Language Contact between Akkadian and Northwest Semitic Languages in Syria-Palestine in the Late Bronze Age

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1 Introduction

Akkadian, a native language of Mesopotamia, “is by far the best attested Semitic language in the ancient world prior to the appearance of Arabic in the historical record” (Kouwenberg 2011: 330).¹ The oldest traces of Akkadian can be dated to the middle of the third millennium B.C., and the last text is datable to the first century A.D. (Kouwenberg 2011: 330-332). During the second millennium B.C. this language was used as a *lingua franca* in the ancient Near East by a large number of States, reaching its peak as the language of diplomacy in the Middle Babylonian period (ca. 1500-1000).²

As Akkadian expanded beyond the geographical area where it was spoken, it came into contact with both Semitic (e.g., Amorite, Ugaritic, Canaanite) and non-Semitic languages (e.g., Hittite, Hurrian). These languages were often spoken by societies who had not previously developed a script system for their native languages. Given the new situation, extra-Mesopotamian scribes adopted at times Mesopotamian cuneiform script to write texts only in Akkadian. On other occasions, they used the Mesopotamian script to write texts both in Akkadian and in the local language. In both cases Akkadian became imbued, to various degrees, with the diverse local languages it came into direct contact with.³ A significant result of this process was that, quite often, Akkadian acted as a sort of “contrast medium,” bringing to light languages (Semitic and non-Semitic, such as Amorite and Kassite respectively) which had not been recorded in writing up until that moment and which would otherwise have probably gone totally unnoticed.

Within the aforementioned framework, this chapter shall exclusively focus on the contact between Akkadian and ~~the~~ ~~three~~ other Semitic languages. This contact therefore involves genetically related

¹ This chapter is one result of the research project ‘Native Languages, *linguae francae*, and Graphics Traditions in Late Bronze Age Syria and Palestine: Three Case Studies (Canaan, Ugarit, Emar)’ (FFI2011-25065), funded by the Spanish Ministry for Economic Affairs and Competitiveness within the National Plan for Scientific Research, Development and Technological Innovation (I+D+I). A previous version of this work was presented on 17 July 2014 as a lecture at the *Seminar für Sprachen und Kulturen des Vorderen Orients – Assyriologie* of the University of Heidelberg titled “Akkadisch und einheimische semitische Sprachen im spätbronzezeitlichen Syrien-Palästina: Sprachkontakt und Schreiberschulen.” I wish to thank Professor Dr. Stefan Maul for kindly inviting me to give this lecture and to also thank those who attended for their valuable observations and remarks.

² van Soldt 2011: 405; Streck 2011: 376. See also Márquez Rowe 2006: 140-166. In some cases scribes used Mesopotamian cuneiform script and Akkadian both for international exchanges and for the purposes of local administration.

³ van Soldt 2011; Streck 2011: 366-367, 376-378. From this viewpoint, Akkadian has also been the subject of study in linguistic analyses focused on contact languages; see for instance Thomason 2001: 6, 89; Márquez Rowe 2004; Johanson 2013.

languages, a linguistic situation with peculiar issues.⁴ The three languages in question are Emarite, Ugaritic, and Canaanite, attested to in Syria-Palestine in the Late Bronze Age. Unlike Akkadian, a language within the East Semitic branch of Semitic languages, the aforementioned three languages are part of the Northwest Semitic sub-family, corresponding to clearly differentiated geographical, social, and political environments.⁵ No texts are preserved in Emarite or in Canaanite; our knowledge of these languages is limited to the linguistic elements preserved in Akkadian texts written in the kingdom of Emar and in various localities in Canaan. These languages can be considered “Trümmersprachen” or partially documented languages, whose knowledge is consequently partial and defective.⁶ Ugaritic, in turn, is attested to not only in Akkadian texts but above all in hundreds of texts written entirely in that language using a specific alphabet.

In the following lines I will describe firstly the type of linguistic contact established between Akkadian and Emarite (§2), Akkadian and Ugaritic (§3), and Akkadian and Canaanite (§4). I will next try to elucidate what the attitude of scribes was towards the registering in writing their mother tongue and how they perceived their own language in connection with the Akkadian used in written texts, a goal of a rather sociolinguistic nature. I will try to reach, in conclusion, an understanding of what kind of relationship existed between these three vernacular languages and Akkadian as a *lingua franca*.

2 Akkadian and Emarite

2.1 Texts found in Emar

The archaeological excavations carried out since 1972 in Meskene Qadime (Arab Republic of Syria), ancient Emar, have brought to light about 1,200 texts and fragments written mainly in Akkadian.⁷ The Akkadian language used in these documents has been appropriately studied by Seminara (1988)⁸ while the onomastics was studied by Pruzsinszky (2003). These texts can be dated to the 14th and 12th centuries B.C., that is, to the Syrian Late Bronze Age, and they enable us to study the political and social organization as well as the languages used in a Syrian kingdom already referred to by the Eblaite sources from the 3rd millennium B.C.⁹ The Akkadian texts are of different genres (legal and

⁴ As expounded by Epps, Huehnergard and Pat-El 2013.

⁵ Regarding the Northwest Semitic languages family, see especially Huehnergard 2005; Hasselbach and Huehnergard 2007; Gzella 2011.

⁶ A category where Amorite, for instance, could also be included. Regarding the problems posed by this type of partially documented languages see Hackett 2002. See also Gzella 2011: 426-428.

⁷ A small number of documents were also in Hittite (published) and in Hurrian (unpublished; cf. Giorgieri 2013: 166).

⁸ See also Faist and Vita 2008.

⁹ A full and updated bibliography on all the aspects of the studies of Emar can be found in Faist, Justel, and Vita 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009. See also “Bibliografía de los estudios de Emar, 2006. Página en español, inglés y alemán,” at <http://www.ieiop.com/emar>. To date, the archive of Emar has been the subject of two specific collective works: Chavalas 1996, and d’Alfonso, Cohen, and Sürenhagen 2008. Regarding the chronology of the Emar archives, see d’Alfonso and Cohen 2008; Pruzsinszky 2009; Cohen 2013.

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clerical documents, literary, religious, and lexical texts), and they have an added ingredient of interest: they also attest to the local language of Emar, currently known as “Emarite.”

2.2 Emarite

The classification of Emarite as a Semitic language has been the subject of some debate, but in general it may be classified as Northwest Semitic (NWS).¹⁰ The main difficulty in studying this language is posed by the fact that no text in Emarite has ever been preserved: all elements of Emarite are found inserted, here and there, within syllabic texts in Akkadian written by local scribes. For example:

- lú.meš gal ^{li.meš} *kà-ma-ri* i.kú “The nobles (and) priests eat”.¹¹
- ^dInanna *šu-pá-ra-ti* ‘Ishtar of the goats’.¹²
- ^dkaskal.kur.ra.meš *ša hi-iṭ-ṭi* ‘(god) Balih of the wheat’.¹³

The Emarite linguistic material was compiled and studied by Penttinen (2001). His work serves as a reference for any analysis of Emarite, though it must currently be complemented with and amended by other studies, especially those by Sjöberg (1998), Ikeda (2003),¹⁴ and Cohen (2002; 2009; 2010a; 2010b).

A glossary comprised exclusively of NWS linguistic elements found in the syllabic texts of Emar would yield approximately 145 lemmata which, according to Ikeda (2003, 268), may be classified within the following semantic fields¹⁵: 1) topographic features¹⁶, 2) architectural structures, 3) professional and social status, 4) divine names and epithets, 5) festival and month names, 6) agricultural products, 7) animals, 8) food, 9) vessels and tools, 10) units of measurement. Nevertheless, not all of these items can be directly considered part of the Emarite language, as Ikeda (2003, 268) reckons that only half of these items “may safely be regarded as Emarite bases”; the remainder could be classified within the following four main groups: 1) West Semitic bases which are not necessarily Emarite, 2) West Semitic loan-words into Akkadian, 3) Akkadianized Emarite roots, and 4) Akkadian lexemes with Emarite interference (Ikeda 2003, 268-269).

¹⁰ Pruzsinszky 2003: 41-47, provides a brief history of the investigation. Linguistic links between Emarite and Ugaritic have been explored by Watson 1992; 1993. More recently, del Olmo 2012 has analysed the links between Emarite, Ugaritic and Old South [Arabic](#).

¹¹ Emar 446:38. Penttinen 2001: 95: “/kamarū/ and /kumarū/ WS n.m.pl. ‘priests’ (KMR).”

¹² Emar 379:6. Penttinen 2001: 164: “/šuparātu/ WS n.f.pl. ‘goats’ (ŠPR).”

¹³ Emar 378:43. Penttinen 2001: 70: “/hiṭṭu/ WS n.m.s. ‘wheat’ (HNT).”

¹⁴ Ikeda 2003 provides a very good assessment of the work of Penttinen 2001 and also takes into consideration texts which are not reviewed by Penttinen.

¹⁵ Penttinen’s glossary (2001, 19-198) also compiles Hittite and Hurrian terms.

¹⁶ See also Reculeau 2010.

2.3 *Emarite: Genres, chronology, and statistic data*

According to Pentiuc (2001: 12), “The largest concentration of non-normative Akkadian forms (native and foreign) is found in religious, legal and economic documents. In second place come the lexical and literary texts, and letters provide only one possible example.” The following lines – exclusively focused on the Northwest Semitic elements – aim to qualify and explain Pentiuc’s statements also taking into consideration the diachronic dimension of the various text genres.

Approximately 700 texts found in Emar have been published to date. Two thirds of these consist of legal documents regarding private law.¹⁷ Only 133 of these texts contain a NWS term. Legal texts from Emar correspond, in turn, to two different scribal traditions, known as ‘Syrian’ and ‘Syro-Hittite’, each with their own palaeographic and grammatical characteristics.¹⁸ The ratio between both traditions is approximately one to one.¹⁹ In terms of absolute chronology, the documents of Syrian tradition span from the early 14th century to the mid 13th century, while the Syro-Hittite tradition starts ca. 1275 and ends with the fall of the city around 1175 BC.²⁰ Of the 133 legal texts containing NWS terms 95 are of Syrian tradition, and the remainder are of Syro-Hittite tradition.

The corpus of clerical texts from Emar consists of approximately 175 documents, chronologically corresponding to the final stages of the history of the city.²¹ These documents also reflect the aforementioned Syrian and Syro-Hittite traditions.²² Only 33 clerical texts contain NWS linguistic items, 25 of which are of Syro-Hittite tradition.

As for other genres in the text corpus of Emar, the situation can be summed up as follows: only 8 out of 70 lexical texts, 61 of ca. 320 literary and ritual texts²³ and just one out of ca. 20 preserved letters contain NWS linguistic elements. The only preserved medical text contains just one NWS term.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the aforementioned data: 1) the number of texts from Emar containing NWS linguistic elements is quite low both from the point of view of the entire text corpus from this locality and from a genre standpoint; 2) as legal and clerical texts reveal, both Syrian and Syro-Hittite traditions attest to NWS linguistic elements, neither of which reveal a higher prevalence than the other of these items if both genres are taken into consideration; 3) the textual corpus from Emar attests to NWS linguistic elements throughout its entire chronology, spanning from the early 14th century to ca. 1175 BC.

¹⁷ Cf. Démare-Lafont 2010: 43. Westbrook (2003: 657) reckons that Emar and sites in the vicinity have yielded approximately 500 legal documents.

¹⁸ Regarding these two scribal traditions, see the relevant clarifications produced by Fleming and Démare-Lafont 2009, with preceding bibliography. See also recently Cohen 2012.

¹⁹ Cf. Ikeda 1999: 166; Pentiuc 2001: 10.

²⁰ Cohen and d’Alfonso 2008: 24; Cohen 2013: 289.

²¹ Faist 2008: 201: “roughly between the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 12th century B.C.”

²² Faist 2008.

²³ Approximately 20 literary and 300 ritual texts are preserved. The following observation by Ikeda (2003: 273) should also be taken into consideration: “The religious texts were composed in Emar, while the literary texts were not.”

In short, little more than half (379) of the 700 published texts of the Emar corpus contain a NWS linguistic element. The aforementioned figure of 145 NWS lemmata spans over two centuries of history.

2.4 The attitude of Emarite scribes towards their mother tongue

Bearing all these data in mind, what may have been the attitude of Emarite scribes towards their own mother tongue as a written language? An illustrative example in this respect is provided by the lexical lists known as Urra = *hubullu*, *lú* = *ša*, and *izi* = *išātu* found in Emar. These texts produce a column for the Sumerian entries, a second column in Akkadian (with the occasional insertion of terms in the local language or simply non-Akkadian terms) as a translation of the terms listed in the first column, and a third column with the occasional presence of terms which could be considered as “second glosses.” Here are some examples where the secondary glosses may be interpreted as WS terms, quite probably belonging to the local language:

– (giš) apin á-kár	<i>u-nu-tu</i> ‘utensil’	: <i>a-nu</i> ‘utensil’ ²⁴
– (giš) sag-du	<i>a-sú-ú</i> ‘loom part’	: <i>na-ba-lu</i> ‘harp/hanging’ ²⁵
– az	<i>a-su</i> ‘bear’	: <i>za-ba-ú</i> ‘animal-type’ ²⁶

This “second glosses” have been studied in detail by Cohen (2010a), who reaches the following conclusions regarding their function: “Because of the high percentage of Akkadian words, it is clear that the inclusion of the second glosses was not primarily intended to supply translations of Akkadian words into the local language. Rather the intention was to supply synonyms, related terms, or explanations to the first gloss, without a specific regard of the target language...The purpose of the second gloss...was not merely to translate, but rather to amass additional data to the lexical lists” (Cohen 2010a: 834-835).²⁷

From what we have seen so far it may be deduced that, generation after generation, Emarite scribes were not particularly keen on recording in writing their own mother tongue²⁸. The presence of NWS elements in general and of Emarite elements in particular in Akkadian texts from Emar may be considered sporadic and limited to the semantic fields pointed out by Ikeda (cf. §2.2), which were actually the only cases where the use of terms written in the local language were required. As a general outcome of this attitude of scribes, the Emar Akkadian texts contain hardly half a dozen verbal forms reflecting West Semitic Patterns;²⁹ significantly enough, none of these verbal forms are to be found in letters. As Cohen sums up, in Emar the local language “was never committed to writing,

²⁴ Emar 545 D:69', 136'. Cohen 2010a: 814.

²⁵ Emar 545 H:72, 243'. Cohen 2010a: 824.

²⁶ Emar 551 A:115, 37'. Cohen 2010a: 831.

²⁷ See also Cohen 2010b: 29 and 40.

²⁸ Cf. also Cohen 2009: 242-243: “it is worth asking why the Emar lexical lists were not supplied with a column of the local language as in other peripheral sites, like Ugarit and Hattuša.”

²⁹ Cf. Penttici 2001: 247-248.

reflecting the situation in other scribal centres along the Middle to Upper Euphrates valley during the Old Babylonian and Middle Babylonian periods where the local language or languages were never written” (Cohen 2009: 14).

Overall, an effective sort of barrier seems to be in place in Emar blocking the permeation of linguistic elements from the local language into written Akkadian, save for the minimum requisite items. What could this barrier consist of? Cohen has already pondered this matter, and he points out several possible reasons:

“it is worth asking ... why Emar was resistant to writing its religious or other literature in its own tongue. We can only speculate for now that the city’s geographical position in the Middle Euphrates region contributed to a low language barrier between the local spoken language, Emarite, and the written Akkadian, just as it did in Old Babylonian Mari, or in other contemporary sites, such as Ekalte or Tell Hadidi, unlike the high (or higher) language barrier between Akkadian and the ‘vernaculars’ of the Lebanon coast, Canaan, and Anatolia. Which may have prompted the writing of one’s own language in cuneiform or in indigenous scripts (as Hittite Hieroglyphic or the alphabet). This factor, combined with a certain degree of conservatism, may have contributed to the lack of translations of the scholarly materials into the local tongue and the absence of literature written in Emarite.” (Cohen XXXX:XX)

Alongside these general possible causes, I believe that the matter ought to be focused, from a more specific and explicit standpoint, on Emarite scribes who were the actual authors of the texts we have recovered. In this sense, I believe that the conclusion reached by Ikeda (2010) in his study on diglossia in Emar ought to be taken into consideration:³⁰ “Akkadian was not only written but also spoken in Emar...at least in the royal scribal circle.”³¹ This fact could indeed have acted as an efficient barrier against the inclusion of Emarite linguistic elements in the Akkadian texts from Emar, despite the clear tension between both languages which can be occasionally noted in some Akkadian texts.³² But it may not have been the only one, as pointed out later *sub* §3.4.

3. Akkadian and Ugaritic

3.1. The kingdom of Ugarit

In terms of geographic area, political power, and military capacity, Ugarit (also located in the modern Syrian Arab Republic) was an average sized kingdom by the standards of Syria in the second millennium B.C., yet a leading one in economical terms. It vanished (like Emar) from history in the early twelfth century B.C., swept away by the wave of the so-called “Sea Peoples,” a time which witnessed the collapse of the main Late Bronze Age Syrian centers and the disappearance of the

³⁰ On this matter, see also [formerly previously](#) Ikeda 2003: 276.

³¹ [Formerly Previously](#), Seminara 1998: 56 concluded that Akkadian in Emar was born and developed as a written language, deprived of substantial contributions from the actual use of the language (an opinion recorded by Penttici 2001: 12). Later, however, Seminara (1998: 601) did admit the possibility that Akkadian was spoken in Emar, at least in certain circles and under certain circumstances.

³² See, for instance, the case of text E 17; cf. Seminara 1998: 604-606; Cohen 2009: 86.

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kingdom of Ḫatti.³³ The kingdom of Ugarit was contemporary with Emar, with whom direct and close trading relations were maintained.³⁴ It is the only kingdom in Late Bronze Age Syria to have yielded abundant literature written in Ugaritic, the local language.

3.2. Languages and scripts

The language and text situation in Ugarit was very different from that of Emar. Ugarit has yielded instances of various scripts (such as Egyptian hieroglyphs or Cypro-Minoan script)³⁵ and languages (such as Hurrian or Hittite),³⁶ but mostly texts in Ugaritic (the local language) and in Akkadian (non-local language).³⁷ It is probable that, as in the case of Emar (§2.4), Akkadian may have been spoken in Ugarit to a certain extent in the circles of Ugarit scribes.³⁸ Akkadian texts found in Ras Shamra-Ugarit comprise a wide range of genres (school, literary, religious texts, letters, legal, clerical texts, etc.) using, as could be expected, the cuneiform logo-syllabic script of Mesopotamian origin.³⁹ They span from the 14th century B.C. to the destruction of the kingdom in the early 12th century B.C. The texts in Ugaritic were written mostly using a cuneiform alphabet of 30 signs. The moment when this alphabet might have been created continues to be debated though it may be agreed that most of the preserved texts from Ugarit are dated to the 13th and early 12th centuries B.C.⁴⁰ The most recent edition of Ugaritic texts (Dietrich, Loretz, and Sanmartín 2013) [produced including](#) around 1,570 texts and fragments of various genres (myths, rituals, letters, legal, and clerical documents, etc.). Ugaritic is, therefore, a well-attested Semitic language with its own peculiar script.⁴¹

3.3. Interactions between Akkadian and Ugaritic

Mesopotamian script tradition had a direct impact on several aspects of the alphabetical Ugaritic texts. Scribes from Ugarit used preferably clay tablets to write alphabetic texts in Ugaritic.⁴² As a result, alphabet signs acquired a cuneiform appearance. As in Akkadian, texts ran from left to right.⁴³

³³ On the history of Ugarit, see Singer 1999 (= 2011: 19-146); Freu 2006.

³⁴ Cf. Cohen and Singer 2006; Malbran-Labat and Roche 2007.

³⁵ For the former, see Lagarde-Othman 2013 (with previous bibliography). For the latter, see most recently Ferrara 2012: 132-145; 2013: 108-113; Egetmeyer 2013.

³⁶ Dietrich and Mayer 1999; Vita 2009; 2013; Giorgieri 2013.

³⁷ See for example van Soldt 1995a: 206.

³⁸ On this matter, see van Soldt 1995: 205 and 206; 1995b: 186; Márquez Rowe 2006: 149.

³⁹ These documents were partly produced in the kingdom of Ugarit itself and partly in other kingdoms of contemporary Syria such as Ḫatti, Cyprus, or Egypt, or in coastal Syro-Palestine towns. On the Akkadian of Ugarit, see Huehnergard 1989; van Soldt 1991; Malbran-Labat 1995.

⁴⁰ See discussion in Pardee 2012a: 11-12, 45-46.

⁴¹ See Bordreuil and Pardee 2009; Huehnergard 2012; Tropper 2012. On the distribution of Akkadian and Ugaritic in the text corpus of Ugarit, see Malbran-Labat 1996 (esp. 56-61); 1999.

⁴² For Ugaritic texts outside clay tablets, see Zamora 2006; 2007.

⁴³ Except for a few instances of texts written with the so-called “short alphabet”; see Dietrich and Loretz 1988: 145-275.

These traits derive from a centuries-old tradition of use of the Mesopotamian cuneiform script and of the Akkadian language in Ugarit. Huehnergard concludes about the Akkadian of Ugarit that, “While the underlying matrix of the grammar is essentially Middle Babylonian, there are relic Old Babylonian features, Assyrian features, and many features that do not conform to the normative grammar of any Mesopotamian dialect” (1989: 271). Van Soldt adds that “the Akkadian at Ugarit was basically Babylonian, but with a number of influences from other languages: Hurrian, Assyrian and Ugaritic” (1999: 42). These linguistic influences would be directly linked to the political situation at each historical moment. Thus, Hurrian influence was particularly strong in the first period of the archives of Ugarit, when Mittani was a great power. After the defeat of Mittani, the rise of Assyria brought about a higher influence both of Assyrian and Babylonian on the Akkadian at Ugarit (van Soldt 1991: 522-523; 1999: 45). As could only be expected, Akkadian also left an imprint in the Ugaritic lexicon. According to Watson’s analysis, “Of the approximately 2325 words in the Ugaritic lexicon about 175 have been borrowed from Akkadian (directly or indirectly), which is roughly 7%,” hence, generally speaking, “only a small number of words were borrowed from Akkadian whereas in the hippatric texts and the birth omens the percentage is considerably higher” (Watson 2007: 117).⁴⁴

Conversely, what influence did Ugaritic have on the Akkadian at Ugarit? From a chronological viewpoint, “Ugaritic influence, already strong at the beginning of the historic period, becomes stronger as time passes ... In the older texts the Ugaritic influence is mainly noticeable in syntax, but gradually it also becomes stronger in morphology” (van Soldt 1999: 45 and 44). Huehnergard (1989: 280-281) summarizes as follows the traits of Akkadian in Ugarit which may have a Ugaritic foundation: a) the syntax of expressions involving measures, b) the frequency of bound forms for genitive relationships, c) atypical theme-vowels in some G verbs and a number of unique or atypical D forms, d) some of the instances of *ištu* for expected *ina*, e) the frequent use of non-coordinating *-ma* and some of the unexplained instances of enclitic *-mi*, f) a number of cases of incorrect agreement may reflect the gender of an underlying Ugaritic noun, and g) some examples of the predicative verbal adjective and a few transitive *paris* forms probably reflect the Ugaritic suffix-conjugation. As in Ugaritic texts (cf. Tropper 2012: 447-452), syllabic texts also reflect the application of the Barth-Ginsberg law in verbal prefixes (van Soldt 1991: 431). In terms of syntax, the word order in clauses “is much freer than in native Akkadian and the verb is seldom placed at the end” (van Soldt 1991: 518). Instances where syntax follows the order subject – verb – object – indirect object (instead of the habitual Babylonian order subject – object – indirect object – verb) may generally be explained by the direct influence of Ugaritic.⁴⁵

As for the lexicon, what impact did Ugaritic have on the Akkadian texts? The glossary of Ugaritic words in syllabic texts completed by Huehnergard (2008: 103-189) produces approximately 290 entries.⁴⁶ Of this amount, 130 originate exclusively in the group of lexical texts known as “polyglot Syllable Vocabulary A” (S^a Voc.).⁴⁷ For example:⁴⁸

⁴⁴ See, in more detail, Watson 2007: 65-118.

⁴⁵ Cf. van Soldt 1999: 44. See also in detail Huehnergard 1989: 217-224; van Soldt 1991: 475-490, 518. See also, more briefly, Streck 2011: 377.

⁴⁶ This figure includes the entries which must be eliminated and included in Huehnergard’s glossary according to the “Appendix” in Huehnergard 2008: 189-194 (cf. p. 404 and <https://>

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Sign	Akkadian	Hurrian	Ugaritic		
NU	<i>a-bu</i>	<i>at-ta-ni</i>	<i>a-da-nu</i>	/ʾadānu/	‘father’
KAR	<i>šu-zu-bu</i>	<i>a-bu-uš-ku-me</i>	<i>pu-la-tu</i>	/pullaṭu/	‘to save’
NU	<i>la-a</i>	<i>ma-nu-ku</i>	<i>la-a</i>	/lā/	‘not’

About 160 entries come from non-lexical texts throughout a period of little more than a century.⁴⁹ In general, these lexemes are found either “(a) as parts of the names of local geographical features or plots of land or, much more often, (b) by chance, essentially *lapsus calami* in which the scribe either forgot the appropriate Akkadian word and substituted a Ugaritic form or thought that the (Ugaritic) form he was writing was proper Akkadian” (Huehnergard 1999: 134).⁵⁰ The impact of Ugaritic is particularly noticeable in daily life texts, especially in legal and economic ones. In legal texts, the local linguistic background is remarkably noticeable in the use of specialized vocabulary — fed by the legal Syro-Babylonian tradition and by local technical terms — and in the verbal morphology, using mixed verbal forms.⁵¹ The influence of Ugaritic is even stronger, at all levels, in

www.eisenbrauns.com/assets/errata/Huehnergard-AddendaCorrigenda.pdf). See also Huehnergard 1999: 134: “Embedded within the syllabic cuneiform texts written by scribes at Ugarit are over three hundred Ugaritic lexical items. These Ugaritic forms appear in all genres of Akkadian texts.”

⁴⁷ “The S^a Voc. was a Mesopotamian lexical series in which columns of individual cuneiform signs, in a fixed order, were equated with one or more Akkadian words in a second column ... The Ugarit exemplars ... are unusual in that they ... add either one additional column giving lexical equivalents in Hurrian or, more often, two additional columns with equivalents in both Hurrian and Ugaritic ... Nearly all parts of speech are attested among these forms” (Huehnergard 1999: 134). Regarding this, see the analysis carried out by Huehnergard 2008. Cf. also van Soldt 2008.

⁴⁸ Cf. Huehnergard 1999: 135.

⁴⁹ See also detailed statistics by Huehnergard 2008: 12-13. It may be noted that, from a merely quantitative viewpoint, the figure of approximately 160 Ugaritic words in Akkadian texts is not too far-off the 145 Northwest Semitic words preserved in the Akkadian texts from Emar (cf. §§2.2 and 2.3). It should also be noted that scholars distinguish approximately 90 Amorite entities which are loanwords into Akkadian and Sumerian (Streck 2000: 82-128, 135; 2010: 39; 2011: 453; see also Knudsen 2004).

⁵⁰ “About a fourth of the Akkadian texts contain one or more such Ugaritic words ... Most of the syllabically-written Ugaritic words are also attested in alphabetic texts. Over one-fifth of the forms, however, are thus far unknown in alphabetic form” (Huehnergard 1999: 136, 138). Huehnergard (2008: 12) reaches his conclusions on the basis of a total of 565 syllabic texts. This figure, however, will soon be notably increased by the edition of the syllabic texts found in the “House of Urtēnu”; see, regarding this, the catalogue made by Malbran-Labat 2008.

⁵¹ On this matter, see detailed analysis by Malbran-Labat 1999: 78-87. See also Márquez Rowe 2006: 167-174.

syllabic clerical texts,⁵² to the extent that it may be claimed that in most of these documents and despite the script used, the language transcribed was not Akkadian but Ugaritic.⁵³

3.4. *The attitude of Ugaritic scribes towards their mother tongue*

From the previous section it may be concluded that Ugaritic had a noticeable impact on Akkadian texts written in Ugarit, particularly in certain genres, a circumstance which, to a certain extent, may have been related to the level of training of the scribes.⁵⁴ In the daily performance of their job, Ugaritic scribes demonstrated that it was technically possible to write in their mother tongue using the logo-syllabic cuneiform script. Yet, the Ugaritic column of the S^a Voc. (§3.3) and, to a certain extent, the syllabic administrative texts, reveal that furthermore (and conversely to what probably happened in Emar) scribes done this *being fully aware and deliberate in their action*.⁵⁵ Consequently, scribes might have opted to go a step beyond, that is, to write full texts in Ugaritic using the logo-syllabic script of Mesopotamian origin. Nonetheless, save for one sole exception which may have been mere experimentation,⁵⁶ they did not do so. Ugaritic scribes did not have the interest or the will to exploit that option.⁵⁷

Why did scribes not take a step which was feasible and might seem (from our perspective) even reasonable? One initial reason may be similar to that pointed out for the case of Emarite (§2.4), that is, that Akkadian in Ugarit was a language spoken to a certain extent in scribal circles (cf. §3.3). One second possible reason, which would support the first, could be the rigorous Mesopotamian school tradition in Ugarit.⁵⁸ That tradition may have made Ugaritic scribes conceive that Mesopotamian cuneiform script was not appropriate, merely from a conceptual viewpoint, to transcribe the local

⁵² Approximately a total of 144 texts, according to calculation by Roche 2010: 119.

⁵³ See Malbran-Labat 1999: 96: “l’examen du lexique et des formes verbales semble conduire à la conclusion que la langue des documents administratifs [syllabiques] n’était pas l’akkadien, mais un jargon dans lequel il est difficile de voir un dialecte akkadien tant il est imprégné d’ougaritique ... Ainsi l’opposition n’est-elle pas entre ‘textes ougaritiques alphabétiques’ et ‘textes akkadiens syllabiques’ mais entre ‘textes en cunéiformes alphabétiques’ et ‘textes en cunéiformes suméro-akkadiens’: plus qu’un bilinguisme, c’est un digraphisme qui était pratiqué par l’administration ougaritaine.” Roche has delved into this idea and concluded that “if a small number of the logo-syllabic administrative texts were written and intended to be ‘read’ in Akkadian, the majority (perhaps even a large majority) appear to have been ‘read’ in the local language, Ugaritic” (Roche 2010: 119). See also van Soldt 1995: 211-212; 2010: 351-355; Márquez Rowe 2006: 152-154.

⁵⁴ See in this respect van Soldt 1995a: 206; Márquez Rowe 2006: 153.

⁵⁵ Thus already also Huehnergard 1999: 134, for the Ugaritic column of S^a Voc.

⁵⁶ It consists of text RS 20.163 (= KTU 10.1), regarding which see Huehnergard 1987: 11-12, and KTU, 739.

⁵⁷ Therefore, should the alphabetic script not have ~~been taken~~ on in Ugarit, our current knowledge of Ugaritic vocabulary and grammar would be as fragmented as it is for Emarite.

⁵⁸ On the weight of Mesopotamian tradition on the Ugarit scribal teaching system as well as on the presence in Ugarit of Babylonian and Assyrian scribes, see Malbran-Labat 1999: 76, 100; van Soldt 1995b; 2001; 2002; 2012 (cf. in this matter Roche 2008a: 207 n. 12); Hawley 2008a: 2008b.

Semitic language.⁵⁹ This belief was probably supported by the possibility of channelling the local language through the cuneiform alphabet. It was a script of a much shorter life and extent, free from the burden of a long and prestigious foreign scribal tradition. Consequently, it was conceptually apt to transcribe the local language while it might also act as an instrument which could be used for experimenting with other languages,⁶⁰ as well as for its joint use, in one single text, alongside logo-syllabic script.⁶¹

4. Akkadian and Canaanite

4.1. *Amarna letters*

The so-called ‘El-Amarna Letters’ were found around 1887 in the homonymous Egyptian locality, the ancient capital of Egypt under pharaoh Amenophis IV. This correspondence, a total of 350 letters and fragments, constitutes the main documentation on international relations in the ancient Near East in the 14th century B.C. It also constitutes the main documentation on the history and language of Syria-Palestine in the 14th century B.C.⁶²

⁵⁹ This attitude could be due, to a certain extent, to the “impermeability rule” described by Nougayrol 1962: 31 and 32; an impermeability which could have been a necessity rather than a rule for the scribes.

⁶⁰ In line with Mesopotamian tradition (cf. Malbran-Labat 1999: 76), Ugaritic scribes had already proved their capacity to exploit the possibilities rendered by the Mesopotamian logo-syllabic script to develop, e.g., complex graphic sets; see in this respect Roche 2008a; van Soldt 2010. This capacity for exploration continued, for instance, in the use of the alphabetic cuneiform script to write texts in Akkadian and Hurrian; see in this respect especially the work of scribe Tab’ilu, studied by Pardee 2010; 2012b; Lam and Pardee 2012: 421-422; Bordreuil, Hawley, and Pardee 2013; Hawley, Pardee, and Roche-Hawley 2013; Roche-Hawley and Hawley 2013. On the adaptation of the cuneiform alphabet to Hurrian language see Vita 2013.

⁶¹ The use of alphabetic and logo-syllabic scripts in one single text in Ugarit is particularly frequent in texts written in Ugaritic (cf. Malbran-Labat 1999; Roche 2008b), but not on the contrary, as stated by Malbran-Labat 1999: 96: “Il semble que ce soit un caractère fondamental de l’écriture d’Ougarit que de ne pas mêler de caractères alphabétiques au sein d’un document noté en cuneiformes mésopotamiens.” The Ugaritic text RS 94.2411, recently edited (Bordreuil, Pardee, and Hawley 2012, 11), reveals that the mixture of scripts could occur not only in one single text but even in one single line within the text (cf. lines 8 and 9 of the text).

⁶² See regarding this the work by Cohen and Westbrook 2000. The main edition of the texts continues to be Knudtzon 1907-1915, complemented by Rainey 1978. See also the useful transcription of the Canaanite letters provided by Sh. Izre’el in <http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/semitic/amarna.html>. The main translations correspond to Moran 1992, Liverani 1998 and 1999, Cochavi-Rainey 2005. See also Mynářová 2007; 2014.

4.2. Canaanite and Canaano-Akkadian

The Syro-Palestinian Amarna letters are linguistically interesting from various points of view. They were written on clay tablets, and the language used is Akkadian on the basis of an ancient Babylonian dialect using the Mesopotamian logo-syllabic script.⁶³ But they were written by autochthonous Syro-Palestinian scribes whose mother tongue was not Akkadian but a ~~northwestern Northwest~~ Semitic language which is quite often reflected in the Akkadian they use, ~~both~~ morphologically, syntactically or lexically. The Akkadian used is, therefore, ~~impregnated-iml~~ with traits from other linguistic systems, the Northwest Semitic local languages and dialects.⁶⁴ Consequently, Rainey (2010: 852) describes the language used in these letters as a hybrid made up of three layers: 1) the basic Old Babylonian, 2) the local modifications, and 3) the purely Northwest Semitic elements. As well as Old Babylonian, the letters also use (sometimes jointly) the Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian dialects (Rainey 2010: 853). The “local modifications” would be expressions that are neither Babylonian nor Canaanite, but reflect Canaano-Akkadian mixed forms. The purely Northwest Semitic features present in the letters reflect the oldest linguistic characteristics of the Canaanite family.⁶⁵ According to Rainey (2010: 855), this hybrid language “was a real dialect alongside Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian”.

Thus, Northwest Semitic languages or local dialects appear in three main forms in this hybrid language:

1) Canaanite lexemes may appear in the middle of a sentence either independently or acting as glosses, translating a preceding word or phrase:⁶⁶

- *ir-ka a-nu-ki* I am your servant⁶⁷
- *ù sag. du-nu : ru-šu-nu i-na qa-te-ka* ‘and our head is in your hand’⁶⁸
- ⁱ *A-ia-ab : he-eh-bé-e* ‘He has hidden Ayyab’⁶⁹
- [*ù*] *li-iḫ-šu-uš-mi : ia-az-ku-ur-mi* ¹ *lugal-ri en-ia mi-im-ma ša in₄-né-pu-uš-mi ugu* ^{ur₁} *Ḫa-šú-ra^{ki}* ‘[So] may the king, my lord, take thought for everything that has been done against Hazor’⁷⁰
- *ù iz-zi-iz-mi egir-šu : aḫ-ru-un-ú* ‘and I took my place behind him’⁷¹

⁶³ Rainey 1996a: 17-32.

⁶⁴ This morphosyntactic phenomenon seems to go back to the letters of Taanak, from the mid-fifteenth century B.C.; see Rainey 1996a: 31-32.

⁶⁵ Cf. Izre’el 1995: 103; Steiner 1997: 146-147; Moran 2003: 343; Edzard 2011: 481.

⁶⁶ This glosses could incorporate – or not – a so-called “gloss-wedge” or “Glossenkeil” On the phenomenon of codeswitching in the Canaanite glosses existing in these letters, see Izre’el 1995: 101-122; Gianto 1995; Liverani 1998: 24-27; Tropper and Vita 2010: 26.

⁶⁷ EA 287:66. WS /ʾanōki/.

⁶⁸ EA 264:18. WS /rōšu-nū/.

⁶⁹ EA 256:7. WS /hiḫbē/. Rainey 1996a, 12: 122; Tropper and Vita 2010: 101.

⁷⁰ EA 228:18-23. *yazkur*: a jussive form, cf. Rainey 1996a: 245.

⁷¹ EA 245:10. Moran 1992, 299. WS /ʾaḫrōn-hu/ (Can. *ʾaḫr-* + nun energeticum *-ōn-* (< *ān*) + *-hu*; cf. Rainey 1996b: 122; Tropper and Vita 2010: 114).

2) As in Ugarit, terms in the local language can also be found in lexical texts. In Canaan, unlike in Ugarit, just a small amount of these types of texts has been found though they are quite significant.⁷² The most relevant in this sense is a fragment of a lexical text found in Aphek (Aphek No 5837/1).⁷³ The five preserved lines (none of them complete) reveal that the text was structured in three columns: the first for the Sumerian term, the second for the Akkadian version, and the third for the version in the local language. The first two lines read:

1'	...a].meš	:	ma-wu	:	mu-mi ⁷⁴	'water'
2'	gešti]n.meš	:	ka-ra-nu	:	ye-nu	'wine'

It is quite probable that a second fragment of a lexical text also found in Aphek, as well as another found in Ashkelon, may also have had a column for Canaanite terms.⁷⁵ The latter (part of the series Urta = *hubullu*) "follows the Emar version exactly" (Huehnergard and van Soldt 1999: 191), whereas the texts from Aphek show more freedom compared to the Mesopotamian models: "Neither of the Aphek lexical texts conforms to any known Mesopotamian series" (Rainey 1976: 139).⁷⁶ All three fragments may be dated to the 13th century B.C.⁷⁷

So far, Canaan has not yielded any instances of lexical texts datable to the 14th century B.C. Nonetheless, the Amarna letters do seem to reveal indirect evidence of the existence of lexical texts in Canaanite scribal centres during that period. Indications of this are provided by a number of glosses that appear to be unnecessary from a functional point of view which, in my opinion, could be elements that scribes extracted from lexical lists that they had used in their training with the purpose of hinting at their professional background, at their training as writing professionals, and at their expertise as scribes. Consequently, these glosses could somehow directly reflect elements from the lexicographical education of the scribes and may be of assistance in the identification of underlying lexical texts.⁷⁸ The following case, identified by Shlomo Izre'el in a letter from Meggido, should be added to the instances reviewed in Vita (2012):⁷⁹

⁷² I consider the idea of Tadmor (1977: 101-102) appropriate in the sense that it must be accepted "that centres of cuneiform literacy existed in each of the city-states of Canaan from the Middle Bronze to the close of the Late Bronze Ages." It should be supposed that each chancery could have been, at least potentially, a school, even if it was a modest one. For a different viewpoint see recently van Soldt 2013.

⁷³ Rainey 1976; Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 31-32.

⁷⁴ Concerning *mu-mi* (*mū/ōmi*), see Izre'el 2003: 77.

⁷⁵ Aphek No 5837/1; cf. Rainey 1975; Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 29-30. Fragment from Ashkelon: Huehnergard and van Soldt 1999; Horowitz, Oshima and Sanders 2006: 42: "When complete, most likely Sumerian, Akkadian and West-Semitic entries."

⁷⁶ In this sense also Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 30.

⁷⁷ Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006: 29, 32, 42; Huehnergard and van Soldt 1999: 184.

⁷⁸ On this type of glosses, see in detail Vita 2012.

⁷⁹ This example, overlooked in Vita 2012, was kindly pointed out to me by Prof. Shlomo Izre'el via email. See also the case of EA 244:30-33 discussed in Izre'el 2003: 100.

ù la-a-mi ni-le-ú ZÚ.SI.GA ba-qa-ni : qà-^ršî-ra ù la-a-mi ni-le-ú a-ší KÀ a-bu-ur-lí : ša-aḥ-ri iš-tu pa-ni¹ la-ab-a-ya

‘And we cannot do the plucking, and we cannot go out of the gate because of Lab’aya’ (EA 244: 13-17; Izre’el 2003: 91)

Izre’el remarks: “The scribe of this letter interestingly uses tripartite gloss sets. It reminds us of the trilingual vocabularies used in cuneiform schools, where each lexeme is represented by a Sumerian logogram, its Akkadian counterpart, and finally the local word, the latter two in syllabic writing ... The employment of such tripartite gloss sets is understandable in the context of cuneiform scribal education” (2003: 91).

3) More frequently, however, the local language is apparent through forms which hybridise Canaanite and Akkadian elements, particularly frequent in the verbal system. Generally, scribes took a verbal base attested in Akkadian and combined it with Canaanite prefixes and suffixes. In the resulting form, Canaanite affixes predominated in terms of expressing time and aspect, the Akkadian verbal base being of little relevance in that sense.⁸⁰

da-ag-la-ti, ki-ia-am ù da-ag-la-ti, ki-ia-am ù la-a na-mi-ir ‘I looked this way, and I looked that way, and there was no light’⁸¹
a-na-ku aq-bu [šum-ma UD.K]ÁM.MEŠ yi-iš-mu lugal-ru [ù UD].KÁM.MEŠ yi-il-te₉-qú-šu-nu ‘I have been saying: “[If one da]y the king should hear, [then in one da]y he could seize them”’⁸²
a-na mi-ni, yi-iš-tap-ru¹ Ri-ib-^dISKUR ki-na-an-na-ma ṭup-pa a-na É.GAL ‘Why does Rib-Haddi continually send a tablet in this manner to the palace?’⁸³
ù ir-ka-ab-mi it-ti¹ Ya-aš-da-ta ‘So I mounted up with Yashdata’⁸⁴

This language, currently known as Canaano-Akkadian,⁸⁵ is the product of the coexistence and interaction of two Semitic languages and does not constitute a cohesive linguistic system.⁸⁶ It is an

⁸⁰ See in detail Rainey 1996a; Izre’el 2005. Also, amongst others, von Dassow 2004: 644-647; Tropper and Vita 2010.

⁸¹ EA 292:8-10. Moran 1992: 335. Akk. *dagālu* ‘to look’; *qatl-ātī* (*qatl+ā+ti*), cf. Rainey 1996a: 285; Tropper and Vita 2010: 70-71.

⁸² EA 109:15-17. Rainey 1996a: 100. *yi-iš-mu*: a form using the Akkadian preterite theme (Rainey 1996a: 60-61); *yi-il-te₉-qú*: a form based on the Akkadian *-t-* preterite (Rainey 1996a: 54).

⁸³ EA 106:14. Based on G preterite with infixed *-t-* or on Gt preterite, cf. Rainey 1996a: 102; Tropper and Vita 2010: 64 (yi-QTL-u).

⁸⁴ Regarding the Akkadian term *rakābu* ‘to ride, to mount’, probably to represent Canaanite **irkab* as opposed to the Akkadian form *arkab*, cf. Rainey 1996a: 71.

⁸⁵ A denomination used first by Shlomo Izre’el 2005 (first edition 1998).

⁸⁶ Izre’el 2005: 3, appropriately describes the situation as follows: “The CanAkk texts are characterized by inherent variation. Variation may be geographically dependent. It may depend on the scribal tradition of different cities, but also on imported traditions or variant local ones ... Geographic

example of the situation where two different linguistic systems interacted, producing a novel grammatical organization. This situation is referred to as a language contact phenomenon and typically involves linguistic objects such as pidgins, creoles, *koinés*, and mixed-languages. Consequently, Canaano-Akkadian is typically analysed within the language-contact framework.⁸⁷ Yet, the exact linguistic nature of this language, and its possible oral use has been the subject of very varied proposals and continues to be debated.⁸⁸

In our opinion,⁸⁹ although Canaano-Akkadian emerged from the situation of diglossia and had its roots in two linguistic systems (Akkadian and Canaanite), the real state of affairs at the time of composing the Amarna letters corresponded rather to triglossia. That is to say, three languages coexisted at the scribal centres: Akkadian, Canaanite, and the outcome of their “blending,” Canaano-Akkadian.⁹⁰ The Akkadian was a high variety and superstrate: it was typically written but possibly also spoken, although very infrequently, for instance during the Akkadian lessons. Canaanite was a low variety and substrate: it was used by the vast part of the society; it was typically spoken and only infrequently written,⁹¹ e.g., glosses. Canaano-Akkadian was a high variety “mixture” of the superstrate and substrate: it was typically written although, in agreement with Izre’el (2012), we suggest that Canaano-Akkadian was a type of a mixed-language that was genuinely spoken at the scribal centres, constituting a professional jargon. It is possible that conforming to the typical behaviour of jargons, scribes may have been using Canaano-Akkadian as their in-group code for all types of conversations, not only the formal ones. Thus, to an extent, Canaano-Akkadian would be a middle stage between its two sources, having emerged from the previously mentioned diglossial circumstances. All of this suggests that, rather than a single static definition, one may understand Canaano-Akkadian as a dynamic fuzzy (yet synchronic) object where properties and situations typical for pidgins (more

variation is dependent upon scribal traditions and scribal education. By and large, there is correlation between the provenance of a letter and its linguistic structure. The farther south one travels in Canaan the more remote becomes a CanAkk text from Akkadian, and the closer it becomes to the Canaanite vernacular of that region..

⁸⁷ See recently Johanson 2013: 281-282.

⁸⁸ Regarding the various proposals of linguistic classification of Canaano-Akkadian and relevant bibliography, see in detail Tropper and Vita 2010: 20-24; Andrason and Vita 2014. More significant studies: Ganto 2000; von Dassow 2004; Sanders 2009; Rainey 2010; Izre’el 2012.

⁸⁹ On the subject expounded next, see in more detail Andrason and Vita 2014.

⁹⁰ These three tongues match the three layers of the language of the letters as posited by Rainey, see above.

⁹¹ At least by means of the Mesopotamian logosyllabic writing.

specifically, their sub-type, koinés), mixed-languages, and jargons intervene.⁹² On the whole, it is a unique linguistic organization shaped by its exceptional sociolinguistic environment.⁹³

4.3. *The attitude of Canaanite scribes towards their mother tongue*

As we have seen, in the Amarna corpus the pressure of the local language over Akkadian is notably stronger than in Ugarit. The use of hybrid Canaanite-Akkadian forms, for instance, is more intense and systematic than in Akkadian texts from Ugarit, resulting in the language known as “Canaanite-Akkadian” (§4.2). A more likely atomized mixture of Akkadian in Canaan, scattered about in smaller and more or less independent centers,⁹⁴ may have contributed to this outcome in the lack of a strong and centralized scribal center, which in all likelihood existed in Ugarit.

The Canaanite terms and grammar elements present in the Amarna letters (cf. §4.2) jointly demonstrate that, as well as Ugarit scribes (cf. §3.4), Canaanite scribes were able to use the Mesopotamian logo-syllabic writing system in order to render their mother tongue. Nevertheless, both the lack of texts written in the local language⁹⁵ and the instability of writing of Canaanite forms⁹⁶ suggest that the scribes – again, similar to their colleagues from Ugarit – were uninterested in developing an orthographic convention with which they could render their Northwest Semitic mother tongues or dialects by employing this type of writing system. Along with the influence of the Mesopotamian school tradition, and as in the case of Emar and Ugarit, one possible reason for this attitude may have been the fact that Canaanite-Akkadian was a language spoken at the scribal centers and may have constituted a professional jargon (§4.2). Hence, the writing of the local West Semitic languages or dialects had to be achieved via different manners, most probably by means of the alphabet (as in Ugarit) and using mostly perishable materials. In this sense, we ought to remember that in this geographical area there seems to be alphabetic evidence going back to even before the 14th century B.C.⁹⁷ and that Canaanite scribes in general developed their own strong personality boasting great creativity and an experimental disposition.⁹⁸ In this manner, Canaanite would offer a situation

⁹² On the contrary, the idiom does not fulfil the necessary condition of a creole – it was never nativized.

⁹³ The “dynamic” classification of Canaanite-Akkadian formulated above, albeit distinct from other views, should not be understood as invalidating the linguistic tradition of the Canaanite-Akkadian studies. Quite the reverse, we see our proposal (Andrason and Vita 2014) as profoundly inclusive.

⁹⁴ For a more negative opinion on scribal schools in Canaan, see von Dassow 2004: 667.

⁹⁵ A possible exception may be RS 94.2615, edited by Arnaud 2006. See, however, the view presented by von Dassow 2010: 901 n. 13.

⁹⁶ Regarding this, see Andrason and Vita 2014.

⁹⁷ According to Hachmann, Kāmid el-Lōz could have yielded lineal alphabetic inscriptions archaeologically dating from the 14th century B.C. (Hachmann, 1993: 228) plus one in cuneiform alphabet dating from the 14th or 15th century B.C. (Hachmann 1987: 106; against this, see Sass 1988: 165–166). The Proto-Canaanite Inscriptions are also to be borne in mind (Sass 1988; Finkelstein and Sass 2013).

⁹⁸ As we have seen (§4.2), some of the school texts found in Canaan are adaptations of Mesopotamian models for local needs or circumstances. This creative and adaptive ability goes back to the third

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similar to what can be observed in Ugarit, where the scribes ~~cheese-chose~~ to develop (quite probably earlier than in Ugarit) an alphabetic cuneiform system in order to note their mother tongue (§3.4).

5. Final comments and conclusions

Of all the Northwest Semitic languages considered, Emarite and Canaanite are only partially documented. No full texts in these languages are preserved, just linguistic elements interspersed, to varying degrees, in the Akkadian language used by local scribes. Ugaritic is a remarkable exception, particularly due to the large number of texts in this language written by means of an alphabetic script.

Epps, Huehnergard, and Pat-El (2013) have pointed out the specific problems attached to the study of contacts between genetically related languages. All three cases dealt with in this chapter could fit into this category of linguistic contact, though two particular features can be noted. On the one hand, Akkadian was not a language spoken in society in Emar, Ugarit, or Canaan (at least not significantly). In those places, therefore, prolonged and significant contact between two linguistic communities interacting in the same area did not exist.⁹⁹ Contact between Akkadian and the aforementioned Northwest Semitic languages occurred within communities of scribes, that is, in the bosom of small communities of (in principle) highly specialized professionals. The mother tongue of those scribes was Northwest Semitic, but their language of study, work, and prestige was Akkadian.¹⁰⁰

The prestige of Akkadian among these communities of scribes produced a second peculiarity in this type of linguistic contact concerning writing: scribes in Syria-Palestine in the Late Bronze Age did not seem to conceive of the use of Mesopotamian logo-syllabic script for writing local Northwest Semitic languages. This fact may concern, in the ancient Near East of the second millennium B.C., only this type of languages and does not affect, however, non-Semitic languages such as Hurrian or Hittite. At least in the cases of Ugarit and Canaan, scribes demonstrated that this way was feasible though it was not exploited.

Inhibiting elements must therefore have been in play which prevented Northwest Semitic languages from being written in Mesopotamian cuneiform script. One reason could have been the aforementioned prestige of Akkadian in the Syro-Palestinian scribal centers, where the direct presence of Babylonian and Assyrian scribes can also be detected;¹⁰¹ a prestige Akkadian maintained

millennium, as demonstrated by the syllabary found in Byblos (Dossin (1969: 247; Edzard 1982: 58; Cavigneaux 1980-1983: 618) and by the so-called “pseudo-hieroglyphic script”, also from Byblos.

⁹⁹ This historical and linguistic situation would substantially differ from that described, for instance, by Beaulieu for the case of contacts between Akkadian and Aramaic in the first millennium B.C., where both languages “were in intimate contact for centuries, being spoken and written side by side in the same society” (Beaulieu 2013: 358).

¹⁰⁰ As previously seen (§3.4), the writing of Ugaritic was also taught at schools largely following the Mesopotamian curricular model.

¹⁰¹ The presence of Mesopotamian scribes in Ugarit has already been pointed out above (§3.4). Regarding Emar, see Cohen 2009: 183. The existence of foreign scribes in Canaan, highly plausible, remains yet to be studied in detail.

throughout the first millennium B.C.¹⁰² This prestige could also have caused Akkadian to be a language (to a greater or lesser extent) spoken in the circles of Syro-Palestinian scribes. These could probably have produced professional jargons where Akkadian was interspersed, to varying degrees, with local linguistic traits, a situation undoubtedly propitiated by the genetic relationship between the languages involved.¹⁰³ In that sense, Canaano-Akkadian seems to set, in Syria-Palestine in the Late Bronze Age, the limit reached (in the written and spoken registers) by linguistic contact between Semitic languages.¹⁰⁴ The scribes' perception that Akkadian and Mesopotamian logo-syllabic scripts were barely dissociable must have also had an impact.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, the logo-syllabic script may not have been considered adequate for writing in other Semitic languages; a situation where, once more, the genetic relationship between the languages involved may have played a part (yet to be defined). Some of those Northwest Semitic languages, conversely, were written using alphabetic scripts and partly perishable materials, at least in the Levantine strip of Ugarit and Canaan.¹⁰⁶ These scripts were free of the weight of centennial scribal traditions and therefore conceptually appropriate to transcribe local languages of this geographical area.

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¹⁰² In the case of contact between Akkadian and Aramaic, Beaulieu 2013: 375 states: "Babylonian resisted the influence of Aramaic to a considerable degree. This could be attributed to some extent to a systematic and self-conscious purist endeavour on the part of scribes and the learned classes...Babylonian enjoyed a more prestigious status as the language favoured by the monarchy and the urban elites...while Aramaic seems to have been confined largely to an administrative and juridical role, albeit a significant one in those areas."

¹⁰³ See Beaulieu 2013 regarding linguistic transfers between Aramaic and Akkadian propitiated precisely by the close genetic relation between both languages.

¹⁰⁴ Canaano-Akkadian will also need to be studied within a broader framework including the linguistic phenomena resulting from contemporary contacts between Akkadian and Hurrian and between Ugaritic and Hurrian. Therefore including the archives of Alalah IV (slightly earlier in time; von Dassow 2012) and the mixed Akkadian-Hurrian language of Qatna (Richter, in Richter and Lange 2012: 29-42, with previous bibliography); see also von Dassow 2010: 905. Regarding Hurrian in Ugarit, see recently Vita 2009; 2013; Giorgieri 2013: 167-178.

¹⁰⁵ See already in this respect the relevant remarks by Nougayrol 1962: 32.

¹⁰⁶ Emar, conversely, was far from the area of influence of alphabetic scripts; see also comments by Millard 2007: 86-87.

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