Philology versus linguistics and Aramaic phonology

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The recent publication of *The Cambridge Encylopedia of the World's Ancient Languages*[1] provides an occasion for assessing the present state of our knowledge of ancient languages. Any assessment, however, will inevitably be influenced by methodology and point of view, depending upon whether the reader is a linguist or a philologist. The present author would broadly define the difference in the following way, at least as far as ancient languages are concerned: linguists tend to focus on the rules of language and general theories about language which can be generated from these rules, while philologists, although concerned with formal grammar, tend to scrutinize the textual evidence upon which a grammar is based.[2] These two approaches are sometimes difficult to reconcile.[3]

The description of ancient Aramaic in the *Cambridge Encyclopedia* is a case in point,[4] since the languagc is discussed in a way consistent with most standard grammars which have appeared recently.[5] The crucial question is whether there is adequate evidence from contemporary texts to formulate rules of phonology and morphology for ancient Aramaic. The purpose of the present paper is to present the phonology of Achaemenid Aramaic from a philological rather than a linguistic point of view, i.e. examining the evidence from texts. It is my contention that recent discussions of Aramaic grammar have not sufficiently taken into account the strongest textual evidence for the phonology of Aramaic.

The phonology of Aramaic—the problem

According the S. Morag, the earliest vocalization system known for Aramaic appears in fourth–seventh century Syriac manuscripts, but these only used diacritical marks to distinguish certain morphological features, such as the consonantal use of matres lectiones; vowels were not actually marked until manuscripts of the seventh–eleventh centuries.[6]

Within open and closed syllables, all of the rules constructed for Biblical Aramaic (and by extension to Official Aramaic) for vowel length and quantity have been derived from late traditions of vocalization of the Biblical text.[7]

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[1] Edited by R. D. Woodard, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. My sincere thanks to T. Kwasman for corrections and comments.

[2] The relationships between evidence and inference are currently part of an interdisciplinary project at University College London on 'Evidence and Causality', funded by the Leverhulme Trust. The methodological differences between philology and linguistics, as regards ancient languages, roughly reflect this dichotomy of evidence and inference.

[3] See the author's review of the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Language* in this journal, pp. 199–200.

[4] S. Creason, 'Aramaic', in *Encyclopedia*, 391–426.

[5] See, for example, T. Muraoka and B. Porten, *A Grammar of Egyptian Aramaic* (Leiden, 1998), and M. Folmer, *The Aramaic Language in the Achaemenid Period* (Louvain, 1995).

[6] S. Morag, *The Vocalization Systems of Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic* ('s-Gravenhage, 1962), 46–8.

[7] See Creason, 'Aramaic', 395: 'the phonology of Aramaic at its various stages is complicated by the paucity of direct evidence for the phonological system and by the ambiguous nature of the evidence which does exist'. Some of the ambiguities, however, could be resolved by the re-examination of the ancient evidence.

It is questionable whether one should apply a vocalization system from a thousand years later to earlier texts, but there are also many inconsistencies in the pointing of Biblical Aramaic, and in fact the Massoretic system was not as well developed for Aramaic as it had been for Hebrew. There is, for instance, little distinction between vowels in nouns which occur in 'near-open' syllables. While in Biblical Hebrew 'near-open' syllables (i.e. open syllables occurring next to the stressed syllable) were usually considered to contain long vowels, the same rule cannot be applied to Aramaic: *tᵉlāt* (vs. Heb. *šālôš*). The inconsistency of the phonology of Biblical Aramaic points to uncertainties within the system of vocalization. For instance, Segert's attempt to classify Aramaic syllables according to accented, near, and unaccented syllables does not succeed in explaining the rules of phonology.[8] In each category one finds both short and long syllables, with exceptions in each category, making the exercise somewhat futile.

Moreover, the Massoretic vocalization of segholate nouns in Aramaic may have been influenced by Hebrew (e.g. *melek*), although the theoretical reconstruction of these nouns is as *qaṭl, qiṭl, quṭl* forms. There are numerous discrepancies in the vocalization of these nouns which cast serious doubts on the reliability of the Massoretic tradition.[9]

Evidence from an Aramaic incantation in cuneiform script

The best evidence for the phonology of Eastern Aramaic from Achaemenid times comes from this unique tablet (see Appendix), which is an Aramaic incantation written in Late Babylonian cuneiform on a clay tablet. The Aramaic incantation in cuneiform script (hereafter AIC) provides the clearest evidence for the phonology of Eastern Aramaic.[10] Although assumed to date from the Seleucid period, the script is ambiguous and the text may well date from the Achaemenid period. Because cuneiform preserves both consonants and vowels, the Aramaic incantation in cuneiform offers important evidence for the pronunciation of Aramaic in Achaemenid-Seleucid Babylonia. The orthography is now easier to interpret, thanks to the recent discovery of a school tablet from Babylon in the British Musuem (BM 26536) recording two versions of an alphabet transcribed into cuneiform script.[11] The sequences of signs are as follows: *a, bé, ge, da, e, ú, za, he, ṭè* (var. *ṭu*), *ia, ka, la, me, nu, sa, a-a-nu, pe, ṣu, qu, re, ši, ta*. Certain of these signs for alphabetic letters are particularly noteworthy, such as *e* for h, *ú* for w (or long *u* as matres lectionis), and *ia* for y. The use of *a-a-nu* for ע indicates that there was no equivalent phoneme to correspond to *ayin* in Akkadian orthography. BM 26536 also lists a selection of nouns with sequences of long and short vowels in open and closed syllables, chosen as examples of nominal forms rather than for meaning, and many of these nouns have Aramaic cognates.[12] The cuneiform

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[8] S. Segert, *Altaramäische Grammatik* (Leipzig, 1986), 100 f.

[9] See F. Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (Wiesbaden, 1968), 27; Segert, *Grammatik*, 201 ff.; Creason, 'Aramaic', 401, describes these forms solely in terms of the appearance of an anaptyctic vowel, without considering the influence of Hebrew.

[10] The tablet was originally copied by F. Thureau-Dangin, *Tablettes d'Uruk* (Textes Cunéiformes du Louvre, VI), (Paris, 1922), No. 58, and has now been edited by M. J. Geller 1997–2000 ('The Aramaic incantation in cuneiform script' (AO 6489 = TCL 6, 58), *Jaarbericht ex Oriente Lux* 35–36, 127–146 [given as AIC]), and see N.A.B.U., 2001 No. 4, 'Corrections', No. 101 (p. 97); T. Kwasman collaborated on this edition but is not responsible for errors. This tablet has received intensive scholarly treatment (with the complete bibliography in the above article). The most recent treatment has now been offered by C. Müller-Kessler; see Appendix.

[11] Geller, AIC 35–6, 144 ff.

[12] Examples of words with Aramaic cognates in this text are *nappāḫu* 'smith', *ilī* 'gods', and *ṣēru* 'door pivot'; see Geller, AIC 35–6, 144. The lack of an equivalent to *ayin* in BM 26536 accords well with the observation, ibid. 128, that in AIC *ḫ* was used to represent *ayin*.

transcription of the alphabet in BM 26536 represents the same system of transcribing Aramaic into cuneiform in AIC.[13]

The following categories of relevant data have been extracted from AIC.
Matres lectionis and vowel reduction:
According to Creason, matres lectionis in Old Aramaic indicated long vowels, but by Middle and Late Aramaic they indicated short vowels as well.[14] Long vowels in cuneiform script are indicated by plene writings, corresponding to matres lectionis:

> *ti-ḫu-ú-ut* (AIC 3; 25) [for long]; *qu-ú-mi-ni*ᵗ (AIC 17) var. *qu-ú-mi-i* (AIC 42); *bi-'i-šá-ti-ia* (AIC 35)

Unaccented open syllables in cuneiform script do not always show vowel reduction to shewa, as is usually indicated in Massoretic pointing of Biblical Aramaic;[15] see *la-bi-iš* (AIC 20), *dar-da-qé-e* (AIC 11) vs. *da-re-da-qí-ia* (AIC 36), and *ga-ab-re-e* (AIC 12) vs. *ga-ba-re-e* (AIC 37).[16] On the other hand, syllables with shewa in unaccented open syllables also appear in cuneiform:

> *qé-ṭa-ri* (AIC 1); *di-* (AIC 2); *ti-ḫu-ú-ut* (AIC 3); *de-le-e* (AIC 34); *mé-ḫa-áš-še-e* (AIC 28); *pe-la-nu* (AIC 14, 22, 29); *re-ḫu-ṭi-i′* (AIC 16, 41); *ma-zi-ga-a′* (AIC 6); *ne-še-e* (AIC 12)

These patterns cast doubt on the evidence for the phonology of Massoretic pointing of Biblical Aramaic, which forms the basis for many of our grammatical rules for the phonology of Aramaic.
Morphology:
(1) Although the particles *zy/dy* are phonetic variants in different Aramaic dialects (although both can occur within the same text as well),[17] the cuneiform Aramaic incantation uses only *dy* in both free-standing and proclitic forms: *di* = ד (AIC 2) and *di-i′* = די (AIC 6).[18]
(2) Co-ordinating conjunctions appear in two forms (both non-proclitic) in cuneiform:[19]

> *ú-ma-a′* = או wa 'or' (AIC 10–13, 23, 36–40)[20]
> *u* = ו in AIC 12, *né-še-e u ga-ab-re-e*, although in AIC 37 we find *né-še-e ú-ma-a′ ga-ab-re-e*

(3) Prepositions:[21]

> *mn* = מן 'from' appears in cuneiform as *mi-in* (AIC 1, 2, 14, 27, 28, 32, 33,[22] although note in AIC 34 *mi-in-ni*, 'from', indicating a form מין with matres

[13] This information supplements Creason's discussion of the alphabets used for writing Aramaic, 'Aramaic', 393 f.
[14] Creason, 'Aramaic', 397.
[15] As Rosenthal, *Grammar*, 17.
[16] See Geller, AIC 35–6, 129. This evidence does not quite support the thesis that vowel reduction in short open syllables began in the Achaemenid period, the evidence for which is mostly to be found in Akkadian loanwords in Aramaic; see S. A. Kaufman, 'The history of Aramaic vowel reduction', apud M. Sokoloff (ed.), *Arameans, Aramaic and the Aramaic Literary Tradition* (Bar Ilan, 1983), 55.
[17] Creason, 'Aramaic', 416, 4.7.4, and Muraoka and Porten, *Grammar*, 3 f.
[18] The dialectal difference between Official Aramaic זי and Biblical Aramaic די is well known, but it is unexpected that AIC preserves the latter form consistently, both in a short and plene form (*di* and *di-i′*). The cuneiform text shows the distinction between non-proclitic *dy* (*di-i′* AIC 6) and proclitic *d-* (*di-a-ba-ba-a′* AIC 2).
[19] Creason, 'Aramaic', 416, 4.8.1.
[20] This form is difficult to explain, see Geller, AIC, 35–6, 138 f.
[21] See Creason, 'Aramaic', 415.
[22] *mi-in ti-ḫu-ú-ut* 'from under', see M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat Gan, 2002), 1201.

lectionis, since the doubling of the *nun* indicates a long vowel in the closed syllable.

qu-da-am = קדם 'before', AIC 14, 36 does not reflect the expected vowel pattern of this word. *al* for על: there are two forms of this preposition, namely the standard על 'on', AIC 29, *al pi-la-nu*, to be distinguished from א 'upon' (l. 2 *a-ba-ba-a′*), the proclitic form in Talmudic Aramaic for 'on'.[23]

ti-ḫu-ú-ut = תחות (AIC 3, 21, 25), and *mi-in ti-ḫu-ú-ut* = מן תחות (AIC 33), showing co-ordinated prepositions which are common in Aramaic.

Possessive pronouns *le-e* and *de-le-e* (AIC 26, 34) = ליה and דליה both occur.[24]

The interrogative pronoun in cuneiform, *man-nu* = מאן 'who?' (AIC 19–20) shows the doubling of the /n/, indicating a long vowel or matres lectionis.[25] Another interrogative pronoun, *ma-a-a* (AIC 7) = מאי 'what?' in Talmudic Aramaic, shows an Eastern Aramaic form of this particle.[26]

Nouns. The following categories of nouns are based upon categories described in Dalman's *Grammatik*,[27] and the examples below are drawn exclusively from AIC, since vowel length can usually be clearly determined. The purpose of the comparison is to test whether the Eastern Aramaic dialect of AIC conforms to the same phonological and morphological patterns as those identified theoretically (on much later evidence) in the unvocalized Babylonian Talmud.

Segholate nouns in AIC

quṭl: *ru-ga-ze-e* (AIC 20, 24), vs. Segert 1986, 202 (5.3.7.3.3), shows no vowel reduction; cf. JA רוגזא (cf. Dalman, *Grammatik*, 144). *kul* (AIC 14, 39)= כול (Dalman, *Grammatik*, 145). *pu-um-mé-e* (AIC 21, 24, 32, 34) corresponds to JA פומיה, treated by Dalman, *Grammatik*, 201, as irregular, although the doubled /m/ in *pu-um-mé-e* indicates a long syllable corresponding to matres lectionis in the first syllable.

qiṭl *qí-ṭa-ri* (AIC 1) קיטרא (Sokoloff, DBJA, 1011 f.); *mi-il-in-ni* (AIC 4, 7) = מילין (Dalman, *Grammatik*, 143); the doubling of the /n/ indicates a long second syllable corresponding to matres lectionis.

qaṭl: *ga-ab-re-e* and *ga-ba-re-e* (AIC 12, 37) correspond to Babylonian JA *gabrê/gabrîn* (Segert, *Grammatik*, 202 5.3.7.3.4) vs. BA *gubrîn* (see Rosenthal, *Grammar*, 27); Dalman, *Grammatik*, 139 also notes the Babylonian form גוברייא. *né-še-e* (AIC 12) is assigned by Dalman to this category, although it is irregular, with JA plural form נשייא (Dalman, *Grammatik*, 139, 200).

Non-segholate nouns in AIC

qaṭal: The word *ra-ab-ra-bé-e* in AIC 11; Rosenthal, *Grammar*, 1968, 31 derives the noun רברבי from an adjective (רב); see Dalman, *Grammatik*, 147. The noun *ba-ba-a* (AIC 2) (= בבא) may also belong to this category. AIC *ṭa-ba-ti-ia* (34) also belongs to this category (cf. Dalman, *Grammatik*, 148, טבתא and טבייא).

qaṭṭal: Quadriliteral nouns are known from AIC 11, *dar-da-qé-e* (11) = Talmudic Aramaic דרדקא, cf. Dalman, *Grammatik*, 166. *ag-gan-nu* 'bowl' (AIC 5, 9) appears in JA as אגנא, cf. Akkadian. *agannu* 'large bowl', see Sokoloff DJBA 79.

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[23] This distinction was not noted by Creason, 'Aramaic'.
[24] See Creason, 'Aramaic', 409, 4.3.4.
[25] Creason, 'Aramaic', 416, gives *m′n* as one form of the interrogative pronoun.
[26] This form is not found in Creason, 'Aramaic', 416, 4.7.3, but see Sokoloff, DJBA, 634 f.
[27] G. Dalman, *Grammatik des Jüdisch-Palästinisch Aramäisch* (Darmstadt, 1905).

qiṭṭal/qīṭal: Examples of nouns with reduplicated middle radical (Dalman, *Grammatik*, 162, gives **qiṭṭāl**) appear in AIC 8 as *li-iš-šá-ni* 'tongue', corresponding to JA לישנא, (Sokoloff, DJBA, 627), but Akkadian *lišānu*; *ig-ga-ri* 'roof' (AIC, 1, 27), corresponding to JA איגרא (Dalman, *Grammatik*, 162); *si-ip-pa-a* 'threshold' (AIC 2) corresponding to JA ספא, cf. Akkadian *sippu*. One should probably assign AIC *iš-šá-aʾ* 'fever' to this category, corresponding to JA אישא, as Dalman, *Grammatik*, 202; the first syllable is long, representing matres lectionis, see Sokoloff, DJBA, 126.

qaṭil: AIC 12 has *ka-niš-a-aʾ-ʾi-[i]* 'assembled ones', known in this form from Talmudic Aramaic; Dalman, *Grammatik*, 149 has כנישא and כנשתא, both classified as feminine forms, which would not apply to AIC, and for the gentilic-type endings, cf. Dalman, *Grammatik*, 176–7.

qaṭīl: *za-ka-a-a* (AIC 10), note that Dalman (*Grammatik*, 161) treats this word זכאי as a **qaṭṭāl** form, assuming the doubling of the middle radical, which is not borne out by the evidence of AIC in which this word appears; Sokoloff DJBA, 412, reads זכאי, 'person successful in a legal case'. AIC *ha-gi-ir-ta-aʾ* (16, 41) 'lame' corresponds to JA חגיר, see Dalman, *Grammatik*, 157. *ia-ti-ir-ta-aʾ* (AIC 17, 42) 'deformed (woman)' has an analogue in JA יתיר 'very large', see Dalman, *Grammatik*, 162–3, but treated as a **qaṭṭīl** form, which is not supported by the orthography in AIC.

qāṭil: This noun category is discussed by Dalman (*Grammatik*, 151–2), and it is plausible to ascribe to this category *ḥa-as-si-ir-ta-a* (AIC 15, 40) 'lean (woman)'; the noun form should be distinguished from Dalman's **qaṭṭīl** form (Dalman, *Grammatik*, 162), since the doubling of the /s/ consonant suggests a long first syllable, corresponding to *qameṣ*. Another candidate for this noun category is *ia-a-ti-ib-a-a-iʾ-aʾ* (AIC 13) 'inhabitants', known from Talmudic Aramaic in the form יתיבתא, see Dalman, *Grammatik*, 152; the initial long syllable is written with a plene a, representing Massoretic *qāmeṣ*.

Determination in Aramaic and lack of case endings. One of the characteristic features of Aramaic language was the use of a final *aleph*, probably as matres lectionis for a long *ā*-vowel, to indicate the determined state of a noun or adjective. In later phases of Eastern Aramaic the determined state becomes so common that it virtually replaces the absolute state. In Western Aramaic, the distinction between the absolute and determined states remained in use.[28] In AIC, nouns appear in both determined and undetermined states: *qé-ṭa-ri mi-in ig-ga-ri* 'binding from a wall', (AIC 1) vs. *mi-in si-ip-pa-a di-a-ba-ba-aʾ* 'from the threshold of the door' (AIC 2).

Verbal forms
peʿal: *za-ke-et* [1 p. s. perf.] (AIC 10); *na-šá-a-a-ta₅* [2 p. s. perf.] (AIC 1, 27); *ḥa-za-ú-ni-iʾ* (AIC 7);
ma-aḥ-zi-ia-aʾ (6) [infinitive]
  passive forms (peʿil): *de-le-e* (AIC 34); *le-qé-eṭ* (AIC 35)
  passive participles/adjectives: *a-si-ir* (AIC 5) var. *a-si-i-ir* (AIC 8), *la-bi-iš* (AIC 20) versus *la-bi-šú* (AIC 24), *šá-ti-iq* (AIC 7), *ra-gi-zu* (AIC 19, 23), *ma-zi-ga-aʾ* (6, 9)[29]

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[28] J. C. Greenfield, 'Aramaic and the Jews', in M. J. Geller, J. C. Greenfield and M. P. Weitzman (eds), *Studia Aramaica* (Oxford, 1995), 14.
[29] See Geller, AIC, 35–6, 137, where the word was analysed as a fem. sing. active participle (*māzegā*), but it is more likely to be a passive participle.

imperative: *áš-ka-ḫi-i* [fem.] (AIC 16, 41);[30] *qu-ú-mi* [fem.] (AIC 17, 42); *a-ma-ár* (AIC 18, 43); *qu-um* (AIC 18, 43)

pa^ccel: *mé-ḫa-áš-še-e* (AIC 28);[31] *ʾaḫ-ḫa-de-e-ti-ik* [1 p. s. perf.] (AIC 2); *mé-er-ra-aʾ* (6, 9)[32]

aphel: *áš-laḫ-te-e* (AIC 30), *al-bi-iš-te-e* (AIC 31), *maḫ-ḫe-te-e* (3)[33]

haphel: *ḫa-ki-mi-tu₄* [1 p. s.] (AIC 26), *ḫa-al-le-ta₅* [1 p. s.] (AIC 4, 29)[34]

itpe^cal: *it-ka-pi-iʾ* (AIC 8), *it-ta-ši-da-at* (AIC 9)

itpa^ccal: *mi-it-ra-ag-ga-zu* [part.] (AIC 19, 23);

It is noteworthy that there are no instances in AIC of participles being combined with independent pronouns as a present tense verbal form, as is common in later Eastern Aramaic; see Addendum below.

Bound forms with verbs[35]

With third masc. suffix: *mé-ḫa-áš-še-e* (AIC 28), *maḫ-ḫe-te-e* (3), *áš-laḫ-te-e* (AIC 30), *al-bi-iš-te-e* (AIC 31)

With first person suffix: *ḫa-za-ú-ni-iʾ* (AIC 7)

With second person suffix: *ʾaḫ-ḫa-de-e-ti-ik* (AIC 2)[36]

Conclusion

Philology demands a very different approach to language than does linguistics. A linguistic analysis of language, no matter how useful, does not entirely displace the philologist's need to focus on the textual evidence behind the theories of language.

Have we learned anything from this exercise? Most of the forms in AIC are consistent with theoretical reconstructions of the phonology and morphology, based upon later evidence. There is value, however, in presenting evidence which either confirms or casts doubt upon the inferences drawn from circumstantial or indirect evidence, since the Aramaic incantation in cuneiform script often provides the best evidence for certain forms of the language.

Addendum: *The participle combined with the personal pronoun*

Talmudic Aramaic and Mandaic frequently use the construction consisting of a present participle combined with a personal pronoun, e.g. *ktbn'* (*kātēbnā*) 'I write', to express the present tense.[37] The form also occurs in Aramaic magic bowl texts.[38] The important point here is that this usage is limited to 1st and 2nd person forms, since in the 3rd person the personal pronoun is not

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[30] This form is not an aphel but a form with prothetic aleph, see Geller, AIC, 35–6, 141 and Creason, 'Aramaic', 401.

[31] This is an infinitive form (root חשש); see S. A. Kaufman, 'Aramaic', in R. Hetzron, *The Semitic Languages* (London, 1997), 116, for the useful observation that the Aramaic infinitive was simplified to a single form with preformative /m/, which is characteristic of every infinitive form in Aramaic, in both the basic and derived stems.

[32] Participle, see Geller, AIC, 35–6, 137, from a root ערי, see Sokoloff, DJBA, 881, 'to pour out', attested in the pa^ccel.

[33] An infinitive (root נחת).

[34] Note the mix of both ʾaphel and haphel forms within the same text, see Geller, AIC, 35–6, 136, although these forms were rejected by C. Müller-Kessler, *Res Orientales* 14 (2002), 198, n. 22, and 199, n. 38. See Appendix.

[35] See Creason, 'Aramaic', 406.

[36] See Müller-Kessler, RO 14 (2002), 196f. for an alternative reading; see Appendix.

[37] See J. N. Epstein, *A Grammar of Babylonian Aramaic* (Jerusalem, 1960) [in Hebrew], 40–41 and in derived stems, see pp. 45, 49, 53, 56, 59, 62, 64, 68, 70, 76, 79, 84–86, 88, 90, 93, 97 f., 101 f.

[38] H. Juusola, *Linguistic Peculiarities in the Aramaic Magic Bowl Texts* (Helsinki, 1999), 79 f.

combined with the participle but appears morphologically separate. Nevertheless, in Official and Biblical Aramaic the present participle is not combined with the personal pronoun, despite being employed as a present tense narrative verbal form.

This construction is known from documents in Palestine in the second century AD, in a marriage document, probably indicating an older formulaic syntax: *wyhbnh lk ksp ktbtk*, 'I will give you (part. + 1.p.s. pers. pron.) the value of your ketubah'.[39]

The question is whether, in this regard, Eastern Aramaic may have been influenced by its *Sprachbund* with Akkadian. The Akkadian stative can be analysed as a nominal sentence, actually consisting of a personal pronominal suffix added to the stative form.[40] In Akkadian one must distinguish between the stative forms used with nouns (e.g. *šarrāku*) and those with verbal bases which can take other verbal endings (such as the ventive), e.g. *parsāku*. It is this latter form (*parsāku*), consisting of the verbal adj. (*parsu*) combined with the independent personal pronoun which is parallel to the usage of the participle plus pronoun in Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic. This form also survives into Neo-Aramaic and may have influenced Neo-Iranian.[41] Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic probably reflects the *koinē* or spoken dialect of Babylonian Aramaic, which was likely to have descended from the spoken Aramaic of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires.

Appendix

I include for convenience the edition of AIC published in JEOL 1997–2000. A slightly later edition of the text was given by C. Müller-Kessler,[42] but in the present writer's opinion her edition does not represent an improvement, for a number of reasons.

(1) As far as readings of the signs are concerned, she was working only from photographs without collating the tablet itself. The tablet, however, is very small and the signs are difficult to read, and any improvements in readings, in my view, will have to be based upon collations of the original. Two instances in which she has altered the readings are both unlikely to be correct. In l. 2 she reads [*a*]*s¹-s*[*á*]*ḫ¹-ti iq*, 'Ich riss ein Holz'.[43] The reading *sáḫ* is a rare value of a sign found in Neo-Assyrian, since the usual reading is *šaḫ*; the AIC tablet tends to avoid unusual readings of signs. Moreover, there is no basis for interpreting *iq* as the equivalent of Eastern Aramaic אעא for 'wood' (see Sokoloff, DJBA, 152), since the form *ʿq* probably occurs in Western Aramaic only.[44] Müller-Kessler also suggests a new reading for l. 15 (see also l. 40), in which she reads *q*]*í-ir-ru-ub*?. Not only does this reading not fit the traces, but one does not expect the doubling of /r/ in this word; cf. Akkadian *qerbu*.

(2) Most of the changes suggested by Müller-Kessler represent alternative interpretations of the text, but here again methodology is a problem. Cyrus Gordon's groundbreaking edition of this tablet in 1937 made enormous progress in understanding the text,[45] but he erroneously tried to interpret the

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[39] K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (Göttingen, 1984), 309, No. M 20.
[40] G. Buccellati, 'An interpretation of the Akkadian stative as a nominal sentence', JNES 27 (1968), 2, and idem., *A Structural Grammar of Babylonian* (Wiesbaden, 1996), 353–9.
[41] F. Pennachieti, 'Sprachbund zwischen Aramaisch und Iranisch', in V. Orioles, *Tipologie di Convergenza Linguistica* (Pisa, 1988), 98–9.
[42] C. Müller-Kessler, 'Die aramäische Beschwörung und ihre Rezeption in den Mandäisch-magischen Texten', *Res Orientales* 14 (2002), 193–208, especially 195–201.
[43] Ibid., 198, n. 19.
[44] See M. L. Folmer, *The Aramaic Language*, 68; what is the vowel associated with this form?
[45] C. H. Gordon, 'The Aramaic incantation in cuneiform', AfO 12 (1937), 105–17.

meaning on the basis of Aramaic magic bowls, which probably date from as much as a millennium later. In the same vein, Müller-Kessler has compared this incantation to Mandaic incantations, although the closest parallels are to found within Akkadian incantation literature, and particularly so-called Egalkurra incantations, in which the subject refers to himself in the first person and addresses his rival in the second or third person. Nothing similar is known from magic bowls, which should not surprise us, since there are relatively few parallels between magic bowl or lead roll incantations and traditional incantation texts in Akkadian.

(3) Müller-Kessler rejects some of the grammatical interpretations of the previous edition, such as the appearance of mixed haphel and aphel forms within the same text, and hence she rejects the interpretation of the words *ḫa-ki-mi-tu₄* [1 p. s.] (AIC 26), *ḫa-al-le-ta₅* [1 p. s.] (AIC 4, 29) as haphel forms, since aphel forms also occur in this text. In this period, however, one does not have to look far to find texts with both haphel and aphel forms within the same text, such as in the Hermopolis papyri.[46] Moreover, the use of [ḫ] for Aramaic [h] is found elsewhere in an undisputed reading in AIC, in l. 16 and 41, *re-ḫu-ṭi-iʾ*, corresponding to Aramaic רהטי (see Sokoloff, DJBA, 1060).

For the reader's convenience, the transliteration and translation of AIC is given below.

AO 6489 (= TCL VI, 58)

1　[n]a-šá-ʿaʾ-a-ta₅ qé-ṭa-ri mi-in ig-ga-ri
　　ʿaḫ-ḫaʾ-deʾ-eʾ-ti-ik mi-in si-ip-pa-a di-a-ba-ba-aʾ
　　ʿmaḫʾ-ḫe-te-e ti-ḫu-ú-ut li-iš-šá-ni-iʾ
　　ḫa-[a]l-le-ta₅ al ba-a-a ma-le-e mi-il-in-ni
5　pa-tu-ú-ri a-si-ir li-iš-šá-an : ag-gan-nu
　　ma-zi-ga-aʾ mé-er-ra-aʾ : ma-aḫ-zi-ia-aʾ di-iʾ
　　ḫa-za-ú-ni-iʾ ma-a-a ma-le-e mi-il-in-ni šá-ti-iq
　　pa-tu-ú-ru a-s[i]-ʿiʾ-ir li-iš-šá-ni it-ka-pi-iʾ
　　ag-gan-nu ma-zi-ga-aʾ mé-er-ra-aʾ it-ta-ši-da-at
10　a-na-aʾ za-ke-et ú-ma-aʾ a-na-aʾ za-ka-a-a ma-aʿaʾ
　　qu-da-am ra-ab-ra-bé-e ú-ma-aʾ dar-da-qé-e
　　n[é-š]e-e u ga-[a]b-re-e: pu-ḫur ú-ma-aʾ ka-niš-a-a-ʾi[-i]
　　ta-ra-ḫa ú-ma-aʾ ia-a-ti-ib-a-a-ʾi-i
　　qu-da-am pe-la-nu gloss: ʿa-na-naʾ mi-in kul ul-la-aʾ
15　ra-aḫ-ḫi-q[i] ʿú-ma-aʾ [q]é-ru-ubʾ : ḫa-as-si-ir-ta-a ši-la-[mi-iʾ(?)]
　　ḫa-gi-ir-ta-aʾ re-ḫu-ṭi-iʾ áš-ka-ḫi-i ḫa-ba-ra-ʿnaʾ
　　ia-ti-ir-ʿtaʾ-aʾ ka-ṣa-ta-aʾ qu-ú-mi-niʾ
　　a-ma-ár šá-ṭe-e qu-um ḫa-ri-iš

　　man-nu ra-gi-zu man-nu mi-it-ra-ag-ga-ʿzuʾ
20　man-nu la-bi-iš šá-am-lat ru-ga-ze-[e]
　　iš-šá-aʾ ba-aʾ-pu-um-mé-e : ḫa-la-ʿṭiʾ-in-ni t[e-]
　　　　　　　　: MIN MIN MIN(=ḫu-ú-ut) li-iš-šá-n[é-e]

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[46] Muraoka and Porten, *Grammar*, 114 f. Müller-Kessler's interpretation of l. 4, 'ich betrat ein Haus angefüllt mit Worten' is not convincing; what is a 'house full of words'? The expression *ma-le-e mi-il-in-ni*, lit. 'full of words' refers to a person, in this case the rival, as in l. 7. Müller-Kessler's translation for l. 7, repeating ʿein Haus, angefüllt mit Worten', also ignores the paleography of the signs, since the signs /ba/ and /ma/ are clearly distinguished on the tablet, and the word 'house' does not appear in l. 7. In sum, the verb in l. 4 needs to be transitive and in fact causative, with the object being the rival, *ma-le-e mi-il-in-ni*, and hence the verb should be a haphel form.
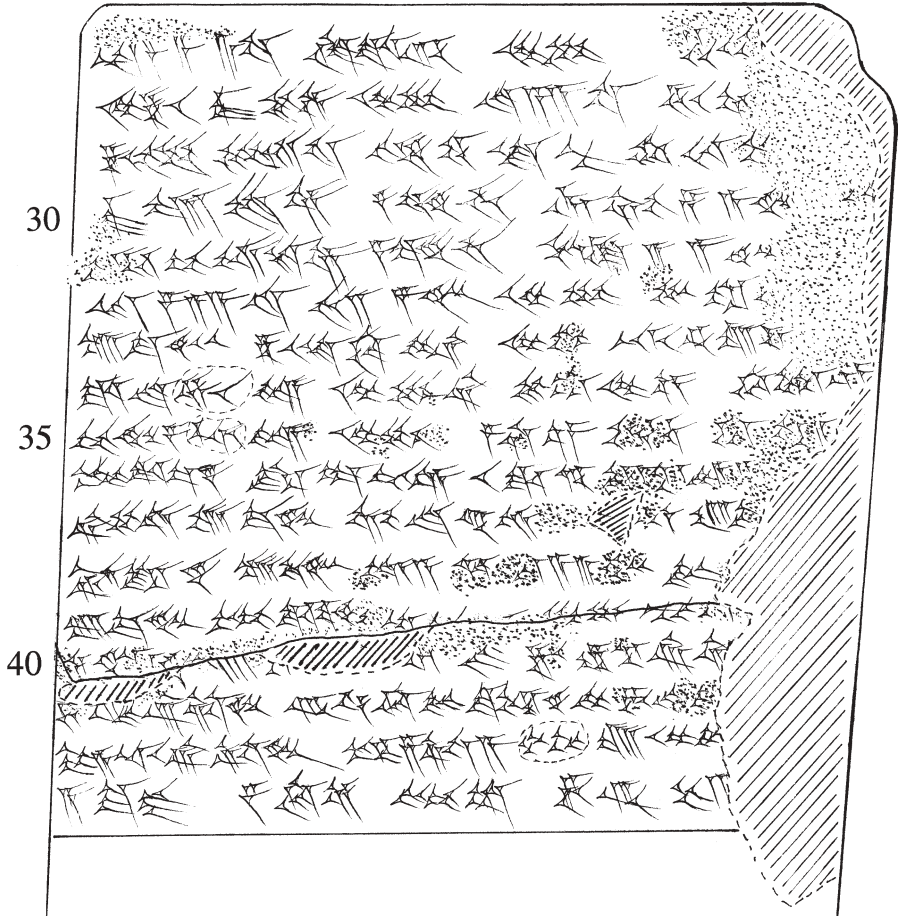
AO 6489 (= TCL 6 58) obv.

Top.
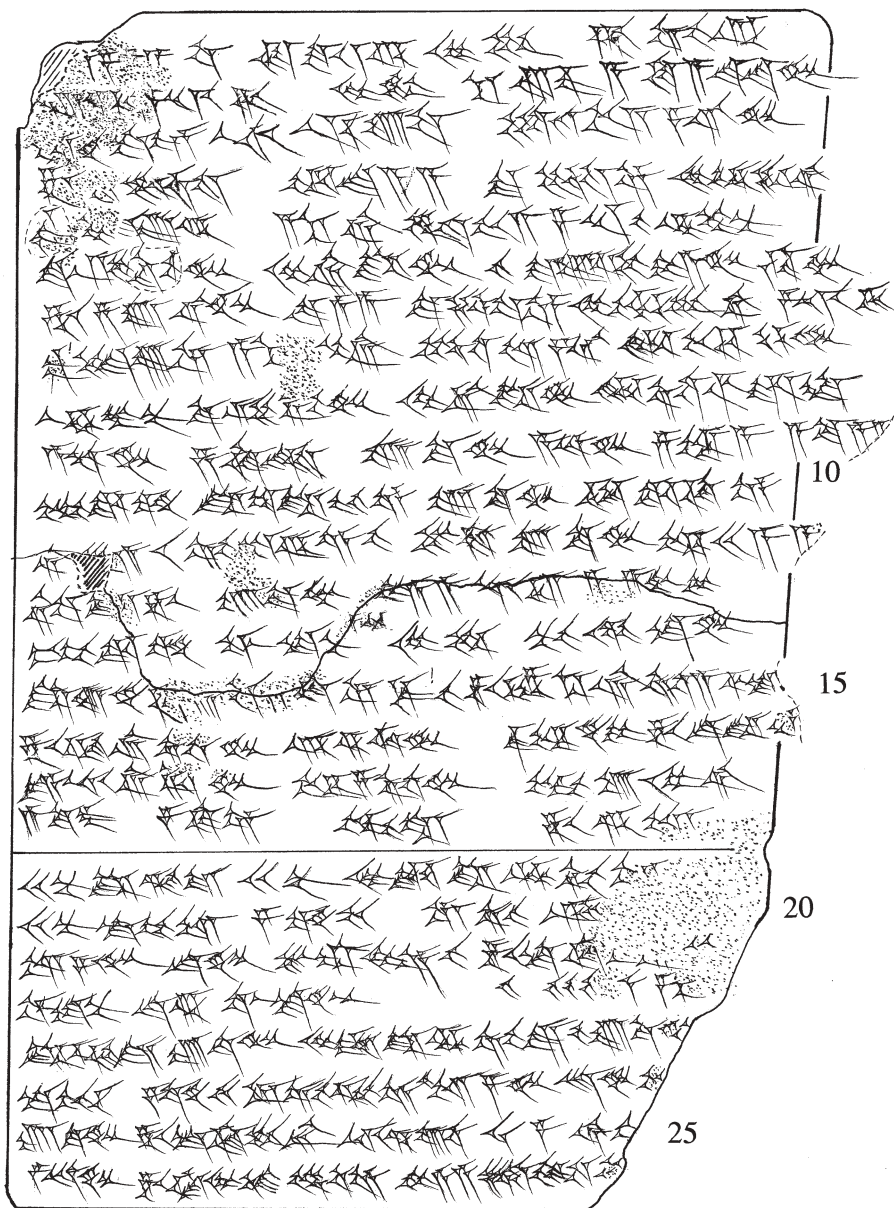
pe-la-nu ba-ri pe-la-a':
ra-gi-zu ú-ma-a' mi-it-ra-ag-ga-zu : ú-ma-⌈a'⌉
la-bi-šú šá-am-lat ru-ga-ze-e : iš-šá-a' ba-a'-p[u-um-mé-e]
25   ú-ma-a' ḫa-la-ṭi'-in-ni ti-ḫu-ú-ut liš-šá-né-⌈e⌉
⌈a⌉-na-a' ḫa-qé-mé-tu₄ le-e ia-a-li-li-i[n-ni]

rev. ⌈na-šá-a-a⌉-ta₅ qé-ṭa-ri mi-in ⌈ig⌉-g[a-ri]
mé-ḫa-áš-še-e mi-in ba-a-a-ta₅ ig-g[a-ri]
ḫa-al-le-ta₅ al pe-la-nu di na ⌈x⌉ […]

30   *áš-laḫ-te-e šá-am-lat ru-ga-za-a-ʾi-*⌈*i*⌉
⌈*al*⌉-*bi-iš-te-e šá-am-lat ka-dib-a-a-*⌈*i*⌉-[*i*]
na-šá-a-a-ta₅ iš-šá-a' mi-in pu-um-m[*é-e*]
ú-ma-a' ḫa-la-ṭi-i-ni mi-⌈*in*⌉ *ti-ḫu-ú-ut* [*liš-šá-né-e*]
ṭa-ba-ti⌉*-ia mi-in-ni pu-*⌈*um*⌉*-mé-e* ⌈*de-le-e*⌉
35   *bi-i'-šá-ti-ia mi-in šá-*⌈*qé*⌉*-e* ⌈*le-qé-eṭ*⌉
qu-da-am ra-ab-<ra->bé-e u da-re-da-⌈*qí-ia û*⌉*-*[*ma-a'*]
né-še-e ú-ma-a' ga-ba-re-e [x x]*-*⌈*na*⌉ *ú-m*[*a-a'*]
ta-ra-ḫi ú-ma-a' ⌈*ia-a-ti*⌉*-ib-a-a-*⌈*i*⌉*-i*
ú-ma-a' qu-da-am p[*e*]*-*⌈*la-nu*⌉ [*m*]*i-*[*i*]*n kul* ⌈*ul*⌉*-*[*la-a'*]
40   [*r*]*a-*⌈*ḫi-qi-i' û-m*[*a-a' qé*]⌉*-*⌈*ru-ub*⌉ *ḫa-as-si-ir-t*[*a-a'*]
⌈*ḫa-gi-ir*⌉*-ta-a' re-ḫu-ṭi-i áš-*⌈*ka-ḫi-i ḫa-ba*⌉*-r*[*a-na*]
ia-ti-ir-ta-a' ka-ṣa-ta-a qu-ú-mi-⌈*i*⌉
a-ma-ár šá-ṭe-e qu-um ḫa-ri-iš
left edge: ⌈x-ᵈ*Nabu*(PA) x⌉ (in a smaller script)
Aramaic: traces of Aramaic letters in minute script: … דמתה

Translation:

1   You took a binding from a wall,
     and I *locked* you out from the door.
     To place *him* under my tongue,
     I brought the prattler home.
5   The table is set (but) the tongue <is bent>; the bowl
     is mixed and mingled <(but) is poured out>. When they
     saw me: Why is the prattler quiet?
     The table is set (but) the tongue is bent,
     the bowl — mixed and stirred up — is poured out.
10   I was innocent or I am innocent. Why?
     Before adults or children,
     (before) women and men, (before) the assembly or those assembled,
     (before) the gate or the residents,
     before so and so (anyone), from all those
15   far or near relations: lean (woman), [*be*] *whole*!
     lame (woman), run! — find a *partner*!
     Superfluous (woman) — rise up like dirt !
     Speak, fool! Rise, dumb one!
     Who is angered, who is raging, and
20   who is clothed in the dress of [his] anger?
     (Having) fire in his mouth (and) *dumplings* [under] his tongue,
     So-and-so son of So-and-so
     is angered or raging or
     is clothed in the dress of his anger. Fire in [his] mouth,
25   or *dumplings* under his tongue—
     I have appointed *howlers* for him.

rev.
     You took a binding from the wall.
     … within the wall,
     I brought … to So-and-so,
30   I stripped him of the dress of enraged ones,
     I dressed him in the dress of liars.
     I took the fire from [his] mouth,
     or the *dumplings* from beneath [his tongue].
     Goodness was drawn from his mouth,
35   evil was collected from his loins (lit. thigh).
     Before adults, children,
     women or men […] or
     the gate or the residents,
     or before anyone, from all those,
40   far (or) near relations, lean (woman),
     lame (woman), run — find a *partner*!
     Rise up, deformed or bashful woman!
     Speak, dumb one! Rise, deaf one!

left edge:
     Akk.: (proper name)
     Aramaic: (mostly illegible)