

volumes are planned. We can only wish the authors continued success and timely publication.

**Christian W. Hess**

Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

JACOB JAN DE RIDDER:

*Descriptive Grammar of Middle Assyrian.*

(Leipziger Altorientalische Studien 8.) xviii, 628 pp. Wiesbaden:

Harrassowitz, 2018. €98. ISBN 978 3 447 10979 6.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X22000209

The writing of grammars holds an uneasy place in the Assyriological curriculum. Particularly in the German tradition, they are often assigned as dissertation topics to students too busy with the grammatical forms within the time allotted to gain a firm grasp of the historical and social contexts. By the time most Assyriologists reach scholarly maturity, they tend to find countless other interesting things to say about the texts, so that the slog back to reconstructing paradigms becomes understandably unappealing. The *Descriptive Grammar*, originally submitted as a PhD dissertation at Universität Leipzig, certainly belongs to the same tradition. The grammar of Middle Assyrian has long wanted revision, as the field has until now made do with W. Mayer's *Untersuchungen zur Grammatik des Mittelassyrischen* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1971); see, for example, the reviews by H. Freydanck in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 70, 1975, 142–4 and by J.N. Postgate in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 31, 1974, 273–4 on its shortcomings, particularly its treatment of “anomalies”. We can emphasize that de Ridder's *Grammar* offers a substantial advance, and will doubtless serve as a reference for the foreseeable future.

In form and structure the work closely follows N.J.C. Kouwenberg's *Grammar of Old Assyrian* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), the debt to which is acknowledged in the foreword (p. xix). The core of the *Grammar* follows a traditional chapter division covering orthography and phonology (chapters 2–4; a syllabary is given on pp. 549–70); nouns (chapters 5–7), adjectives and participles (chapter 8); numbers (chapter 9); pronouns (chapters 10–11); particles (chapter 12); prepositions (chapter 13); adverbs (chapter 14); and verbs (chapters 15–17). Syntax is treated in the last five, brief chapters (18–22). The book concludes with summary paradigms (chapter 23) and concordances (chapter 25).

As becomes clear from the introduction (pp. 1–35), the “descriptive” portion of the title should be taken seriously. The presentation of historical context or Middle Assyrian as “dialect” (what is “Standard Akkadian” on p. 4 supposed to mean?) and the noncommittal references to the Middle Assyrian literary corpus, explicitly outside the scope of the grammar, all remain superficial and largely irrelevant. Gaps in secondary literature can be overlooked. More serious omissions include W. van Soldt's *Studies in the Akkadian of Ugarit* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1991), cited on p. 15 but missing from the bibliography, where comparative discussions of many of the grammatical issues treated here can already be found; the site of Satu Qala is mentioned repeatedly in the introduction without any reference to its publication in W. van Soldt *et al.*, *Anatolica* 39, 2013, 197–239, or to numerous subsequent treatments. The “map of the linguistic landscape” (p. 3), which assigns

neat linguistic spaces to Hurrian, West Semitic, Akkadian, and Elamite(!), serves more as window-dressing than as an aid to understanding the dialect area: none of the marked areas are linguistically exclusive. That the map “should not be taken as gospel” (p. 2) is a peculiar understatement. It is exactly in the analysis and understanding of the grammatical phenomena treated that much work remains: cf. the statement on the “core” of the MA writing system as having been borrowed from Old Babylonian (p. 42) with the more nuanced relationship between the writing systems of Late Bronze Age Mittani and Assyria analysed in Z.S. Homan, *Mittani Palaeography* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

Methodological considerations are accordingly almost entirely absent, though discourse analysis receives a cursory nod in the sections on “word order and topicalization” (pp. 478–80) and “casus pendens” (pp. 481–2). The advances achieved by the *Descriptive Grammar* can otherwise easily be shown by comparison with the controversial sections of its predecessor. The *Grammar* rightly rejects Mayer’s dubious appeal to the phenomena of *tafḥīm* (vowel backing) and *imāla* (vowel fronting) in Arabic to explain vocalic variation in Assyrian (pp. 87 and 97). Compared with Mayer’s cursory section on nominal case (*Untersuchungen zur Grammatik*, 48), which concludes that inflection remained unchanged since Old Assyrian, pages 185–98 here give a lengthy list of attestations of case variation; examples from the Giricano-texts were already gathered by K. Radner, *Das mittelassyrische Tontafelarchiv von Giricano* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 53 (not cited here). Not all attestations, however, are equal for reconstructing case decline: p. 187 offers the entry 1 *sūtu burāšu kīmū* <sup>sim</sup>ka-ak-<sup>1</sup>ku<sup>1</sup> “one seah of juniper instead of *kakkū*-peas<sup>(?)</sup>”, cited under the older publication KAJ 248:6, but obviously following the newer copy and reading of the tablet in D. Prechel and H. Freydanck, *Urkunden der königlichen Palastverwalter* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014), 65 (not cited here). Notwithstanding the interpretive problems involved in the pairing of juniper and peas as aromatics, the last, damaged sign, squeezed as overflow onto the edge of the tablet, can just as easily be read <sup>1</sup>ki<sup>1</sup>. The “accusative for nominative” 1 <sup>tug</sup>maš-ḥa-ra PN “one *m.*-garment (for) PN” in BATSH 18, 26:1 (p. 26), which simply lists the distribution of garments to particular persons rather again reflects the common asyntactic composition of lists. In any case, the attestations are there, and provide ample material for further study.

**Christian Hess**

Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

CHEN FEI:

*Study on the Synchronistic King List from Ashur.*

(Cuneiform Monographs 51.) xviii, 249 pp. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020. €143. ISBN 978 90 04 43091 4 hardback, 978 90 04 43092 1, ebook.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X22000064

This monograph is a full investigation of the Synchronistic King List (ScKL), which is represented by seven fragments of tablets originating from Assur that recorded the names of Assyrian and Babylonian kings from the eighteenth to the seventh century BC synchronically in parallel columns (Grayson, RIA 6, pp. 116–25, King