithstanding that such an intrinsically hypothetical test of my hypothesis necessarily can produce no proof pro or contra, I have carried out this experiment on the first fifteen lines of a letter from Lab'ayu of Shechem to Pharaoh, EA 254, and I present the result here. The transliteration (top line) is accompanied by a suggested Canaanite reading (bottom line), offered with many reservations due to the guesswork involved. I have relied in part on Zellig Harris's work on the linguistic history of Canaanite dialects,[51] in order to extrapolate putative Canaanite forms by "rewinding" phonetic shifts, while for lexicon and morphology I have depended as much as possible on attested Late Bronze Age material, both Canaanite and Ugaritic; sometimes I have used certain Ugaritic equivalents in place of uncertain Canaanite ones. The following transliteration conventions are employed: Sumerograms in UPPERCASE; Akkadograms in *UPPERCASE ITALICS*; syllabic Canaanite, and "normalized" Canaanite, in *lowercase italics.*

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50. The problems involved have been outlined above, in the section titled "Hybrid Language or Akkadographic Code"; on the nonexistence of mixed languages developed and used only in writing, see n. 20. Some extra complications implied by the postulate of spoken Canaano-Akkadian, which need not be expounded further here, include the number of lects in proportion to the number of putative speakers (surely no more than a few dozen Canaanite scribes at any one time; see above, at n. 29), who were largely isolated from one another (so that, for the most part, each member of this speech community must have had only himself to speak Canaano-Akkadian with, most of the time), and the fact that the principal use to which they evidently put this language was in written communication with people who generally did not use it themselves (Egyptian scribes).

51. Zellig S. Harris, *Development of the Canaanite Dialects: An Investigation in Linguistic History* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1939). Harris produced this study before the system of "hybridized" Canaano-Akkadian verb forms (or, as I argue, spellings) was elucidated, so he cited such forms as Canaanite; his work also predated significant progress on the verb system of Ugaritic. Leaving aside certain aspects of his discussion of the verb system, Harris's work retains its value for charting phonological and morphological developments.

EA 254: 1–15   (*Translation*)

1) *A-NA* LUGAL-*RI* EN-*IA* Ù ᵈUTU-*IA*[52]

    li malki baʿliya wa šamšiya   To the king, my lord and my sun,

2) *UM-MA La-ab-a-ya* ÌR-*KA*

    tahummu Labʾaya ʿabdika   message of Labʾayu, your servant

3) Ù IP-RU ŠA KA-BÁ-ŠI-KA[53]

    wa ʿaparu ḏi kabōsika   and the dust of your treading,

4) *A-NA* GÌR.MEŠ LUGAL-*RI* EN-*IA*

    li - raglê malki baʿliya   at the feet of the king, my lord

5) Ù ᵈUTU-*IA* 7-*ŠU* 7-TA.ÀM

    wa šamšiya šabʿa-da šabʿa-da   and my sun, seven times seven times

6) *AM-QUT IŠ-TE-ME A-WA-TE*.MEŠ

    qâlti ʾišmaʿ[54] *dabarīma*   I fall. I have heard the words

7) *ŠA* LUGAL-*RU IŠ-TAP-RA-AN-NI*

    ḏūti malku yišlaḥannī[55]   that the king sent me;

8) Ù *mi-ia-ti A-NA-KU* Ù

    wa miyāti ʾanōki[56] *wa-*   and who am I, that

9) *ya-aḫ-li-qú* LUGAL-*RU* KUR.KI-*ŠU*

    yaḫliqu malku ʾarṣahu   the king should lose his land

10) UGU-*IA A-MUR A-NA-KU* ÌR *KI-TI*

    ʿalêya rʾâ ʾanōki ʿabdu ʾamitti(?)[57] on account of me? See, I am a loyal servant

11) LUGAL-*RI* Ù *LA-A*[58] *AR-NA-KU*

    malki wa lō pašiʿti[59]   of the king; I have not transgressed,

12) Ù *LA-A ḪA-ṬÁ-KU* Ù

    wa lō ḫaṭaʾti wa   and I have not sinned, and

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52. The same reading would be produced by interpreting the signs that stand for the 1cs. and 2ms. possessive suffixes (-IA, -KA) as Akkadographic or as Canaanite, but this would not apply to all pronominal suffixes; hence spellings of pronominal suffixes that are homologous in Akkadian and Canaanite are transliterated as Akkadographic, unless affixed to a Canaanite word.

53. The verb *kabāsu* exists in Akkadian as well as West Semitic, so the writing could be interpreted either as Akkadographic or as syllabic Canaanite; the former is preferred because the vowel of the Canaanite infinitive should probably have shifted to *ō* (see n. 56, below). The spelling with ŠI reflects a tendency to use Š-signs for /s/ that is typical of western cuneiform writing; see Huehnergard, *Akkadian of Ugarit*, 111–14, and Rainey, *CAT* I: 43–46.

54. Perhaps instead *šamiʿti*, which occurs in a similar statement in EA 362: 5.

55. I assume that in Canaanite of this period, as in Ugaritic, pronominal suffixes on verbs could have either accusative or dative function; see Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik*, §41.2. Exactly comparable to this form would be Ugaritic *tlikn*, "you (f.s.) send (to) me," cited by Tropper (ibid., §41.221.2).

56. The Canaanite form of the 1cs. independent pronoun that was current in this period is known from EA 287: 66, 69. The attestation of the stressed *ā > ō* shift in this and several other words (e.g., *sōkinu*, wr. *sú-ki-ni/na*, EA 256: 9, 362: 69) entails (probably) extrapolating the same phonetic shift to other words where it should also have occurred.

57. I tentatively suggest this word, from √ʾmn, as a possible Canaanite equivalent to Akkadian *kittu*, on the basis of its existence in Ugaritic (*imt* = ʾ*imitta* > ʾ*aminta*; Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik*, §§33.214.23, 33.215.21, 85.4; Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription*, 274) as well as Hebrew; also, a masculine noun from the same root, ʾ*mn*, is used to mean "faithfulness" (*vel sim.*) in the Aramaic of Samʾal (see J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* [Leiden: Brill, 1995], I: 72, s.v. ʾ*mn₃*).

58. The negative *lā* (> *lō*) is used to negate a series of main-clause assertions, as is correct for West Semitic but incorrect for Akkadian, here and in the subsequent lines.

59. Attested once in Ugaritic (G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartín, *Diccionario de la Lengua Ugarítica*, vol. II, s.v. *pšʿ*); the vocalic pattern applied here is chosen on the basis of that attested in the Canaanite Amarna letters in forms like *šamiʿti* (see *CAT* II: 286, and cf. my review thereof, *IEJ* 53/2 [2003]: 208, with n. 20, and 211), rather than that exhibited by this verb in Biblical Hebrew.

13) *LA-A A-KAL-LI* GÚ.UN.ḪI.A-*IA*
    *lō   kaliᵓti*⁶⁰   (?)*-ya*   I have not withheld my tribute,
14) *Ù LA-A A-KAL-LI*
    wa lō   kaliᵓti   and I have not withheld
15) *E-RI-IŠ-TI₇* ᴸᵁ́*RA-BI-ṢÍ-IA*
    *ᵓarišta*⁶¹   *sōkiniya*   any request of my commissioner.

Every Canaanite scribe differed from every other in regard to his usage and understanding of cuneiform writing, and of the languages underlying what he had learned to write, as is evident from studies of distinct corpora within the Canaanite Amarna letters (such as the letters from Byblos, Tyre, and Jerusalem; see above, n. 5). Therefore my hypothesis that these scribes used cuneiform Akkadographically, and my outline of how they wrote Canaanite in cuneiform, would surely not be found universally applicable throughout all the various text groups. Not all the scribes need have learned to write according to the same curriculum, up to the same level of proficiency, and the evidence indicates that they did not. Even if there turns out to be substantial variation in its application, however, the proposal that the scribes of Canaan learned a more-or-less common set of writing conventions has greater explanatory power and is intrinsically more probable than the proposal, implicit in the conventional approach to the study of this material, that these scribes all learned a hybrid language combining their own language with Akkadian, and that they then wrote this hybrid in cuneiform. The next step in this inquiry is to investigate how cuneiform writing was taught and learned in Canaan, and in what ways instruction and use of cuneiform involved language.

CUNEIFORM IN CANAAN

Where and how did Canaanite scribes learn cuneiform? Did they—as is commonly assumed—necessarily learn the Akkadian language in the process of learning to write in cuneiform? What curriculum and instruction methods produced the observable results that these scribes, at least during the Amarna period, wrote Canaano-Akkadian (whether this was a language or a means of writing one)? Answering these questions is not a straightforward matter, since there is virtually no direct evidence on the basis of which to address them.[62] It is possible, however, to define the parameters within which probable answers may be found, by identifying what kinds of evidence exist and determining what assumptions may be valid predicates for interpreting that evidence.

Considering Late Bronze Age material only, besides the Canaanite Amarna letters, the body of evidence relevant to this discussion includes the approximately fifty cuneiform tablets and fragments found in Canaan and dating to the Late Bronze.[63] These few dozen

60. The form of the Akkadian verb suggests that it stands for a Canaanite prefix-conjugation form, either an imperfect, *ᵓiklaᵓu* ("I do not withhold"), or, since the Akkadian base is provided with no *-u* suffix, a preterite *ᵓiklaᵓ*; however, since the verbs in ll. 13–14 continue the succession of suffix-conjugation forms in ll. 11–12, it seems likely that they would take the same form.

61. This noun is attested in Ugaritic as well as once in biblical Hebrew; see Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription*, 273–74.

62. Similar questions have been posed by others, for instance, Edzard, "Amarna und die Archive seiner Korrespondenten," 252–53; and Rainey, "Taanach Letters," *Eretz Israel* 26 (1999): 155*.

63. See n. 4 above. It would be preferable, of course, to extend this inquiry diachronically as well as geographically, examining the use of cuneiform in Canaan from the Middle Bronze to the Late Bronze and situating it within a broader Syro-Canaanite context. A broader and more thorough investigation must await another occasion; restricting the purview to the Late Bronze Age suffices for present purposes.

texts constitute a variegated and rather eccentric assortment: they range in date throughout the Late Bronze Age, inasmuch as their dates can be fixed within that range; they come from numerous different sites; many are small fragments, of indeterminate type, or barely even legible, thus serving as evidence for nothing more than that "cuneiform was used here"; furthermore, among these texts are several unique and unparalleled items like the cylindrical "letter" from Beth Shean.[64] But this odd assortment also includes a rather high proportion of lexical material—four out of about forty items, or one-tenth of the total, coming from three different sites (Aphek, Ashkelon, and Hazor)—as well as fragments of literary texts that were used in scribal training, such as the Gilgamesh fragment found at Megiddo (where it was apparently brought from elsewhere).[65] Before examining the evidence in more specific terms, however, the premises on which discussion of the use and instruction of cuneiform in Canaan has hitherto been predicated require scrutiny.

First, discussions of cuneiform instruction in Canaan tend to speak of "schools," and to extrapolate from the very sparse evidence a fairly elaborate scribal curriculum which was putatively modelled on that of Mesopotamia and enhanced by the inclusion of local languages.[66] These discussions do not explain (and usually fail to consider) how the postulated curriculum produced the Canaano-Akkadian writing system. Regardless of whether a "school" is conceived as a distinct institution (perhaps housed in its own building) or simply as a collective comprising teacher(s), curricular texts, and students, if schools educating scribes on the Mesopotamian model existed in Canaan, how did the students end up writing Canaano-Akkadian? The schools would have to have been teaching students to write, for example, "hybrid" Canaano-Akkadian verb forms, rather than standard Akkadian forms; the hybrid is what should have appeared in their instruction manuals. Such Canaano-Akkadian curricular texts have not so far been found. While that could change with the next finds of cuneiform texts in Canaan, the sparseness of cuneiform finds in Late Bronze Age Canaan altogether, curricular texts included, hardly supports the postulate that scribal schools of any kind existed there. Some less systematic model of cuneiform instruction would seem more likely.

Second, it is conventionally assumed that, outside Mesopotamia, learning to write in cuneiform entailed learning the Akkadian language, just as learning cuneiform in Mesopotamia entailed learning Sumerian. Some scholars have explicitly insisted on this point with regard to the use of cuneiform in Canaan: van der Toorn emphasizes that "instruction in the

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64. W. Horowitz, "An Inscribed Clay Cylinder from Amarna Age Beth Shean," *IEJ* 46 (1996): 208–17; cf. Rainey's reinterpretation of this text, "Syntax, Hermeneutics, and History," *IEJ* 48 (1998): 239–42.

65. The Megiddo Gilgamesh fragment has now been reedited by Andrew George, in *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003), 339–47. George refers to petrographic analysis of the tablet's clay which indicates a source on the Mediterranean coast rather than at or in the immediate vicinity of Megiddo; 340, with n. 62.

66. See, e.g., van der Toorn, "Cuneiform Documents from Syria-Palestine," 105–8, and A. Demsky, "The Education of Canaanite Scribes in the Mesopotamian Cuneiform Tradition," in *Bar-Ilan Studies in Assyriology Dedicated to Pinḥas Artzi*, ed. J. Klein and A. Skaist (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan Univ. Press, 1990), 157–70. Demsky offers an especially detailed portrayal of Canaanite scribal education, which however employs so many anachronistic assumptions (such as the idea that "children of the aristocracy" were taught to read and write, 168–69), and over-interprets such minute bits of evidence, often of debatable meaning (for example, the letter to Biraššena of Shechem, interpreted by Demsky [ibid.] as referring to scribal education), that it is tantamount to fantasy. Both Demsky and van der Toorn extrapolate very freely from the evidence found at the site of Amarna, in Egypt, to describe the situation in Canaan. By contrast, in the same volume in which Demsky's article appears, the dedicatee, Pinḥas Artzi, writing about the cuneiform school at Amarna, remarks on the absence of a comparable school in Canaan (Artzi, "Studies in the Library of the Amarna Archive," in *Bar-Ilan Studies in Assyriology* [op. cit., above], 140, with n. 8).

cuneiform script went hand in hand with the acquisition of Akkadian as a language"; Demsky states that scribal education involved the study of both the Sumerian and Akkadian languages; meanwhile, Izre'el, clearly aware of the underlying epistemological issue, insists that the Canaanite scribes understood Akkadian to be a language distinct from their own, and that they thought Akkadian was the language in which they wrote.[67] Assertions such as these, like the conventional idea that Akkadian was the *lingua franca* of the second-millennium Near East, are predicated on assuming the exact identity of writing with language, an assumption that has been shown above to be unreliable. The Akkadian columns of lexical texts are customarily taken to be self-evident proof that the Akkadian language was taught, in the same way that the preponderance of syllabically spelled Akkadian words (along with logograms) in the Canaanite cuneiform texts is taken to be *prima facie* evidence that the language of these texts was a dialect of Akkadian. However, it is the lexical component of language which is most readily fixed in writing through spelling conventions. Therefore—in the same way that Canaano-Akkadian texts could have been written Akkadographically rather than in Akkadian—lexical texts could have been used to teach cuneiform spelling at least as easily as to teach Akkadian vocabulary. Edzard, pointing out how small is the vocabulary used in some of the Canaanite Amarna letters, has observed that many of the Canaanite scribes were "very limited in their knowledge of *writable* words" (emphasis mine; Edzard, "Amarna und die Archive seiner Korrespondenten," 253). This would be the likely result of learning to spell a limited set of words and formulas in cuneiform, without necessarily learning to use the Akkadian language.

Statements to the effect that the study of cuneiform necessarily entailed the study of the Akkadian (or Sumerian) language too simplistically assume not only that writing must record language (rather than encoding linguistically interpretable information), but that writing implies explicit linguistic knowledge. Surely some of the Canaanite cuneiformists did learn Akkadian in the course of learning to write, but it is likely that others learned very little if any of the Akkadian language, and simply learned enough Akkadograms, Sumerograms, and syllabic signs to fulfill the limited purposes writing served in their towns. Meanwhile, the cleverest of these scribes developed methods to indicate the correct Canaanite reading of the texts they wrote: a system of Canaanite phonetic complements, and syllabic spellings of Canaanite words.

The schooling of the Canaanite scribes probably took forms as varied as their evident capabilities. Some of them may have been educated in "schools," but maybe not in Canaan. The idea that Canaanite scribes could have learned their craft abroad is implicit in Moran's proposal that the scribe of the Jerusalem letters was from Syria, based on the palaeography, spelling, and language of those letters.[68] In view of this scribe's prolific "Canaanitisms,"

67. van der Toorn, "Cuneiform Documents from Syria-Palestine," 106; Demsky, "The Education of Canaanite Scribes," 160; and Izre'el, "Amarna Glosses," 102–3, and "Methodological Requisites," §3.2. Izre'el bases his claim that the Canaanite scribes "thought of their language of correspondence as Akkadian" on the following grounds (in part addressed above, under "Hybrid Language or Akkadographic Code?"): Their use of the cuneiform script (but then, analogically, early Japanese writers must have believed themselves to be writing Chinese; see above, pp. 657–58 with nn. 39, 42); their use of Akkadian vocabulary and formulae (but these could all be Akkadographic); and their use of the gloss wedge to mark Canaanite words as "foreign" (rather than, as I argue here, to mark words written to aid in the correct reading of the text).

68. Moran, "The Syrian Scribe of the Jerusalem Amarna Letters," in *Unity and Diversity. Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East*, ed. H. Goedicke and J. J. M. Roberts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1975), 146–66 (now republished in Moran, *Amarna Studies: Collected Writings*, 249–74), esp. 155–56.

especially the Canaanite form of the 1cs. pronoun, *'anōkī* (spelled *a-nu-ki*), the evidence detailed by Moran suggests rather that the Jerusalem scribe was a Canaanite who learned to write in Syria.[69] There may also have been instances of the converse, when a teacher was imported into Canaan, perhaps only temporarily; this possibility is evoked by recent discussion of the letter to Biraššena found at Shechem, although the text itself contains no clear evidence either that the writer was a teacher or that the subject was scribal instruction.[70] It does not seem likely, however, that most Canaanite scribes got to study abroad or with a teacher visiting from abroad. Many of them must have trained with their fathers, as was normal for other crafts.[71]

Let us return to the evidence of the cuneiform texts found in Canaan, in particular the lexical texts, which may attest to scribal education in Canaan, and the Canaano-Akkadian forms that occasionally occur in non-lexical texts, which may complicate as well as complement the interpretation of the Canaano-Akkadian hybrid in which the Canaanite Amarna letters are written.

The four lexical texts found at Aphek, Ashkelon, and Hazor would seem to constitute direct evidence not only for writing instruction but language instruction. For two of these texts, perhaps three, offer syllabically spelled Canaanite translations of logograms and of Akkadian words. The one from Hazor is a fragment of a ḪAR-ra = *ḫubullu* excerpt, in which only part of one column of logograms is preserved; being a surface find, it was dated on the basis of palaeography, and might be late Middle Bronze (= late Old Babylonian) rather than early Late Bronze.[72] The lexical text found at Ashkelon is also a ḪAR-ra = *ḫubullu* fragment, but this one comes from a tablet that included Canaanite columns. The fragment preserves part of one column giving the Canaanite translations of a series of entries, and part of another column to its right (separated by a double vertical ruling) giving the logograms that began another series of entries; the original tablet presumably had three-column entries that gave logograms followed by Akkadian and then Canaanite equivalents.[73] One of the two lexical fragments found at Aphek contains triplicate entries that consist of a logogram followed by syllabically spelled Akkadian and Canaanite equivalents, each separated by a gloss mark; entries for "water," "wine," and perhaps "oil" and "honey"

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69. Moran notes these "Canaanitisms," in "Syrian Scribe," 155 and n. 78, but without suggesting an explanation for their use in writing by a scribe native to Syria.

70. See Demsky, in "The Education of Canaanite Scribes," 168–69; and cf. A. Shaffer's reedition of this tablet, "Studies in the Tablets of the Land of Israel, I: The Letter from Shechem," *Beer-Sheva* 3 (1988): 163–69. From the text it seems clear only that the letter's author, whose name may have been feminine, complains of getting no support in connection with youths for whom he or she appears to be responsible. Even if *il-ta-na-ma-du*, "they keep on learning," is the correct reading of the verb in l. 11 (rather than, among other options, Shaffer's *il-ta-na-ba-ṭù*, "they are suffering"), it need have nothing to do with instruction in cuneiform.

71. Å. Sjöberg assumes the same for scribal training in Mesopotamia after the Old Babylonian period, when, "as an institution of education, the eduba seems to die out" ("The Old Babylonian Eduba," in *Sumerological Studies in Honor of Thorkild Jacobsen* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975], 160, with n. 3). Instances of father-son scribal instruction in Ḫatti are mentioned by G. Beckman, "Mesopotamians and Mesopotamian Learning at Ḫattuša," *JCS* 35 (1983): 107, with n. 51. From the first millennium, a specific instance of a father providing writing instruction to his adopted son is documented by an adoption declaration recently republished by Ira Spar and myself, *Cuneiform Texts in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 3, *Private Archive Texts from the First Millennium B.C.* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), No. 53.

72. H. Tadmor, "A Lexicographical Text from Hazor," *IEJ* 27 (1977): 98–102, and pl. 13; having identified the text as the fragment of an excerpt, Tadmor inferred that "its presence at Hazor indicates that the local cuneiform archive contained some explicit Ḫḫ texts," 101.

73. J. Huehnergard and W. van Soldt, "A Cuneiform Lexical Text from Ashkelon with a Canaanite Column," *IEJ* 49 (1999): 184–92; a reconstruction of the left-hand triplet of columns is offered on p. 191.

are partly preserved, written on what appears to have been a cylindrical clay prism mounted on a stick.[74] The other lexical fragment from Aphek preserves remnants of two columns, logograms to the left and syllabic spellings of words that could be either Canaanite or Akkadian (e.g., *alpu*) to the right, written on a tablet only one side of which had been pre-pared as a writing surface; its left portion had apparently been broken off in antiquity and the resultant edge smoothed, which suggested to Rainey, the tablet's editor, that it had been used as a school text.[75] As Rainey points out, neither of the lexical texts from Aphek derives from a known lexical series.[76] Thus, they would seem to be indigenous Canaanite creations, whether for pedagogical or other purposes.

The lexical texts from both Ashkelon and Aphek certainly demonstrate that at least some scribes in Canaan were cognizant of the languages underlying cuneiform writing, and that they deliberately engaged not only in Canaanite-Akkadian translation, but in developing syllabic Canaanite spellings corresponding to logograms and to Akkadian spellings. They may well have been doing this well after the Amarna period, however, for the Ashkelon fragment was found in a thirteenth-century context, and the Aphek fragments in a building destroyed toward the end of the thirteenth century.[77] Meanwhile, the columns of these texts that give logographic and Akkadian spellings, along with the fragments of traditional Sumero-Akkadian lexical texts such as that found at Hazor, testify to instruction in cunei-form, but not necessarily to instruction in Sumerian and Akkadian. With regard to the Su-merian lexical lists used at Ebla one millennium earlier, Miguel Civil points out that these lists could have been read either in Sumerian or in Semitic, and concludes: "Thus the lists written in Sumerian did not represent the words of a *lingua franca* used by persons speak-ing different languages, but rather they were *litterae francae*, so to speak, that could be read in almost any language."[78] His observation can be applied as well to Sumero-Akkadian lexi-cal texts and cuneiform writing in the second-millennium Levant. It was within the frame-work of learning and using an Akkadographic system of writing cuneiform that Canaanite scribes developed Canaano-Akkadian, during the Late Bronze Age.

This development is observable in the non-lexical texts found in Canaan, some of which exhibit features of the Canaano-Akkadian characteristic of the Canaanite Amarna letters, including Canaanite glosses; examples follow.[79] Among the Taanach letters, which origi-nate from several correspondents including an Egyptian official, one letter (TT 2) from,

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74. Rainey, "A Tri-Lingual Cuneiform Fragment from Tel Aphek," *Tel Aviv* 3 (1976): 137–40, and pl. 9. The object preserves the remains of five entries altogether; of the fourth only one sign remains. The third entry has no Canaanite translation following the restored ⌈ša?⌉-*am-nu*, only a shallow gloss mark, perhaps partly erased; Rainey suggests the reason for this was that the Canaanite word for "oil" was identical to the Akkadian (139).

75. Rainey, "Two Cuneiform Fragments from Tel Aphek," *Tel Aviv* 2 (1975): 125–29, and pl. 24; the interpre-tation of the lexical fragment as a school text appears on p. 127.

76. Rainey, "Tri-Lingual Cuneiform Fragment," 139; also "Two Cuneiform Fragments," 125. Recently, Rainey has characterized the tri-lingual Aphek fragment as "obviously originating from Ugarit," without however giving any reason why this should be so, nor making reference to any discussion supporting this statement ("Syntax, Herme-neutics, and History," 240).

77. Huehnergard and van Soldt, "Cuneiform Lexical Text from Ashkelon," 184; Rainey, "Two Cuneiform Frag-ments," 125.

78. Civil, "Early History of ḪAR-ra: the Ebla Link," in *Ebla 1975–1985: Dieci anni di studi linguistici e filo-logici*, ed. L. Cagni (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1987), 140.

79. The examples I adduce in this paragraph are not intended to represent a comprehensive overview of Ca-naanite features in cuneiform texts found in Late Bronze Canaan, only to survey such features in more-or-less datable texts.

apparently, a local Canaanite dignitary uses several Canaano-Akkadian forms.[80] These include two 3mpl. present-future verb forms having the prefix *t-*, in accord with the paradigm of the Canaanite 3mpl. prefix conjugation,[81] and the "hybrid" verb form *ar-ba-ku*, "I entered," in which *ʿrb* (or *erēbu*) appears to be conjugated on the Canaanite suffix-conjugation pattern with the Akkadian 1cs. suffix *-ku* attached, as in Akkadian, by means of *-a-*, causing the elision of the theme vowel.[82] Another Canaano-Akkadian feature that appears in this Taanach letter and, as Rainey observes, in the Shechem letter to Biraššena, is the use of conjunctions according to Canaanite rules: *u* is used in the functions of West Semitic *w*, and *inūma* in the function of Canaanite *kī*.[83]

The Amarna-period tablets found at Kumidi, the seat of an Egyptian provincial commissioner, include letters written in Canaan, which are characterized by Canaano-Akkadian features.[84] From the same period, the letter addressed to the king of Ugarit by the king of Beirut which was recently found in a private collection contains the same types of Canaano-Akkadian features as the Amarna letters from Beirut; in fact, Arnaud and Salvini date this letter to the Amarna period on the basis of its Canaanite features, for they observe that thirteenth-century letters from Beirut found at Ugarit are written in more or less standard Middle Babylonian.[85] And a letter recently found at Hazor, which may have been sent from the area of Lebanon, contains two Canaanite glosses, both apparently 3mpl. suffix-conjugation verb forms translating syllabically spelled Akkadian verbs: *ḫe-te-qú*, possibly "they departed" (√*ʿtq*), and *ša-pa-ṭú-ni*, "they judged me"; the scribe may have worried, probably rightly, that he got the Akkadian verbs wrong, and therefore aided his reader with translations into a shared language.[86] A Canaano-Akkadian verb form also appears in a text that was probably

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80. The sender is named Aḫiya (the syllable *-mi* may be understood as the enclitic particle rather than part of the name) and he describes the addressee as his "brother," before proceeding to the discussion of gifts he needs, among other subjects; see Rainey, "Taanach Letters," 157–59*.

81. These forms are *ti-pu-šu*, "they do," and *tu-da¹-nu-na*, "they will be given" (TT 2: 14 and 20; Rainey, "Taanach Letters," 157*); the latter form is included in Rainey's discussion of the Canaanite 3mpl. prefix conjugation, *CAT* II: 45, but the former seems to go unmentioned in *CAT*.

82. TT 2: 6; see Rainey, *CAT* II: 283, and "Taanach Letters," 157–58*.

83. *inūma* is used as a subordinating conjunction introducing substantival clauses in TT 2: 5 and 17; *u* introduces result, apodosis, and substantival clauses in TT 2: 7, 11, 14, and 20. Rainey points out these features in the Shechem letter in "Taanach Letters," 155*. Regarding the use of *inūma* in the functions of Canaanite *kī* and the West Semitic uses of the coordinating conjunction *u*, see the first section of this article, Features of Hybridization.

84. See, for example, Wilhelm's remarks on the Canaanism of KL no. 5, in "Die Keilschrifttafeln aus Kāmid el-Lōz," 42; and Edzard, "Ein Brief an den 'Großen' von Kumidi aus Kāmid el-Lōz," *ZA* 66 (1976): 65, noting the "Canaanizing" 3mpl. verb forms with *t*-prefix in this letter (KL no. 6). Arnaud identifies a number of Canaanite words and features in the fragmentary letter, a copy kept at Kumidi according to his interpretation, which he publishes as "Une Lettre de Kamid-el-Loz," in *Semitica* 40 (1991): 10.

85. Arnaud and Salvini, "Une lettre du roi de Beyrouth au roi d'Ugarit," esp. 13–15. Canaanizing features in the newly published tablet include the verb forms *yi-⟨iš?⟩-ta-ri-iq*, ʿ*yi*¹-*na-ab-di*, and *yi-te-li* (ll. 9, 11, and 13), all representing Canaanite 3ms. preterites. In commenting on the third of these forms, Arnaud and Salvini point out that the sign WA, denoting the verb's prefix, may serve as a "graphic determinant" to distinguish the 3ms. from the 1cs. form (12).

86. The text is published by W. Horowitz, "Two Late Bronze Age Tablets from Hazor," *IEJ* 50 (2000): 17–25. The two glosses appear in ll. 19 and 21 of the letter; I quote them according to Horowitz's reading and interpretation, which he acknowledges to be uncertain, as is also the interpretation of the Akkadian verbs that the glosses translate. Depending on where the letter came from, the glosses could be understood as Canaanite or more generally as West Semitic. Horowitz suggests Amurru as the letter's place of origin, citing the results of petrographic analysis (20, with n. 9); however, Y. Goren, publishing the results of petrographic analysis in the same journal issue as Horowitz's publication of the tablets, identifies Lebanon, perhaps the Beqʿa Valley specifically, as the letter's probable place of origin (Goren, "Provenance Study of the Cuneiform Texts from Hazor," *IEJ* 50 [2000]: 41–42).

a student's exercise or practice letter, namely the cylindrical text found at Beth Shean, which consists of phrases typical of letters, starting with the epistolary introduction formula (purporting to address a message to Lab'aya of Shechem from Tagi of Ginti-Kirmil). This text contains the verb form *iš-te-me*, not a proper Akkadian infixed-*t* perfect form (despite appearances) but a "hybrid" form in which the 1cs. prefix (aleph, represented as zero) and preterite suffix (zero, in the 1cs.) are affixed to the Akkadian form used as a base.[87]

Together with the lexical and curricular texts, the foregoing examples may vaguely suggest a trajectory in the development of the Canaano-Akkadian system of writing. The ḪAR-ra = *ḫubullu* fragment from Hazor and the Gilgamesh fragment found at Megiddo date to the fifteenth or sixteenth century, earlier than the rest of the material, and represent a phase of cuneiform use and instruction in Canaan prior to the development of Canaano-Akkadian.[88] Among the Taanach tablets, which probably date to the late fifteenth century, the letter discussed above, whose sender was evidently Canaanite, manifests many Canaano-Akkadian features, but the other tablets do not.[89] The fourteenth-century letters found at Kumidi, Shechem, and Hazor exhibit varying degrees of "Canaanization," like the Canaanite Amarna letters themselves; as in many of those texts, in the Hazor letter Akkadian or Akkadographically-written verb forms are explained by means of Canaanite translations. Then there is the Beth Shean "letter," datable to the Amarna period by the persons named therein.[90] If this was indeed a practice letter written by a scribe-in-training, then it testifies to the instruction of Canaanite scribes in writing formulae using Canaano-Akkadian forms; such forms were evidently not learned from curricular texts, however, but by copying phrases that were used in actual documents. Finally, the lexical texts from Aphek and Ashkelon may be evidence of an attempt to systematically teach the languages written in cuneiform, or even to systematize the writing of Canaanite in cuneiform, which probably coincided with the floruit of multilingual and "multi-scriptal" literacy at Ugarit in the thirteenth century.[91]

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87. The form *iš-te-me* appears in l. 7 of the text, for which see Horowitz, "An Inscribed Clay Cylinder," 210 (who does not remark on the Canaano-Akkadian verb form). As to the nature of this text, Rainey is surely right that it is not a real letter, and therefore cannot serve as the basis for any historical reconstruction such as Horowitz proposes. But Rainey's own suggestion, that it "served some scribe who felt he needed a handy copy of the standard formulations for introducing an epistle" ("Syntax, Hermeneutics, and History," 240), is not that credible either. Why would a scribe need a crib sheet for the phrases he wrote most frequently? Rainey adduces, for comparison, the cylindrical school exercise from Amarna, EA 355, and the cylindrical fragment from Aphek (discussed above), which might have served a pedagogical purpose. In view of its content and these possible comparanda, it seems likely that the Beth Shean text was the work of a student.

88. See above, p. 669 with n. 72, on the date of the ḪAR-ra = *hubullu* fragment from Hazor, and see George, *Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 340 and 343, regarding the date of the Megiddo Gilgamesh fragment and the determination that this text derives from the Old Babylonian recension of the Gilgamesh Epic.

89. For the date, and a general assessment of these letters' degree of Canaanism, see Rainey, "Taanach Letters," 154*, and *CAT* II: 31.

90. Lab'aya of Shechem and Tagi of Ginti-Kirmil are well known from the Amarna letters; the Beth Shean cylinder was found in an excavation dump, rather than a datable context (Horowitz, "Inscribed Clay Cylinder," 208–9, with nn. 1 and 5).

91. At Ugarit, though several scripts and languages were available, a tight correlation between script and language was maintained. The local alphabet was almost never used to write texts in any but the local Ugaritic language, while the imported cuneiform script was never used to write texts in Ugaritic. Evidently, therefore, the multilingual vocabularies provided with a Ugaritic column were created for purposes of reference or instruction rather than to facilitate writing Ugaritic texts in Mesopotamian cuneiform. (I am obliged to both Jerry Cooper and John Huehnergard for stressing these points, separately, in personal communications.) By analogy, the Canaanite multilingual vocabularies were probably created for similar purposes. Such purposes could have included systematizing the syllabic writing of Canaanite words by integrating this element of Canaanite scribal practice into pedagogical or reference materials, even if no scribe ever conceived of writing entire texts syllabically in Canaanite.

At the same time, in some Canaanite towns Canaano-Akkadian was replaced by standard Middle Babylonian, according to Arnaud and Salvini's study of letters sent from Beirut (see above, p. 671, with n. 85).

Pinhas Artzi has sketched the progression of Canaanite cuneiform literacy thus: after an "earlier, Mesopotamian peripheral phase," embracing the Middle Bronze Age and ending in the fifteenth century, there follows a "later, Western peripheral phase," characterized by the use of Canaanized Akkadian, glosses, and multilingual "dictionaries." The transition from the earlier to the later phase, Artzi speculates, might have resulted from a "brain-drain," specifically, "the voluntary or forced emigration of learned scribes"—to Egypt.[92] The scribes left behind in Canaan, lacking the means to maintain standard Mesopotamian-style cuneiform education, fell back on the resources of their native language, and so produced the Canaano-Akkadian "hybrid," while figuring out how to write Canaanite in cuneiform.[93] This is a seductive hypothesis, and it can work even without Artzi's proposed "brain drain." There were never so very many scribes in Canaan that the mere passing of a well-trained generation, in the absence of adequate local schools to train their successors, would not have drastically altered the character of cuneiform literacy there. Long ago, in the Middle Bronze Age, they had learned to write Akkadian in cuneiform on the Old Babylonian model; in the early Late Bronze Age, some scribes began incorporating Canaanite features in their writing, perhaps without being aware that they were doing so. During the next few generations, learning to write in cuneiform was transformed into learning a set of spelling paradigms with which to encode linguistic expression, and the underlying language was now the scribes' own, Canaanite. The system of writing that the latter generations learned comprised logograms, Akkadograms, and syllabic signs that were employed both to supplement the logograms and Akkadograms as phonetic complements, and simply to write words in Canaanite. Some scribes became highly literate in this writing system, and polyglots among them could write Egyptian words in cuneiform, or even write good Akkadian, along with Canaanite, while other scribes learned only to spell a limited set of words and phrases. At last, perhaps, realizing that the intermediary of logograms and Akkadograms could be dispensed with—as happened with other writing systems, at other times and places—some clever scribes might have begun to develop the use of cuneiform to write Canaanite syllabically. But their evanescent efforts, conjectured only from the meager remains of two or three lexical texts, were cut short by the adoption of the alphabet and the transition to the Iron Age.[94]

CONCLUSION

If the hypothesis I have presented here is valid, it should not alter the translation of so much as one line in one text, but it would dramatically alter the paradigm of writing and language use in the Late Bronze Age Levant. The idea of a dominant language would be replaced by the idea of a dominant writing system, which was implemented in various ways to

92. Artzi, as respondent to Edzard, "Amarna und die Archive seiner Korrespondenten," in *Biblical Archaeology Today*, 269–70.

93. Artzi, op. cit., 271; in the last clause of the sentence above, I adjust Artzi's formulation to my own. My discussion in this section is indebted in a general way to his interpretation of the Canaanite glosses and Canaanite-Akkadian-logographic "glossaries," in the contribution cited in the preceding note as well as in his older study, "Glosses in the El-Amarna Documents."

94. See, again, Artzi, op. cit., 271, and idem, "Nippur Elementary Schoolbooks in the 'West,'" in *Nippur at the Centennial*, ed. M. deJong Ellis (Philadelphia, 1992), 4–5, where Artzi interprets the ʿIzbet Ṣarṭah ostracon as an alphabetic descendant of cuneiform school texts.

encode different languages, in diverse regions: not Sumerian and Akkadian, but cuneiform *litterae francae* (adopting Civil's coinage, cited above), were the medium of written communication among the multitude of Near Eastern states, with their multiplicity of tongues. Certainly, in many places outside Mesopotamia, cuneiform *literati* did learn and use the Akkadian language in writing, for example, at Ḫattuša, Ugarit, and indeed at Akhetaten, too. I do not intend to imply that the model I propose for the Canaanite use of cuneiform is to be extrapolated to every locality where both the cuneiform script and the Akkadian language were imported, nor to every text corpus wherein the form of Akkadian is discernibly affected by the local spoken languages. But this model may well be found applicable for other text corpora that are characterized by the same set of elements as the Canaanite Amarna letters, i.e., the use of words and syntax according to the rules of the local language, the employment of glosses in the local language, and some degree of apparent hybridization between Akkadian and the local language. No longer, then, would Akkadian be seen as the common language of communication from Susa to Thebes. To put it more pointedly, no longer would we imagine platoons of scribes studying Akkadian in order to write letters to Egypt and elsewhere, then bowdlerizing the language into a host of ultra-localized idiolects whose proper analysis can occupy legions of scholarly careers. Meanwhile, the stock of Canaanite would rise. On the theory that Canaano-Akkadian was not a hybrid language but the Akkadographic writing of Canaanite, it emerges that we have numerous extant tablets written in Canaanite, for the scribes of Canaan wrote their own language in cuneiform, rather than being entirely in the thrall of Mesopotamian scribal tradition. More significantly, perhaps, Canaanite emerges as the spoken and written *lingua franca* of part of Egypt's empire in the Levant.

We whose means to knowledge are primarily textual too readily presume that the text is the reality, but historically texts have more usually served as memoranda (or advertisements, or creators) of reality. Indeed, the concept of a text-based *lingua franca* may be altogether inappropriate to a world where communication, even when mediated through writing, was not fundamentally textual but oral. Such was the literate Near Eastern world of the second millennium B.C.E.

ABBREVIATIONS

AlT   siglum for tablets found at Alalaḫ
CAT   Rainey, *Canaanite in the Amarna Tablets*
EA   siglum for tablets found at Tell el-Amarna
Bibliographic abbreviations conform to those used by *Archiv für Orientforschung*.