ARAMAIC LOANWORDS IN NEO-ASSYRIAN: REJECTING SOME PROPOSALS

Zack Cherry

The most comprehensive study dedicated so far to research on the Aramaic loanwords in Neo-Assyrian and Neo- and Late-Babylonian is the one by von Soden, *Aramäische Wörter in neuassyrischen und neu- und spätbabylonischen Texten. Ein Vorbericht, I-III.*[1] In this study, von Soden identified a total of 240 words which he considered loanwords from Aramaic into at least one of the Akkadian dialects mentioned above. Altogether 79 words of this total are considered Aramaic loanwords in Neo-Assyrian, some of which are also considered loanwords in one or both of the other two dialects.

As important as von Soden's study is for further research on Aramaic loanwords in Akkadian it requires to be revised and brought up-to-date in line with existing lexical tools at our disposal. The number of the current Akkadian dictionaries has increased noticeably and includes now von Soden's complete *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (AHw.), with its *Berichtigungen und Nachträge*, the *Rückläufiges Wörterbuch des Akkadischen*,[2] the *Deutsch-Akkadisches Wörterbuch* (DAW),[3] as well as *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* (CDA),[4] which is basically based on AHw., and most recently the *Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary*.[5] Soon *The Assyrian Dictionary of the University of Chicago* (CAD) will be complete as well.

The advancement in the field of lexicography also applies to the North-West Semitic languages, which include Aramaic. In addition to the *Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l'Ouest* (DISO),[6] which von Soden utilized in his research, there now exists a more complete and up-to-date lexicon, namely the *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (DNWSI).[7]

Moreover, a large number of cuneiform texts have been published and studied since the late 1970s including relevant grammatical and lexicographic analyses that need to be incorporated into von Soden's study. For the Neo-Assyrian texts,

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[1] See von Soden 1966, 1968, 1977.
[2] Hecker 1990.
[3] Kämmerer & Schwiderski 1998.
[4] Black, George & Postgate 2000.
[5] Parpola & Whiting 2007.
[6] Jean & Hoftijzer 1965.
[7] Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995.

the situation has improved dramatically, especially with the inauguration of the *State Archives of Assyria* project (SAA), which not only provides the editions of the previously unpublished Neo-Assyrian texts, but also re-edits many old ones, and maintains a valuable Neo-Assyrian glossary. Thus, not only are the lexical inventories as well as the corpus of the Neo-Assyrian texts published and studied larger than they were before, but, fortunately, many of the previously edited texts also have been re-edited and commented upon anew and are therefore more accurate.

In any case, as the title already indicates, the main focus of this study is on the Aramaic loanwords in Neo-Assyrian. Its primary objective is to re-evaluate some of the words that have been proposed as Aramaic loanwords in Neo-Assyrian, whether by von Soden in his study or by other scholars in the Assyriological literature.

There are various reasons for rejecting a word from being a loan from Aramaic into Neo-Assyrian, for instance:

The word in question originated in error during the copying, analyzing, or learning of the language and, therefore, it exists neither in Akkadian nor in Aramaic, i.e., the word is a "ghost word";

The meaning of the word is unlike what is claimed;

An attestation in Akkadian sources is found from the time before the Akkadian-Aramaic language contact. This means from before 1100 BC, at the latest, as the first real reference to the "Aramaeans" is to be found in the inscription of Tiglath-pileser I of Assyria (1114–1076 BC);[8]

The word is instead borrowed from Akkadian into Aramaic.

However, for lack of space, this paper does not take into account those loanwords that can be rejected for reasons other than the ones specified above. Such other reasons include:

The word is not a loan but rather a cognate;

The word is borrowed from a West Semitic language other than Aramaic;

The direction of the loan cannot be decided.

As a result, following the criteria set forth for our purposes, the rare or sometimes misinterpreted words discussed below should no longer be considered Aramaic loanwords in Neo-Assyrian.

akku "furious": This word is attested in the expression *ḫa-an-ga-ru ak-ku* in a Neo-Assyrian oracle as shown below and is regarded by von Soden as a loanword from Aramaic. He is of the opinion that *akku* "grimm(ig)" is used here instead of the Akkadian word *aggu* "grimmig, zornig".[9] It is entered in AHw. (1542b) as an Aramaic "Fremdwort" and in CDA as a loanword from Aramaic with a cross-reference to the word "*aggu*". CAD, on the other hand, considers the meaning of this word to be unknown and expresses uncertainty about its reading.

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8   See Lipiński 2000: 25 and 35.
9   See von Soden 1977: 184, no. 174.

A different analysis put forward by Parpola states that *akku* is to be taken as an unvoiced variant of the Akkadian *aggu* "angry, furious".[10] The opposition between the voiceless *k* and the voiced *g* as two plosive variants seems to be in part limited by the context; the voiced forms are slightly preferred in a voiced context or in a voiced root context and the other way around (Hämeen-Anttila 2000: 15). In this regard, a parallel case is to be found in the writing of *akappu* for *agappu* "wing".[11] Accordingly, *akku* is nothing other than a variant of the Akkadian *aggu* and not a loanword from Aramaic as proposed by von Soden.

It remains to call attention to the fact that CAD Ḫ: 79b enters the expression *ḫa-an-ga-ru ak-ku* as one word, i.e. *ḫangaruakku*. However, CAD further suggests two possible readings of which *ḫanga ru'akku* is incorrect, but the second one, *ḫangaru akku*, is now considered correct.

> *ḫa-an-ga-ru ak-ku* / *ina* ŠU.2-*ia* / LÚ.KÚR.MEŠ-*ka* / *ú-qa-at-ta* "With an angry dagger in my hand I will finish off your enemies." SAA 9 1 iv 7–10

burbānu "foal(?)": In AHw. (1549b s.v. *bur/bu-ur-ba*(-*a*)-*ni*) and CDA, the meaning of *burbānu* is considered unclear and unknown respectively. On the other hand, this word is not included by CAD.

However, *burbānu* is rendered in SAA 5 64 r.6 in the sense of "foal(?)" (see below).[12] Parpola proposes it as a loanword from Aramaic and refers to the Syriac word, *bar bānā* "calf, bullock that has not yet been yoked" listed in Payne Smith's *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (53b).[13] A closer look at the Syriac word in question reveals that the word *bar baqrā* ܒ݁ܰܪ ܒ݁ܰܩܪ݂ܳ "calf, bullock that has not yet been yoked," was erroneously read as *bar bānā*. Therefore, there is no reason to accept the loan hypothesis proposed above. Most recently, the *Assyrian-English-Assyrian Dictionary*, being notified by this author of the error mentioned above, enters the attested plural noun form of this word i.e. *burbāni* and states that its meaning is unknown.[14] It should be noted, however, that **burbānu*, based on SAA 5 64, has been listed in the words section of the *Register Assyriologie* in AfO 40/41 (1993/1994: 453b) as a loanword from Aramaic. The meaning and the origin of this word remain obscure.

> *i-se-niš* ANŠE.KUR.RA.ME / *ga-mu-zu*! / *lip-šu-ḫu* / *bur-ba-a-ni* "*All the same*, the horses have been *heavily pressed*; the *foals* should rest out." SAA 5 64 r.3–6

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[10] See SAA 9 1 note to iv 7 as well as Luukko 2004: 70–71.
[11] Cf. Kaufman 1974: 139 and von Soden 1957: 122, nos. 2–3. See also SAA 9 1 note to iv 7.
[12] The responsibility for the discussion and analysis of the words *burbānu* and **suānu* (below) in SAA 5 (64 r.6 and 31 r.21) rests entirely with Professor Parpola (personal communication).
[13] See Payne Smith 1903: 53b s.v. ܒ݁ܰܪ ܒ݁ܰܩܪ݂ܳ .
[14] See Parpola & Whiting 2007: 18b.

egirtu "letter": The origin of this word and the direction of its borrowing have been widely debated.[15] AHw. considers *egirtu* to be borrowed from Aramaic. CDA provides instead an Akkadian etymology, namely *egāru* which probably means "to write down".

W. von Soden considers this word to be a loan from the Aramaic *'igge̊rā*, *'iggartā* about which he states: "das zu den nicht deverbalen Substantiven zu gehören scheint."[16] Kaufman, on the other hand, comments on the word *egirtu* as follows: "I find it difficult to interpret the evidence as pointing to anything but an Akkadian etymology here."[17] He presents criticism of von Soden's argument and considers it highly improbable because the noun form *qittal* is unusual in Aramaic. Furthermore, in discussing the Neo-Assyrian term *egirtu ša šulmu* and its analogous Aramaic term *spr šlm*, Kaufman writes:

> The correspondence *egirtu*: *spr* should serve to finally settle the dispute over the etymology of *egirtu*, Aramaic *'grt/h* […]. Were *egirtu* originally an Aramaic word there would be no reason to use the Aramaic *spr* instead of *'grt* to translate it. Thus we are forced to posit an Akkadian etymology for *egirtu*. Morphologically, there is no problem in seeing it as the feminine verbal adjective of the verb *egēru*, "to be crossed (see AHw. s.v.), twisted"; indeed, it is the only possibility. The semantic difficulties are of a more serious nature.[18]

Later, Postgate argued, in favour of an Akkadian etymology, that a derivation for the Neo-Assyrian word *egirtu* is provided in the Middle-Assyrian word *egāru* "to write down". Nevertheless, further corroboration for *egāru* in Middle-Assyrian with the meaning "to write down," is required to establish Postgate's argument. He, however, explains his reasoning as follows:

> The phrase *ana la mašā'e e-gi-ir* (No. 4:10) replaces the normal *šaṭāru* by a verb *egāru*, and thus provides a derivation for Neo-Assyrian *egirtu* making it unnecessary to suspect an Aramaic origin for the word (as does W. von Soden, Or NS 35 [1966] 8, No. 18).[19]

ḫašābu "to count, reckon": According to AHw. (1560a), the meaning of this word is "rechnen". W. von Soden considers *ḫašābu* to be an Aramaic loanword in Neo-Assyrian. He refers to the word *iḫšub*, supposedly attested in ABL 1245 r.19, which he transliterates and renders as follows: *šarru be-lí ki ma-ṣi iḫ-šub*! "wieviel (d.h. wie viele Tage) hat mein Herr König gerechnet?"[20]

The same letter is re-edited as SAA 16 65 in which the assumed word *iḫ-šub* is now read as *aḫ-ru*, and rendered "still," based on the Neo-Assyrian word *aḫḫūr*

15   For a reference to a summary of the history of scholarship in this regard see Kaufman 1974: 48, esp. n. 81.
16   See von Soden 1966: 8, no. 18; 1977: 185, no. 18; and AHw. 190a s.v. *egertu*.
17   See Kaufman 1974: 48.
18   Kaufman 1977: 124 n. 44.
19   Postgate 1980: 68. See also CDA: 67a s.v. *egāru*.
20   See von Soden 1977: 187, no. 189.

"further, still, once more". Accordingly, the entries *ḫašābu* "to count, reckon" for Neo-Assyrian in AHw. and CDA as well as *ḥšb₁* "to calculate" in DNWSI are erroneous.

> LUGAL *be-lí ki ma-ṣi aḫ-ru* IGI.2.MEŠ [*x x x x*] "O king, my lord! How long still [will *my*] eyes [...]?" SAA 16 65 s.2

lapān(i) "before, in front of": W. von Soden points out that *lapān* rarely occurs in Neo-Assyrian and refers to the attestation given in CAD L: 81b. He analyzes the word *lapān*(*i*) as a hybrid consisting of the Aramaic *la-* and the Akkadian word *pānu* "face" and remarks the following: "*la–* hat in diesem Ausdruck teilweise eine separative Funktion, vor allem in den schon im 8. Jahrhundert bezeugten Verbindungen mit den Verben des Entfernens."[21]

The relevant passage reads as follows: *la-pa-ni ša issaparuni* "Before he had sent word." (ABL 685:23) However, ABL 685 is recently re-edited as SAA 15 136, and the expression *la-pa-ni ša* that is said to occur on line 23, is now read as *la pa-né-ša*. As it stands, the word *lapān*(*i*) in the sense of "before, in front of" is not attested in Neo-Assyrian and, consequently, can no longer be considered a loan from Aramaic.

> 2-*ta ši-na* LÚ*.*qin-na-a-te ša* URU.*ma*[*r-pa-da*] / 1.et LÚ*.*qin-nu pa-né-e-ša a-na pa-an* / LUGAL EN-*iá* 1.*et-ma* LÚ*.*qin-nu la pa-né-ša* "There are two families in Ma[rpada], one of them inclined towards the king, my lord, the other one not." SAA 15 136:21–23

magattu "scraper (for bricks)": In AHw., the word *magattu* was at first considered a "Fremdwort" of Aramaic origin in Neo-Assyrian. In CAD, it is considered an Aramaic loanword in Neo-Assyrian. A supposed reference is found in a dowry list of a marriage conveyance which is quoted in both AHw. (576b) and CAD M/1 (44a) as follows: *ma-ga-a*[*t?-*]*tú? parzilli* "a *ma-ga-a*[*t?-*]*tú?* of iron." (ND 2307:34 in Iraq 16: 38)

Nevertheless, the same text was later re-edited by Postgate, who transliterates the word in question as *ma-ga-zu?-tú* and renders it in the sense of "shears". According to Postgate, the reading *magattu* for Neo-Assyrian is certainly wrong.[22] Afterwards, von Soden followed Postgate's reading of *ma-ga-zu?-tú* and corrected it accordingly in the addenda and corrigenda section of the AHw.[23]

palû "to search": W. von Soden considers palû an Aramaic loanword in Neo-Assyrian citing ADD 826 r.2 for evidence: *17 napšāte ša lā pa-li-'a* "17 'Seelen', die nicht durchsucht sind."[24] In AHw. (817b s.v. *palû* III), this word is considered an Aramaic "Fremdwort" in Neo-Assyrian in the sense of "durchsuchen".

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[21] See von Soden 1966: 14, no. 77; 1977: 189, no. 77, also AHw. 534b.
[22] See Postgate 1976: 103–104 (no. 14: 34) and 197b s.v. *magazzutu*.
[23] See AHw. 1572a (s.v. *magattu*), where the word *magazzutu* "shears," is, in its turn, considered an Aramaic "Fremdwort" in Neo-Assyrian. Cf. von Soden 1966: 16, no. 84; 1977: 190, no. 84.
[24] See von Soden 1968: 262, no. 110; 1977: 191, no. 110.

Nevertheless, the same document is now edited as SAA 11 172, where the word *pa-li-'a* is read as GIŠ.*le-'i* and rendered "writing-board". Accordingly, the entries *palû* in AHw. as well as *pl'*₁ in DNWSI are erroneous.

> PAB 17 ZI.MEŠ / *ša la* GIŠ.*le-'i* "In all 17 people, who are not (listed) on the writing-board." SAA 11 172 r.1–2

qadduru "blackened, darkened": In AHw., this word is considered to be developed from the Aramaic *qdr* "finster sein" into Neo-Assyrian in the sense of "geschwärzt". As cited in AHw., it is supposed to be attested in ADD 964 r.9: *dūdu* (Kessel) *qa-dúr*(*u*).[25]

On the other hand, CAD Q (47a) refers to the entry of *qadduru* in AHw., but suggests that it should be probably emended to *qa-lu*. That is, to be read *qallu* with the meaning "small (objects)", an antonym of the word *dannu* "large," which occurs on the preceding line r.7. Nevertheless, the same text is now edited as SAA 7 88, and the word is read *qa-lu*! in accordance with CAD. Hence the entries of *qadduru* in AHw. and CAD are incorrect.

> 1 *du-du* URUDU *dan-nu* / 1 :. *kas-su-pi* :.! / 1 :. *qa-lu*! "1 large kettle of copper; 1 ditto, *chipped*, ditto; 1 ditto, small." SAA 7 88 r.7– 9

*suānu "to punish": An etymology and meaning for this difficult word are suggested in SAA 5 31 (note to r.21) as follows:

> on the basis of the context, *a-su-na-ka* (hapax legomenon) is tentatively taken as a present tense form of an otherwise unknown verb *swn* "to punish," cf. Syr. *šnw* "to punish, abuse, to inflict severe pain, punishment, torture" (Payne Smith, p. 587b).[26]

This is to say that the verb *swn* is tentatively construed by the means of metathesis after the Syriac verb *šnw* taking into consideration the realization of alphabetic /š/ as <s> in Neo-Assyrian.[27] Nevertheless, with a closer look at the Syriac word in question we find that *šnq* ܫܢܩ "to punish, abuse; to inflict severe pain, punishment, torture," was read and transcribed erroneously as *šnw*.[28] Besides, no verb of IIIw is to be found in Syriac or Aramaic since all verbs there of IIIy, IIIw and III'merge into the verbal group IIIy.[29] Therefore, no loan relationship can be acknowledged here and the meaning of the enigmatic word *a-su-na*!-*ka* remains unsolved. However, it is important to call attention to the fact that *suānu, based on SAA 5 31, has been listed as *swn in the words section of the *Register Assyriologie* of AfO 40/41 (1993/1994: 482b), referring to the alleged Syriac word "*šnw*".

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[25]   See von Soden 1977: 192, no. 198.
[26]   See SAA 5 31 note to r.21.
[27]   See Parpola 1974: 4 as well as Fales 1986: 61–62.
[28]   See Payne Smith 1903: 587b, s.v. ܫܢܩ.
[29]   See Müller-Kessler 1991. I am grateful to Mikko Luukko for bringing the note written on *a-su-na-ka* by Müller-Kessler to my attention.

> *la ta-ma-ḫar* : *a-su-na*[1]*-ka* "Do not accept an agreement (*from him*), (*or*) *I shall punish you*!" SAA 5 31 r.21

šapānu "to level": In AHw., this word is considered an Aramaic "Fremdwort" in Neo-Assyrian, attested as *i-si-ip-nu* in ABL 503 (r.5, s. 3), in the sense of "to level".[30] CAD, on the other hand, considers the meaning of *šapānu* uncertain. Furthermore, it reads the form as *i-si-ib-nu*, and analyzes it as follows:

> Most probably *issibnu* is a form of *labānu* "to mold bricks." […]. The proposal that *šapānu* is a loan word from Aram. (AHw. 1170a) is therefore unnecessary; moreover Aram. *ś/spn* is cognate with Akk. *sapānu*.[31]

However, ABL 503 is now re-edited as SAA 15 156, and the word in question is analyzed in a way similar to that of CAD and reflected upon as follows: "*i-si-ib-nu* is understood as 3m pl. pf. of *labānu* 'to mold bricks' (*/iltibnū/), with vowel harmony on analogy with the corresponding singular form (*/iltibin/)."[32] Accordingly, the entry *šapānu* in AHw. and CAD is incorrect. Instead, the word *i-si-ib-nu* should be entered under *labānu*, meaning "to make bricks".

> *si-m*[*an*] / ŠÉ.NUMUN.MEŠ ŠA *i-si-ib-nu ik*[1]*-tab*[1]*-˹su*[1]˺ / LÚ*.ERIM.MEŠ ˹*ur-tam*˺-*mi* ÍD.MEŠ -šú-nu / *i*[*ḫ-ti*]-*ri-ʾu-u i-si-ib-nu* "It being the ti[me] of cultivating the seeds, but they have *moulded bricks* and trodden (earth). I released the men, so they have [d]ug their rivers and *moulded bricks*." SAA 15 156 r.4–7

CONCLUSION

A total of 10 words that were earlier proposed by von Soden and other scholars as Aramaic loanwords in Neo-Assyrian, several of them hapax legomena, have been discussed here. However, for various reasons, these words can no longer be considered Aramaic loanwords in Neo-Assyrian. This in no way diminishes the importance of von Soden's research in which he initiated the first steps towards studying Aramaic loanwords in Neo-Assyrian and Neo- and Late-Babylonian, and laid a solid foundation for further research in this subject. The words *burbānu* and **suānu* are still difficult and remain unexplained for now. It is to be hoped and expected that further research will succeed in establishing the correct rendering of these words.

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[30] Cf. von Soden 1977: 195, no. 225.
[31] See CAD Š/1: 427b s.v. **šapānu.
[32] See SAA 15 156 note to r.5.