

REVIEWS

THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

N.J.C. KOUWENBERG:

A Grammar of Old Assyrian.

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This is one of the most important books in ancient Near Eastern studies of the last twenty or more years. It is an extremely well executed grammar and offers everything the scholar could wish for. Any critical comments are marginal, so I restrict myself to some that might be of particular use to the reader.

On page 11 Kouwenberg (K.) states “. . . that Assyrian knew a period of independent development in isolation from all other known dialects of Akkadian. OA also shares features exclusively with the third millennium dialects of Sargonic Akkadian and Mari Old Akkadian (i.e. against Old Babylonian)”. The note on Sargonic Akkadian is of particular interest to the reviewer, since he holds the view that we have to expect a large group of immigrants to Aššur from a more western region they called Amurru to the city, where they slowly mixed with an Akkadian-speaking group living in the city of old (see my contribution to Subartu 46, in press.)

On page 50 note 7 (and also p. 500), Kouwenberg takes the name spelled *A-šur-ta-ku-lá-ku* as a variant of *A-šur-ta-ak-lá-ku* with epenthesis and does not believe in a form of the D-stem *Aššur-takkulāku*. I do not believe in an epenthesis and would like to compare *Iliš-tikal* (Imp. G) and *Iliš-takkil* (Imp. D) as in KTS II 21, 2 and 15, which should be the same person. It seems rather that the difference between the G- and D-stems of this root (as for the meaning intended here) was only marginal. This would also help us understand why these rare phenomena are both to be observed with the same verb.

An important statement is made on p. 146 against a reading *ili₅* for the sign *el/il₅*. Kouwenberg rejects (with Hecker GKT §61e) the possibility of a VCV-sign in OA, because it would be the only one. He takes e.g. the name *Il-bāni* as a compressed form of *Ilī-bāni*. I absolutely agree with him about not reading signs according to the structure VCV in OA, but I do not see the need to see these names as compressed forms. The understanding of these names as *ilī* “my god” go back to the many spellings with *NI-NI*, understood as *ì-lí* “my god”. I see *NI-NI* in most cases merely as a scribal convention for *ilum* “god”, because we have for many of these names a “normal” syllabic spelling, e.g. *i-lu(um)*, as in *A-mur-i-lu-um* in kt 87/k 307, 4. The word *ilum* stands here normally either for Aššur or indeed for the personal god. Kouwenberg has suggested a very similar solution on p. 241.

Aside from the explanations given by Kouwenberg (pp. 190–3) we could also simply assume that *mer’um* was the Assyrian form while *mārum* goes back to Old Akkadian. I do not see it as a coincidence that the in comparison quite rare form *mārum* is already found in the early inscriptions of Ilu-šuma. It seems much more likely to be a deliberate recourse to Oakk traditions.

As well as suggesting Sg. or Pl. (p. 191 note 61), we could even understand *me-er-i-e-kà* as a Dual “your two sons”, if it is not indeed a mistake.

I do not always agree with the handling of the numerals, as e.g. in TC 3, 273: 5 (p. 336), where the transcription has 2 *né-pí-šu* and the relating translation gives “two packages”. We should translate “two” when the cuneiform has a form of

šena, while we should translate “2” when the cuneiform shows the corresponding numeral, i.e. here 2 verticals. The same goes for the following example Kt. 94/k 524: 17–19.

The name *Al-tāb* does not mean “Where is the sweet one” (i.e. from *ali* “where”) (p. 383). It is to be taken as *Āl-tāb* “The city is good”. It is always spelled *A-al-* and this is not the case with the spellings for *ali* “where”. The name is part of a group I call the “*ālum*-family” and is to be regarded as a parallel to *Aššur-tāb* “(god/city) Aššur is good”. Other members of this family are *Il(i)-ālum* (“(My) god is the city”) and the reverse form of *Aššur-tāb*: *Ṭāb-Aššur*, with once *Ṭāb-ilī* (with *ilī* standing for *Aššur*). In this “family” it is the god in his connection and his identity with the city that is standing in the foreground. The people bearing these names are through their names the embodiment of the concept ^d*A-šūr*^{ki}, meaning “Aššur (is) god and city”, as it is found in the inscription of Zarrīqum and similar in the famous seal inscription of Šillulu. This view on *Āl-tāb* is corroborated by a comparison with the name *Al-bēlī* “Where is my lord?”, which never has a long initial vowel, but is always spelled *Al-*... The strange name *Ṭāb-palūka* (p. 140 with note 55) understood by Kouwenberg as “your reign is pleasant” does in fact also belong into this family of names. The spellings are [DÜG-*ba*]-*lu-kà* in TPAK 1 101, 2; *Ṭá-ba-lu-kà* in ICK 2 14, 4. 7 and *Ṭá-ba-DINGIR-kà* on the seal of the same text. It is more consistent with the rest of the OA onomasticon to understand the name as *Ṭāb-āl(u)ka* “Good is your city”, closely related to the types *Ṭāb-Aššur* and *Āl-tāb*. The scribe of the seal legend has played with the fact that the city and the god Aššur are one and the same and cannot be taken apart. The word *palūm* “reign” does not occur in OA personal names.

The verb *dabābum* does not necessarily fluctuate “between *u/u* (as in Babylonian) and *a/u*” (p. 494). The one text offering both *idabbab* and *idabbub* is the famous letter of king Anum-hirbe of Māma to king Waršama of Kaneš. The use of Babylonian *mār šiprim* instead of Assyrian *šiprum* makes clear that the letter was not written by an Assyrian scribe, and the forms of *dabābum* lead me to think that it was not a native speaker of Babylonian either. The many erasures in the text corroborate this view further.

The form *lá a-ša-ga-šu-ni* (AKT VIa 233: 12) is, contrary to the translation by the editor of the text, seen as an N-form without vowel assimilation and translated as “that I may not be ruined”. However, we have to understand the form as in CAD Š I meaning 4, we are just missing the *ramānum*, which was left out. The translation completely in line with the tenor of the letter should be “(Since the day our father died) do I not exert (myself) to the utmost in this matter day and night?” Here the *liṭṭulā*-formula in l. 13–14 is exceptionally put behind the respective statement. This way the subject is also explained then as an oath-like statement.

Accepting a Sargonic OAKk substrate in OA would make forms like the Stative *dī-i-ik* (for *dēk*) alongside *mārum* and others much easier to understand (p. 563).

I do not think that the *liṭṭulā*-formula is used with the meaning “to witness” or similar (pp. 734–5). For this there are other formulas and words in OA. We have the verb *naṭālum* OA mostly in the formula *ana iṭatlim nadānum* “to sell while looking each other in the eye = for cash”. In the oath-like formula this means that the speaker is ready and willing to give a real oath which is done by facing(!) the god and swearing by a symbol of the respective deity.

I do not see that KTS 2, 52: 13–5 should be problematic (p. 736, n. 36). The text says *A-š[ūr] ū mar-tu il₅-kà il₅ kà-ki li-id-gu₅-lá-ni*, which seems clear; the translation should be “Aššur and Amurru, god of the weapons, shall look upon me scrutinizing (if I can speak the name of your servant without giving away your name)”. See now in more detail my above-mentioned contribution to Subartu 46, in press.

We should add another meaning for *pani*-(+suffix) and the opposite *warki*-(+suffix), as e.g. in Kt. m/k 27 *wa-ar-ki-kà-ma* “after your departure” and in BIN IV 2, 15. 22 *pá-ni-a-ma ab-kam* “carry off before my own departure”, and in ICK I 189: 1’ *ih-da-ma / i-pá-ni-ku-nu-ma ša-áš-qi-lá-ma* “take care to let them pay before your own departure” (p. 807). For those who consent to Akkadian forerunners to Old Hittite literature the famous phrase from the Anitta Text “after my father” could in line with this meaning be understood as “after my father left” instead of “after my father died”.

We should not understand the phrase *lá ša ḥa-bu-lá-ku₆-ni* as “there is no question that I owe you (something)” (p. 809) but on the contrary as “It is *not so* that I owe you something”.

To the author I can only add: thank you very much indeed for this fantastic piece of work – now please proceed to the OA dictionary, we need it more than ever.

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A.R. GEORGE and JUNKO TANIGUCHI (eds):

Cuneiform Texts from the Folios of W.G. Lambert, Part One.

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The career of Wilfred George Lambert, among the giants of twentieth-century Assyriology, spanned almost 60 years. Although Lambert wrote numerous articles and chapters on ancient Mesopotamian religion and mythology, he was most famous for his publications of cuneiform texts. In addition to his four widely used books – *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (1960); *Atra-ḥašis: The Babylonian Flood Story* (1969, with A.R. Millard); *Babylonian Oracle Questions* (2007); and *Babylonian Creation Myths* (2013) – Lambert published numerous editions of Sumero-Akkadian literary texts, typically accompanied by his meticulous copies of cuneiform tablets. Lambert was revered for his knowledge – perhaps matched only by Rylke Borger’s – of the British Museum’s cuneiform tablet collections, and in particular, the Kouyunjik collection. Lambert’s corrections of other scholars’ interpretations, frequently proffered via reference to new but unpublished duplicates or joins, was a familiar occurrence at meetings of the *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*.

On Thursdays Lambert habitually visited the Student Room of the British Museum to examine cuneiform texts housed there; among those who knew him, it was dubbed, “Lambert-day”. Many scholars and students of Assyriology made the most of “Lambert-day” to meet him in person, ask questions, and obtain his help in reading almost illegible signs or interpreting difficult phrases. He was generous, taking time to answer queries or give advice – as long as one was not treading on his toes. On occasion, he gave young scholars the museum registration numbers of unpublished texts he had identified. When one sought information about unpublished duplicates and joins of texts whose editions he was preparing (such as *Enūma*