



Review

ZIPORA COHAVI-RAINEY
THE AKKADIAN DIALECT OF EGYPTIAN SCRIBES IN
THE 14TH AND 13TH CENTURIES BCE

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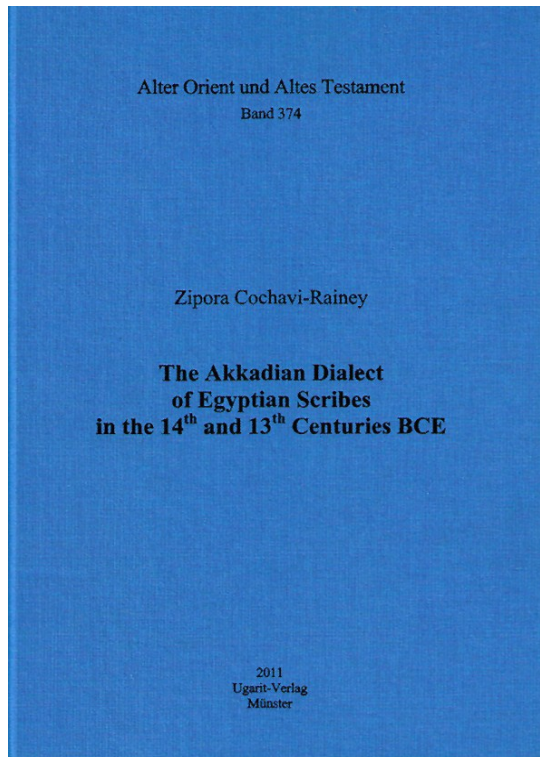
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ABSTRACT

This monograph by Zipora Cochavi-Rainey, published in Münster, Germany in late 2011 by Ugarit-Verlag, is Volume 374 of the Alter Orient und Altes Testament series. Originally written in Hebrew with an English summary, the full English edition, under review here, was translated by the author's husband, the late and lamented Professor Anson F. Rainey of Tel Aviv University. The full and updated publication of this monograph represents a valuable and unique contribution to, and augmentation of, the specialized corpus of diachronic and synchronic studies of Late Bronze Age 'Peripheral Akkadian' texts. It is, of course, of special interest to the study of ancient Egyptian interconnections.

This study originated in the author's two volume 1988 Tel Aviv University doctoral dissertation, aspects of which were subsequently published in three refereed journals.¹ The 290-page work is composed of five chapters, preceded by an excellent and informative introductory chapter and followed by three appendices, along with a reference section and two indices.

The work under review represents an in-depth philological analysis of selected texts from the Akkadian cuneiform correspondence generated by royal Egyptian scribes during the 18th and 19th Dynasties of the New Kingdom period (1550-1069 BCE).² The language of communication employed by these scribes was not the dialect of classic Old Babylonian Akkadian used during the First



Dynasty of Babylon (1894-1595 BCE), but the Middle Babylonian Akkadian of the Kassite period in southern Mesopotamia (c. 1415-1155 BCE), an Akkadian dialect which became the linguistic model for all the regional variations of Akkadian that came to function as pan-Near Eastern linguistic mediums of diplomatic, cultural, and commercial communications during the Late Bronze Age.

The 14th century BCE documents analyzed by Professor Cochavi-Rainey for this monograph primarily come from the royal administrative archives generated at the chancery of Akhetaten (Tell el-Amarna), the royal capital of the religiously controversial Pharaoh Akhenaten (1352-1336 BCE), which was situated roughly halfway between the Old Kingdom capital of Memphis and the New Kingdom capital of Thebes. Two 14th

century BCE texts found at Kâmed el-Lôz in the Beqa' Valley of southern Lebanon are also included in the author's study. Both letters are from the King of Egypt; one written to Zilliya, the ruler of Damascus, and the other addressed to Abdi-milki, the ruler of Shezana (*Šaza'na*), a town located near Kâmed el-Lôz.

The 13th century BCE documents under analysis in this monograph consist of the royal correspondence of Ramesses II (1279-1213 BCE), Queen Nefertari (the first of Ramesses II's seven principal queens to occupy the position of 'great royal wife'), Ramesses II's mother Tuya, his vizier Pa-siru, and one of his sons, prince Sutekh-(her)-khepesh-ef, all of which were sent to the Hittite king Ḫattušili III (1266-1237 BCE) and his Hurrian queen Pudu-Ḫeba. This group of texts comes from the excavated royal archives of Ḫattuša (modern Boghazköy), the capital city of the Middle and Late Bronze Age Hittite Empire, located roughly 124 miles (200 km.) east of the modern Turkish capital of Ankara.

The scribes of various ethnicities who used Akkadian for their international communications naturally developed slightly different dialects and regional variations of the language, influenced by their own native tongues. For example, letters between the Hurrian kingdom of Mittani and its vassals reveal an Akkadian colored by the Hurrian language of its scribal community, a language thought to be related to the East Caucasian language group. The Middle Babylonian Akkadian used in letters from the Hittite-dominated regions of Anatolia show the influence of both Hurrian and Hittite, a language that in 1915 was demonstrated to be Indo-European by the Czech scholar B. Hrozný.³ Letters written to Pharaoh Akhenaten from his vassals in Canaan used an Akkadian replete with linguistic West Semitic Canaanitisms, and correspondence sent to Egypt and Ugarit from the island kingdom of Alashiya (Cyprus) show the scribal influence of three dialects: Middle Babylonian, Hurro-Akkadian, and Canaanite-Akkadian, doubtlessly reflecting the ethnic mix of its scribal community.⁴ The term often applied to these ethnic and regional Akkadian variations is "Peripheral Akkadian," and it is the Egyptian-influenced Akkadian of the Amarna and Ramesside period scribes working within Egypt which is the central analytical focus of this work. Thus, two of the fundamental questions which the author seeks to answer in this monograph are: To what degree did royal Egyptian scribes from two different centuries and two different dynastic periods allow their Akkadian formulations to be influenced by their own language, that of New Kingdom 'Late Egyptian', and were some of these scribes foreigners, possibly having been brought into royal Egyptian service to augment the talent and linguistic range of the indigenous scribal community?

Cochavi-Rainey's evaluation of these letters from two very different dynastic periods of Egyptian history is both synchronic,

in that the linguistic nuances of the Egyptian letters are compared with other contemporary text sources written in Peripheral Akkadian, and diachronic in its illustration of the differences in the Egypto-Akkadian used by two groups of Egyptian scribes separated in time from each other by nearly a century. In this monograph the author has made a comprehensive attempt to catalog and explain the grammatical and stylistic nuances which Late Bronze Age scribes in Egypt employed in their compositions using the Middle Babylonian Akkadian dialect as their foundational linguistic model, and in so doing, she has created an invaluable linguistic database which will not only facilitate a better understanding of the Amarna and Ramesside texts themselves, but serve as an aid to the further evaluation of recently and newly discovered cuneiform archives still undergoing analysis and publication (e.g. the text corpus from ancient Emar on the northern Euphrates).

THE AKKADIAN TEXTS OF EGYPTIAN SCRIBES SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS

For purposes of linguistic illustration, Cochavi-Rainey has selected twelve 14th century BCE texts, ten of them from the el-Amarna archives (EA 1, 5, 14, 99, 162, 163, 190, 367, 369, and 370). While two of the longer and more complex el-Amarna letters, EA 1 and EA 14, are individually discussed in detail in the book's Appendix I and II respectively, the author notes that full transcriptions and translations of all the texts discussed in this volume are not provided therein due to the publication of the full text editions of the Boghazköy correspondence, already handled by Elmar Edel,⁵ and new collations and transcriptions by Anson F. Rainey of the complete el-Amarna correspondence archive based upon his life-long analysis of the more than three hundred and fifty extant physical tablets. This work is to be published in an upcoming edition now being brought to completion by Zipora Cochavi-Rainey and William Schniedewind of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at the University of California at Los Angeles.

Found in EA 1 is the usage of verbal and nominal forms which deviate from standard Akkadian, as well as the mixed usage of Old Babylonian and Middle Babylonian syntax conventions, which the scribe sometimes disregards for syntax conventions associated only with 'Peripheral Akkadian'.⁶ EA 1 is the draft of a highly diplomatic letter sent by Amenhotep III (1390-1352 BCE) to the Kassite king of Karaduniaš (Babylon), Kadašman-Enlil I (c. 1374-1360 BCE), in response to the Kassite king's inquiry as to the whereabouts of his sister, who had been given in marriage to the king of Egypt by Kadašman-Enlil's father, Kurigalzu I.

Contained in EA 14, a long letter sent by either Amenhotep III, Akhenaten, or Tutankhamun to Kadašman-Enlil I's son and successor, Burna-buriaš II (1359-1333 BCE),⁷ is a list of numerous wedding gifts sent from the royal court of Egypt to the daughter of King Burna-buriaš, who was to wed the Egyptian king. Because of the nature of this list, it contains numerous cuneiform renderings of both specialized and specific Egyptian and West Semitic terms for various luxury objects, materials, and precious commodities.

With regards to the evidence of West Semitic linguistic influence within the 14th century BCE Akkadian correspondence of Egyptian scribes, it should be noted that Western Semitic, Syro-Canaanites served in the administration of Pharaoh Akhenaten, such as his highly respected vizier Aper-El ("El Provides"), whose well-preserved, rock-cut tomb at the royal necropolis of Saqqara was discovered in 1987 by the French archaeologist Dr. Alaine Zivie, Director of Research at the French National Centre of Scientific Research (CNRS).

From the 13th century BCE, Professor Cochavi-Rainey has selected twenty-five texts exhibiting grammatical and stylistic features unique to the Egyptian scribal renderings of the Akkadian language in the 13th century. All the texts selected by the author for analysis are personal letters, except for the Akkadian version of the text of the peace treaty between Ramesses II and Ḫattušili III, signed in 1259 BCE, fifteen years after the celebrated 1274 BCE stalemated battle near the Syrian city of Qadesh on the upper Orontes between the Egyptian forces under Ramesses II and the Hittite army under Ḫattušili III's brother, Muwatalli II (1295-1272 BCE).⁸

Seven pieces of correspondence analyzed for this 13th century BCE aspect of the author's study are letters from Ramesses II to Ḫattušili III; four other letters from Ramesses II are addressed to Ḫattušili III's powerful and influential royal partner, Queen Pudu-Ḫeba, who has been essentially credited with 'Hurrianizing' the state religion of the Hittites; and a single letter from Ramesses II addressed to both Ḫattušili III and Queen Pudu-Ḫeba was also sampled as part of the analysis. Other single letter selections culled for grammatical and stylistic examples include two letters from Ramesses II's mother, Tuya (*Twy*); one addressed to Ḫattušili III and the other addressed to Queen Pudu-Ḫeba. A letter to the Hittite queen from Ramesses II's first 'great royal wife', Queen Nefertari (*Nfrt-iry*), whose name is rendered in Akkadian as 'Naptera', is also analyzed in this sampling. Also included is a letter addressed to Pudu-Ḫeba from Ramesses II and his vizier Pa-siru, a name rendered in Akkadian as Pašīara. A letter to Ḫattušili III from one of Ramesses II's sons, prince Sutekh-(her)-khepesh-ef [*šwth-(hr)-ḫpš.f*], rendered in Akkadian as Šūtaḫpašap, has also been selected for analysis.

Aside from a fragmented letter sent by Ramesses II to unknown recipients, there are two other letters Cochavi-Rainey has analyzed for their particular Egypto-Akkadian nuances. One was from Ramesses II to the ruler of Mirā in western Anatolia, which was part of the kingdom of Arzawa, and the other, much older letter, was sent to the Hittite king Šuppiluliuma I (1344-1322 BCE), apparently from Ankh-es-en-amun, a daughter of Akhenaten and the half-sister/wife of Tutankhamun.⁹

Although written sometime during the very late 13th century/early 12th century BCE, grammatical and stylistic examples are also culled from three letters sent to King 'Ammurāpi' (c. 1200 BCE), the last king of the renowned coastal city-state of Ugarit. One piece of correspondence concerned the carving and installation of a memorial statue of Ramesses II's son and successor, Pharaoh Mer-en-ptah (1213-1203 BCE), and the other was sent by Chancellor Bay (*Beya, Be-e-ia*), the powerful Syrian chancellor who served under the last three rulers of Egypt's 19th Dynasty.¹⁰

CONTENT SUMMARY

Chapter 1, which covers the comparative orthography, phonetics, and phonology of the selected texts, commences with a highly useful syllabary listing all the most important Akkadian signs, or characters, with their different syllabic and ideographic readings, contextual meanings, and referenced locations within the texts.

Chapter 2 deals with the morphosyntax of the Akkadian used by the scribes of Egypt and provides full coverage of the usages and forms within the selected texts of pronouns, nouns, numerals, adjectives, verbal forms and conjugation, prepositions, particles, and adverbs.

Chapter 3, which deals with matters of syntax used in the Peripheral Akkadian of the Egyptian scribes, also includes a three-page section on idiomatic expressions unique to Peripheral Akkadian, some of which have parallels in Middle and Late Egyptian.

Chapter 4 is an index of all the personal names and toponyms that occur within the selected texts analyzed for this monograph. Personal names covered are Egyptian, West Semitic, Kassite, Indo-Aryan, Hittite, and those of Near Eastern divinities. Their Akkadian forms as found in the texts, and when applicable, their Egyptian forms, are given along with the referenced text locations in which they occur. Also listed along with the personal names found in this selected correspondence corpus are twenty-one regional toponyms.

Chapter 5 contains an excellent synchronic summary of the linguistic features from the various regional Akkadian dialects and the native Egyptian language which exerted their influence upon, and found their way into, the scribal compositions produced in royal Egyptian chancery offices, as well as in regional Egyptian military-administrative outposts such as Gaza.¹¹

Appendix I provides full coverage of the particular syntax and rhetoric of el-Amarna letter number 1 (EA 1), a long letter addressed to the Kassite king of Babylon, Kadašman-Enlil I, by the 18th Dynasty pharaoh Amenhotep III. It is a text filled with quotations from the two kings' previous correspondence, accompanied by the scribal employment of multiple rhetorical devices, upon which commentary is provided by Zipora Cochavi-Rainey.

Appendix II presents a full, line-by-line transcription of the Akkadian text of el-Amarna letter number 14 (EA 14), along with an English translation and a summary of its various linguistic features. The great value of this letter is in the names of items found in its long list of wedding gifts sent by the king of Egypt (either Amenhotep III, Akhenaten, or Tutankhamun) to the daughter of the king of Babylon, Burna-buriaš II.

Appendix III contains Akkadian approximations of Egyptian vocabulary, primarily referring to the names of items sent to Babylon as gifts by the Egyptian kings, while some Egyptian administrative and military terms are also given in their Akkadianized forms. All vocabulary entries are accompanied by the author's commentary.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO EGYPTOLOGY AND PERIPHERAL AKKADIAN STUDIES

Aside from two monographs published in the early 20th century by Böhl and Labat,¹² which only sparingly dealt with the linguistic features found in the Egyptian letters discovered at el-Amarna and Boghazköy, research into the Amarna and Boghazköy texts previous to Cochavi-Rainey's 1988 doctoral dissertation did not provide *extensive* analysis focusing on the particular nature of the language used by the royal scribes of Egypt in their international communications. Research into these texts previous to Cochavi-Rainey's study also did not diachronically compare the 14th century BCE Amarna archive texts with the Ramesside scribal correspondence from the 13th century BCE found at Boghazköy, nor had any synchronic studies of Peripheral Akkadian been done with any comparative focus on the grammatical and stylistic nuances introduced by the Egyptian scribes into their particular Akkadian compositions. Although synchronic studies have been published dealing with

the Peripheral Akkadian dialects in which Hurrian, Hittite, and Canaanite scribes wrote, Cochavi-Rainey's study is the first to fully treat synchronically the Peripheral Akkadian employed by the scribes of Egypt.

In the author's treatment of the texts selected for this volume, she has analyzed and cataloged the orthography, phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax of the Akkadian used by the Egyptian scribes of the 14th and 13th centuries BCE. She has also isolated its special features and compared them with the unique linguistic characteristics of other collections of Peripheral Akkadian texts from the same general time period. Explanations for the special, or unusual linguistic features identified and discussed have then been sought through a comparison of them with similar elements found within the native language of the Egyptian scribes, which at the time would have been the Late Egyptian dialect of the New Kingdom period. Although focused on the Peripheral Akkadian of the 14th and 13th century BCE Egyptian scribal community, Cochavi-Rainey's monograph, because of its synchronic aspects, also stands as a good introduction to the particular linguistic features of Peripheral Akkadian in general.

CONCLUSION

To what degree did royal Egyptian scribes allow their Akkadian formulations to be influenced by their own language, and were some of these scribes non-Egyptians who had been brought into royal Egyptian scribal service, are two of the fundamental questions to which the author of this monograph sought answers in her study. These two inquiries have been meticulously addressed and answered by the author, and in so doing, she has made a unique contribution to the study of 'Peripheral Akkadian' in general, as well as to an expanded understanding of the nature of the international diplomatic language employed by 14th and 13th century BCE Egyptian scribes in particular.

For any advanced Akkadian undergraduate or graduate course focused on reading the Amarna letters, this book deserves placement as a required or highly recommended course text, and for scholars of the ancient Near East interested in conducting a thorough linguistic study of the Akkadian Ramesside and Amarna archive correspondence, Professor Cochavi-Rainey's excellent and painstakingly comprehensive monograph will become an indispensable resource and guide within this historically important area of ancient Near Eastern philological research.

NOTES

- ¹ *Ugarit-Forschungen* [21 (1989):39-46; 22 (1990):5-23; 25 (1993):75-84; 29 (1997):95-114], *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* [49 (1990):57-65], and *Israel Oriental Studies* [18 (1998):207-228].
- ² Dates for Egyptian kings and dynastic periods provided in this review are taken from Ian Shaw (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 479-483. The dates for Mesopotamian kings and dynastic periods are taken from J. A. Brinkman's "Mesopotamian Chronology of the Historical Period" in A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, Revised Edition completed by Erica Reiner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 335-348; and Michael Roaf, *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East* (Oxfordshire: Andromeda Oxford Limited, 1966), 140. The dates and chronology of Hittite kings are taken from O. R. Gurney, *The Hittites*, 5th Revised Edition (London: The Folio Society, 2002), 205-206.
- ³ O. R. Gurney, *The Hittites*, 5th Revised Edition (London: The Folio Society, 2002), 113, 120.
- ⁴ Zipora Cochavi-Rainey, *The Alshab Texts from the 14th and 13th Centuries BCE: A Textual and Linguistic Study*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 289 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2003).
- ⁵ Elmar Edel, *Die ägyptische-bethitische Korrespondenz aus Boghazköi in babylonischer und bethitischer Sprache*, *Abhandlungen der rheinisch-westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Band 77 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994).
- ⁶ As examples of Peripheral Akkadian usage by the Egyptian scribe who composed EA 1, discussed in Appendix I of this book (pp. 215-226), it should be noted that in Old and Middle Babylonian Akkadian the verb in a clause is usually placed last, while in Peripheral Akkadian the verb can be placed at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a clause, depending on what the scribe wants to emphasize. Peripheral Akkadian also uses *amur*, the imperative of the verb *amāru* ("to see"), as a presentation particle at the head of a sentence, with the meaning, "Behold,..." Two characteristic West Semitic Peripheral Akkadian usages by the Egyptian scribes consisted of the employment of the conjunctive *ú* to introduce the apodosis at the head of a conditional sentence, e.g. *ú šumma* ("But if..."), and the usage of the *ú* conjunction placed at the head of temporal clauses with the meaning of "when," "at the time that," "as soon as," etc. In standard Old and Middle Babylonian Akkadian the particle *-mi*, usually following *ummā* (*ummāmi*), or a verb of speaking, such as *qabū* ("to speak, say"), indicated that direct speech was to follow, however, in the entire extant corpus of Akkadian letters written by Egyptian scribes, only once, in EA 1 (line 26), is the particle *mi* used to introduce direct speech. Additionally, the conjunctive enclitic *-ma*, used to join clauses in Old Babylonian, was rarely used by the Egyptian scribes.
- ⁷ The Kassite king of Babylon to whom EA 14 was addressed is King Burna-buriaš II (1359-1333 BCE), as is clearly indicated by the second half of his name (a theophoric reference to the Kassite storm-god Buriaš), as preserved on the second line of the tablet (*-bu-ra-ri-ia-aš*). However, because only the last two Akkadian signs (*-re-ia*) of the cuneiform rendition of the pharaoh's name remain in the first line of column 1 of the tablet containing the text of EA 14, and because three near-consecutively ruling Egyptian kings' names in Akkadian ended with those two signs (Cochavi-Rainey 2011: 227, 229), the pharaoh sending the letter could either be Amenhotep III (1390-1352 BCE), Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten (1352-1336 BCE), or even Tutankhamun (1336-1327 BCE), all three of whose reigns overlapped that of King Burna-buriaš II.
- ⁸ Muwatalli II's son, Urhi-Tēšub, came to the Hittite throne in 1272 BCE, taking the throne name of Muršili III, but was deposed six years later in 1266 BCE by his uncle Ḫattušili III. It was Ḫattušili III who inserted into the 1259 BCE peace treaty he signed with Ramesses II the provision that his own son and royal heir, Tudḫaliya IV (1237-1209 BCE), would be recognized by Ramesses II as the legitimate successor to the Hittite throne at Ḫattuša, and that the throne would not revert back to the sons of his brother, Muwatalli II, after Ḫattušili III's death. See Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000-323 BC* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 149.
- ⁹ When the young king Tutankhamun died in 1327 BCE his widowed queen and half-sister Ankh-es-en-amun, whose father Akhenaten had originally named Ankh-es-en-pa-aten, wrote a letter to the Hittite monarch Šuppiluliuma I (1344-1322 BCE). As a gesture of peace between the two warring powers, she requested in the letter that he send one of his sons to marry her and become king of Egypt, and in the process create a united Egyptian-Hittite world empire. After some hesitation, he honored her request and sent his son Zannanza to Egypt. However, along the way, most likely in Syria, the young Hittite prince was murdered, possibly by soldiers under the command of the Egyptian general Horemheb, who in 1323 BCE would become the last king of the 18th Dynasty. Nevertheless, aside from his own personal political ambitions, General Horemheb most likely did not want to see the son of a Hittite enemy sitting on the throne of Egypt, and thus engaged in political assassination to prevent such a situation from occurring. See Jacobus Van Dijk, "The Amarna Period and the Later New Kingdom" in Ian Shaw (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 292.

¹⁰ King ‘Ammurāpi’, a contemporary of the last Hittite king of Ḫattuša, Šuppiluliuma II (1207/1205 - ? BCE), became the last king of the great coastal city-state of Ugarit (mod. Ras Shamra, near Latakia in western Syria), for at some point during the reign of Egypt’s Sety II, between 1200 and 1194 BCE, King ‘Ammurāpi’ saw his renowned city destroyed and burned to the ground by an advance of the invading, piratical/migratory, Late Bronze Age phenomenon of chaos known as the ‘Sea Peoples’. As ‘Ammurāpi’ states in an urgent communiqué to the king of Cyprus, the Mediterranean island then called Alashiya (RS 18.147), all of this was occurring while his troops and chariots were in central Anatolia, in the land of the Hittites (Ḫatti), and his small navy was anchored off the southwestern coast of Anatolia, in the land of Lukka.

As cuneiform correspondence sent from Egypt, excavated at Ugarit, has shown, King ‘Ammurāpi’ was also a contemporary of Chancellor Bay (Bey, Beya, or Be’ia), ‘chancellor of the entire land’, a powerful Syrian official who served under Pharaoh Mer-en-ptah’s son and successor, Sety II and his principal ‘great royal wife’ Queen Ta-usret. Chancellor Bay helped bring to the throne of Egypt the only son of Sety II, Sa-ptah (1194-1188 BCE), who was the son of Sety’s Syrian concubine, Sutilja. Pharaoh Sa-ptah (“Son of [the creator god] Ptah”) was only a young boy when he

began his six-year reign and he also suffered from poliomyelitis which caused one of his legs to be atrophied. His step-mother, Queen Ta-usret, ruled as regent on the young pharaoh’s behalf, and when he died in 1188 BCE, she became the last monarch of the 19th Dynasty, ruling for two years as ‘King of Egypt’ in accordance with the protocols previously established by Queen/Pharaoh Hatshepsut (1473-1458 BCE), and supported by the behind-the-throne power and influence of Chancellor Bay. See Jacobus Van Dijk, “The Amarna Period and the Later New Kingdom” in Ian Shaw (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 303-304.

- ¹¹ A. F. Rainey, “Verbal Usages in the Taanach Texts,” *Israel Oriental Studies* 7 (1977): 64.
- ¹² Franz Marius Theodor Böhl, *Die Sprache der Amarnabriefe mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Kanaanismen*, Leipzig: semitistische Studien 5/2 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1909); René Labat, *L’Akkadien de Boghaz-Köi; étude sur la langue, des lettres, traités et vocabulaires akkadiens trouvés à Boghaz-Köi* (Bordeaux: Delmas, 1932).