

New Perspectives in the Study of Third Millennium Akkadian*

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§1. Introduction

§1.1 Assyriologists find themselves in a rather enviable position. Their research can draw on an immense wealth of written sources that mirror almost the entire cultural heritage of Ancient Mesopotamia from the 4th millennium B.C. to the 1st century A.D. The formal, geographical, and chronological diversity of these sources is enhanced by a strong diversity of contents: the enormous pool of available pertinent data affords more or less satisfying answers to questions stretching from arithmetic in the Assyro-Babylonian scribal education to zoology as reflected in cattle management records from the 3rd Dynasty of Ur.

§1.2 While the sheer quantity of the written remains from Ancient Mesopotamia as well as their multifaceted topical range provide a unique textual basis for a wide variety of scholarly endeavors, some areas of As-

syriological research would appear to thrive particularly well on the evidence distilled from cuneiform texts. One such extraordinarily promising field of study that immediately comes to mind in this context is the comparative history of the Akkadian language, so far the oldest semitic language known from written records. After all, we are able to trace the history and diachronic linguistic development of Akkadian over a period of roughly 2,700 years, with significant gaps in the textual tradition occurring rather infrequently.

§1.3 Another aspect of considerable importance is the very number of Akkadian cuneiform texts accessible to date. Granted that at present it is still extremely difficult to produce an even remotely accurate estimate, we can safely assume that this number is in the six-digit range at the very least.¹

§1.4 At first glance, the phenomenological² parameters just outlined appear to render Akkadian particularly suitable for almost any kind of comparative or historical analysis, especially the rules governing linguistic change and continuity one might expect to find uniquely reflected in close to three millennia of documented language history. Hence, given this enormous potential, it might be all the more surprising to realize that the comparative history of Akkadian has never been counted among the central focal points of Assyriologi-

* The present article is a revised English version of the author's "Zur Stellung des Ur III-Akkadischen innerhalb der akkadischen Sprachgeschichte," in: J.-W. Meyer and W. Sommerfeld, eds., *2000 v. Chr. - Politische, wirtschaftliche und gesellschaftliche Entwicklung im Zeichen einer Jahrtausendwende (=Colloquien der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft, vol. 3; Saarbrücken 2003 [in press])*. It is derived from a paper read in March 2003 at the University of Chicago, the University of California at Berkeley, and the University of California at Los Angeles. Upon the request of R. K. Englund, the annotated and slightly modified manuscript is made available in this format to reach the wider readership of a networked community.

The abbreviations used here follow the standard of the *Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative*. Additional abbreviations are:

IMGULA 3/1 W. Sommerfeld, *Die Texte der Akkad-Zeit, 1. Das Dijala-Gebiet: Tutub (=IMGULA 3/1; Münster 1999)*.

IMGULA 5 M. Hilgert, *Akkadisch in der Ur III-Zeit (=IMGULA 5; Münster 2002)*.

¹ For the size of the Akkadian cuneiform text corpus known to date, see most recently C. Peust, "Über ägyptische Lexikographie," *Lingua Aegyptia* 7 (2000) 254.

² Throughout this article, the term "phenomenological" refers to phenomenology not in its specific definition as a philosophical methodology, but in its more general sense, i.e., pertaining to the description and classification of phenomena as they appear, without inquiring into their explanation or cause.

cal research. This observation remains valid up to the present day, even if we concede that alongside the ever-increasing number of published Akkadian cuneiform texts the large majority of the known regional dialects, linguistic periods, and language levels of Akkadian have become the subject of intense scholarly scrutiny over the past decades.³

§1.5 However, if one were to arrive at a “Comprehensive History of the Akkadian Language”—at present an admittedly ambitious, if not unattainable goal—it would certainly not suffice to create an annotated list of these linguistic phenomena, possibly arranged by chronological and geographical criteria. In fact, it could be argued that the foremost objective of such a language history should be to analyze and define their synchronic and diachronic relationships, to inquire into the complex interplay between cuneiform orthography and the spoken language,⁴ and to describe the pertinent trends of linguistic evolution as visible in the factual transformation of Akkadian through time. In particular, those scholars who work in related or neighboring academic fields and who strive to expand their linguistic horizon into the realm of the oldest Semitic language known to date, i.e., non-Assyriologists handling primary cuneiform sources with considerable unease, would undoubtedly welcome a methodologically sound, well structured, and adequately referenced “Comprehensive History of the Akkadian Language,” as postulated here.

³ For selected references to the pertinent secondary literature, see *IMGULA* 5, p. 5, n. 2.

⁴ Individual aspects of this “interplay” are analyzed successfully in the context of studies addressing the orthography and (historical) phonology of the Akkadian language; see, e.g., *IMGULA* 3/1, pp. 18-22; W. Sommerfeld, “Bemerkungen zur Dialektgliederung Altakkadisch, Assyrisch und Babylonisch,” in G. J. Selz, ed., *Festschrift für Burkhard Kienast (=AOAT 274; Münster 2003)* pp. 569-586 (Sargonic Akkadian); *IMGULA* 5, pp. 65-79 (Ur III Akkadian); W. Sommerfeld apud W. von Soden, *GAG*³, pp. 35-36, §30* (Old Babylonian); W. Mayer, *Tall Mubāqa-Ekalte II. Die Texte (=Ausgrabungen in Tall Mubāqa-Ekalte, vol. 2 [=WVDOG 102]; Saarbrücken 2001)* pp. 36-37 (local dialect, ca. second half of the 2nd millennium B.C.); K. Deller, “Zweisilbige Lautwerte des Typs KVKV im Neuassyrischen,” *OrNS* 31 (1962) 7-26; idem, “Studien zur neuassyrischen Orthographie,” *OrNS* 31 (1962) 186-196 (neo-Assyrian); M. P. Streck, “Keilschrift und Alphabet,” in D. Borchers, F. Kammerzell and S. Weninger, eds., *Hieroglyphen, Alphabete, Schriftreformen (=Lingua Aegyptia – Studia Monographica 3; Göttingen 2001)* pp. 77-97 (neo- and Late Babylonian); see also A.

§1.6 Bearing in mind these considerations, we will direct our attention to a truly programmatic paper that John Huehnergard presented at *The William Foxwell Albright Centennial Conference* slightly more than a decade ago. Entitled “New Directions in the Study of Semitic Languages,” this contribution concisely summarizes the past achievements and remaining desiderata in the scholarly treatment of several important Semitic languages including Akkadian. With reference to Akkadian, Huehnergard deliberately points to the conspicuous discrepancy between the abundance of currently available Akkadian cuneiform texts on the one hand, and the relatively modest corpus of comparative studies focusing on individual Akkadian dialects and linguistic development levels on the other. In addition, he delivers a poignant plea for an innovative historical grammar of what is conventionally termed “Old Akkadian,” i.e., all written manifestations of Akkadian in cuneiform texts from the entire 3rd millennium B.C., including—in descending chronological order—Pre-Sargonic, Sargonic, and Ur III Akkadian.

§1.7 At this point, it may be instructive to look more closely at those passages of Huehnergard’s argumentation that convey a rough impression of the contemporary, overall state of research regarding 3rd millennium Akkadian at the beginning of the last decade:

There is enough new material available that a new grammar of Old Akkadian should be written to replace the ground-breaking study published by I. J. Gelb thirty years ago [i.e., MAD 2] ... Akkadian, despite the pan-dialectal coverage offered by von Soden’s Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik, has been the subject of relatively little comparative or historical discussion. Here too, however, things may be changing. Recently, Simo Parpola published a very stimulating and insightful study entitled simply “Proto-Assyrian.” The relatively recent appearance of additional Old Akkadian texts and of early Old Babylonian texts, with some features different from those found in texts of Hammurapi’s domain, should prompt additional future research into comparative and historical Akkadian grammar.⁵

Westenholz, “The Phoneme /o/ in Akkadian,” *ZA* 81 (1991) 10-19.

⁵ J. Huehnergard, “New Directions in the Study of Semitic Languages,” in J. S. Cooper and G. M. Schwartz, eds., *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-First Century: The William Foxwell Albright Centennial*

§1.8 These rather extensive prefatory remarks may serve as a preliminary groundwork for the discussion of new perspectives in the study of 3rd millennium Akkadian as presented here. Bearing in mind the preceding thoughts can help us understand why studies on the comparative history of Akkadian in general, as well as the ongoing grammatical and historical analysis of 3rd millennium Akkadian in particular, may have such a remarkable impact on the conventional ideas about the diachronic linguistic development and dialect diversity of this language.

§1.9 An initial, practical point of reference here is the rather astounding realization that, since the not-so-distant days of Huehnergard's postulating a new grammar of "Old Akkadian," our understanding of the linguistic properties and internal segmentation of pre-Old Babylonian Akkadian has advanced immensely and at a rather rapid pace. Even the traditional and widely used designation "Old Akkadian" itself, as a crudely simplifying collective term for 3rd millennium Akkadian in its entirety, has turned out to be utterly inadequate. Except in descriptions of past Assyriological research on this topic, the conventional classification, "Old Akkadian," is therefore avoided in the present article.

§1.10 Before we can turn to a linguistic characterization of Ur III Akkadian as a key element in defining individual diachronic development patterns of 3rd millennium Akkadian as a whole, we must first consider some of the methodological and practical problems that are always present where the comparative history of Akkadian is concerned. In a second step, we will visit several "historical landmarks" of twentieth century research on both the pre-Old Babylonian Akkadian textual tradition as well as on early Old Babylonian language varieties. Once we have discussed what Ur III Akkadian actually is and to what degree it is related to the predominant semitic language of the preceding Sargonic period, we will be in an excellent position to design an updated, factually sound, and fairly intricate model of the early history of the Akkadian language ranging from the end of the pre-Sargonic Akkadian tradition to the primary manifestations of Akkadian in the early 2nd millennium B.C., i.e., Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian. While answering many heretofore existing questions, this innovative model raises compelling new ones.

Conference (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1996) 256, 262-263.

§2 *Methodological and Practical Considerations*

§2.1 As mentioned before, the comparative history of Akkadian and its two principal dialects, Babylonian and Assyrian, is not among the most extensively studied research topics in present-day Assyriology. A reasonable claim could be made that the primary reasons for this regrettable circumstance are of a rather fundamental and complex nature and have virtually nothing to do with assumed intrinsic shortcomings of this particular academic field or its representatives. Naturally, it would reach beyond the scope of this paper to reflect on all of these reasons and discuss them in detail. Suffice it to say that the problems arising from a theoretical periodization of Akkadian as an extinct language are in essence methodological and practical ones.

§2.2 Reviewing the methodological problems first, we have to realize that as a matter of principle such a theoretical periodization is always, and by its very nature, a simplistic construct devised to detect and accentuate crude linguistic development patterns. The spoken language, however, does not lend itself to any kind of strict and thus static notional segmentation into distinct evolutionary units, as the rationale of its existence and development is constant and pervasive change, even if that change is ever so minute.

§2.3 Having said this, it follows necessarily that spoken language can never be viewed and treated as a monolithic system. At any given point in time, and within the same socio-cultural realm, language is not merely comprised of the contemporary standard and literary language. Rather, as a matter of ubiquitous linguistic stratification, it is the conglomerate sum of all diatopic, diaphasic, and diastratic varieties of speech⁶ including several sub-codes, such as synchronic sociolects, special and technical languages, as well as vernacular.

§2.4 For any scholar probing into the comparative history of an extinct language solely on the basis of its written remains, it is an extremely difficult, if not impossible task to decide where and to what degree

⁶ For these socio-linguistic categories classifying the synchronic variations of an (historical) language and correlating with the extra-linguistic dimensions of place, social situation, and social class, respectively, see, e.g., E. Coseriu, *Einführung in die Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft* (Tübingen 1988) pp. 280-286; G. Berruto, "Varietät," in U. Ammon, N. Dittmar and K. J. Mattheier, eds., *Sociolinguistics/Soziolinguistik (=Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft 3.1)*; Berlin, New York 1987) pp. 266-267.

any of these varieties of speech or elements thereof may have found their way into the contemporary textual tradition. This latter observation applies in particular to the Assyriologist who is fortunate enough to work not only with literary, historiographic, or scholarly sources composed in Akkadian, but also with documents of everyday use, such as letters, legal and administrative records, as well as personal business memoranda.⁷ It stands to reason that in this text corpus characterized by documents of everyday use one must expect to encounter more frequent colloquial deviations from the contemporary standard or literary language with regard to lexicon, morphology, and syntax.

§2.5 Given the fundamental methodological predicaments just outlined, one is easily tempted to resign to agnostic silence when individual linguistic periods or the comparative history of an extinct language such as Akkadian are concerned. Yet, knowledge may advance through erroneous hypotheses as a basis for further scholarly debate just as much as it does through suddenly uncovered truth. In this respect, the hypothetical assumption of linguistic periods and levels as distinct evolutionary units of a language is simply a theoretical aid designed to facilitate the analysis, description, classification, and comparison of supposedly coherent sets of linguistic features. Thus, when we discuss “pre-Sargonic,” “Sargonic,” and “Ur III Akkadian” in the following, it is understood that these terms primarily denote rather abstract, notional entities of linguistic classification.

§2.6 As suggested above, the main impediments to a “Comprehensive History of the Akkadian Language” are not merely methodological by nature. Rather, there are also considerable practical difficulties arising from the peculiarities of the diachronic Akkadian textual tradition in spite of its overall richness in form and contents. These difficulties represent a dilemma specific to the field of Assyriology. For it is still true that the cuneiform sources available to date are not abundant for all linguistic periods and regional variants of Akkadian. This circumstance is aggravated by strongly varying degrees of direct access to the linguistically relevant data,

⁷ Many examples of such more or less informal personal memoranda, frequently written in the first person, are found within the Old Assyrian text corpus; see, e.g., A. M. Ulshöfer, *Die altassyrischen Privatorkunden (=FAOS Beihefte 4; Stuttgart, 1995)* pp. 26, 28-30, 245-268, 324-392. For a possible Akkadian business memorandum from the Ur III period, see *IMGULA* 5, p. 23, no. 11.

since many editions of cuneiform texts are outdated, insufficiently commented upon, illustrated, or indexed. Thus, they generally fall short of those desirable standards that significantly facilitate any further research.

§2.7 It appears that these practical obstacles might have had a particularly heavy impact on our perception and interpretation of 3rd millennium Akkadian. This impression is primarily caused by a comparison with the current state of research on orthography, grammar, and lexicon of the linguistic periods and regional variants of Akkadian attested during the 2nd and 1st millennia. For these periods, the quantity and high quality of the available sources, as well as the effects of a sophisticated and rather well-adapted cuneiform writing system, have brought about a comparatively secure level of insight and understanding among Assyriologists. At the same time, however, many of the linguistic properties of 3rd millennium Akkadian, along with their historical classification, remain largely in the dark.

§2.8 Returning to the reasons for this significant gap in our knowledge, we can be even more specific now and assert that they are not solely methodological and practical ones. Rather, they are also found in some of the phenomenological peculiarities characterizing the entire corpus of 3rd millennium cuneiform texts.

§2.9 A first aspect relevant in this context is that of source accessibility. For, with the possible exception of the Sargonic period, cuneiform texts written entirely in Akkadian are comparatively rare among the 3rd millennium sources. As a consequence, investigations into the linguistic properties of pre-Old Babylonian Akkadian are often forced to thrive almost exclusively on rather disparate and widely scattered forms of data, such as proper nouns, loanwords, or short Akkadian phrases embedded in Sumerian context.⁸ Locating and evaluating this linguistic source material is an extremely time-consuming and difficult task. In particular, the essentially rich evidence provided by thousands of Semitic personal names may only be considered reliable

⁸ In addition to I. J. Gelb, *MAD* 2² and 3, a characterization and documentation of pre-Sargonic Akkadian evidence may be found in A. Westenholz, “Personal Names in Ebla and in Pre-Sargonic Babylonia,” *ARES* 1 (1988) 99-117; M. Krebernik, “Die Texte aus Fāra und Tell Abū Šalābīḥ,” *OBO* 160/1, pp. 261-270. For the textual tradition of the Sargonic period, see, e.g., A. Westenholz, “The Old Akkadian Period: History and Culture,” *OBO* 160/3, pp. 18-28, 74-78; *IMGULA* 3/1, pp. 2-3, 5.

and meaningful for an historical classification after extensive prosopographic, orthographic, and grammatical analyzes have taken place.⁹

§2.10 A second important phenomenological feature of the 3rd millennium text corpus derives from the properties of the prevalent orthographic conventions attested therein. As already mentioned, Akkadian texts are by comparison few in number, while Sumerian documents abound. With the dominance of written Sumerian during the 3rd millennium, the orthographic conventions as well as the syllabary employed to express this language in writing played a correspondingly significant role. Presumably invented with a view to the graphic representation of Sumerian—still a contentious issue in our field—,¹⁰ this writing system was subsequently implemented to inscribe Akkadian texts, at first apparently without any major adaptive modifications. However, the respective phoneme inventories of both languages differ considerably. As a consequence, the Sumerian writing system often led to an inadequate representation of Akkadian forms in cuneiform texts. A typical and well-known example for this partial, structural incompatibility is the writing system's widespread indifference toward the phonemic features, voiceless, voiced, and “emphatic” that are found with several consonantal phonemes in Akkadian sharing the same locus of articulation.¹¹ Thus, a single syllabogram such as the sign *da* can be employed to express all three alveolar plosives attested in Akkadian followed by the vowel /a/, i.e., the syllables /da/, /ta/, and /ʔa/.

§2.11 While orthographic innovations and reforms in the 2nd and 1st millennia were apparently aimed at overcoming this and several other inadequacies of the cuneiform writing system in representing spoken Akkadian, it was never entirely purged of them. In the seemingly “odd” orthography of 3rd millennium Akkadian, whose graphic representations exhibit only marginal adaptations to the phoneme inventory of a Semitic language, these deficiencies are immediately recognizable.

⁹ For a discussion of the difficulties involved in analyzing the semitic onomastic evidence from the Ur III period, see *IMGULA* 5, pp. 89-91, 95.

¹⁰ See, e.g., most recently M. Krebernik, “Zur Struktur und Geschichte des älteren sumerischen Onomastikons,” in M. P. Streck and S. Weninger, eds., *Altorientalische und semitische Onomastik* (=AOAT 296; Münster 2002) pp. 1-2, n. 1.

¹¹ See, e.g., *GAG*³, p. 23, §19a; M. P. Streck, *Lingua Aegyptia – Studia Monographica* 3, 88.

§2.12 Summarizing these phenomenological characteristics of the pre-Old Babylonian Akkadian tradition on a more abstract level, we may conclude that specifically in its outward appearance as a language inadequately expressed by the contemporary cuneiform orthography, 3rd millennium Akkadian, above all, looks distinctly different from the two main varieties of the early 2nd millennium, i.e., Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian. In addition, it is crucial to note that these phenomenological differences are quite obvious, even upon a cursory perusal of the pertinent cuneiform texts.¹²

§3 Past Research

§3.1 I believe that in order to grasp the character and meaning of twentieth century research on what we are accustomed to call “Old Akkadian” it is of some importance to bear in mind these essentially simple facts. It seems that the very invention and subsequent use of the linguistic collective term “Old Akkadian” was largely inspired by the apparent typological similarity perceived in certain patterns of graphic representation as well as in the “unusual,” comparatively non-uniform, and seemingly “archaic” syllabary of Akkadian expressions and cuneiform texts from the pre-Sargonic, Sargonic, and Ur III periods. A brief review of the earliest treatise on 3rd millennium Akkadian may support this hypothesis.¹³

§3.2 In a pioneering 1916 study entitled *Materialien zur altakkadischen Sprache (bis zum Ende der Ur-Dynastie)*, A. Ungnad restricted himself to a single concise statement about the historical relationship between “Old Akkadian” on the one hand, and Old Babylonian on the other (translation by the author):

[In Old Akkadian,] the use of individual cuneiform signs for the representation of Akkadian

¹² In addition to the syllabogram inventory used for the graphic representation of Akkadian and the marked indifference toward the phonemic features voiceless, voiced, and “emphatic” (see §2.10, above), the mostly implicit representation of consonantal length may be addressed as another rather obvious characteristic of 3rd millennium Akkadian orthography (see, e.g., *GAG*³, 11, §7d). Even in cuneiform texts from the Ur III period, only a comparatively small number of Akkadian forms show an explicit expression of consonantal length; see *IMGULA* 5, pp. 313-315.

¹³ For a more detailed description of past Assyriological research on 3rd millennium Akkadian sources and the early history of Akkadian, see *IMGULA* 5, pp. 5-15.

*sounds is not nearly as strictly limited as it is during the time of the Hammurapi dynasty, or even in later periods.*¹⁴

§3.3 The methodological precedent set here, i.e., viewing the earliest developmental levels of Akkadian as a largely homogenous linguistic entity and distinctly separating this assumed entity from the Akkadian varieties of the 2nd and 1st millennia, based almost exclusively on divergent orthographic conventions, reflects a perception of 3rd millennium Akkadian that has prevailed in Assyriology for decades.¹⁵ Curiously, it appears to be accompanied frequently by the tacit assumption that identical or similar patterns of *graphic representation* are a reliable indicator of *linguistic identity* and that “Old Akkadian” essentially retained the same linguistic features over a period of roughly 700 years.

§3.4 The publication of I. J. Gelb’s *Old Akkadian Writing and Grammar* and *Glossary of Old Akkadian* in the 1950’s marked the beginning of a new era in the study of 3rd millennium Akkadian. Both contributions focused on the presentation, organization, and grammatical analysis of the available evidence that had become rather plentiful in the preceding four decades. In his “Definition of Old Akkadian,” Gelb characterized “Old Akkadian” cuneiform texts as

*... the written remains of the Akkadian language from the oldest periods of Mesopotamian history down to the end of the 3rd Dynasty of Ur.*¹⁶

§3.5 Here, too, “Old Akkadian” served as a convenient collective term for the entire 3rd millennium Akkadian tradition, including pre-Sargonic, Sargonic, and Ur III Akkadian. However, both in *MAD 2* and *MAD 3*, Gelb made a first effort to distinguish between these three presumed linguistic periods of Akkadian, and marked the respective forms accordingly. Still, the grammatical and linguistic picture drawn of “Old Akkadian” in *MAD 2* appears to have primarily targeted the documentation and description of linguistic features common to all known varieties of 3rd millennium Akkadian. Diachronic, diatopic, and diastratic differences played a comparatively minor role.

¹⁴ A. Ungnad, *Materialien zur altakkadischen Sprache (bis zum Ende der Ur-Dynastie)* (=MVAG 20/2 [1915]; Leipzig 1916) 4.

¹⁵ See *IMGULA* 5, pp. 7, 12.

¹⁶ I. J. Gelb, *MAD 2*, p. 1.

§3.6 Gelb was nonetheless aware of the fact that Ur III Akkadian, being the latest manifestation of the pre-Old Babylonian tradition, somehow defied his attempts at a proper linguistic and historical classification:

*The linguistic materials are not adequate to enable us to give a short sketch of the Ur III Akkadian comparable to that given above of the Sargonic.*¹⁷

§3.7 In addition, he was forced to admit that the pertinent Ur III evidence he had accumulated was far from exhaustive, insofar as the corpus of published sources from this period had considerably increased in size and already comprised more than 10,000 individual cuneiform texts:

*Due to the immense number of the Ur III sources, it would have been impossible for me to collect the Ur III personal names as completely as I did the Pre-Sargonic and Sargonic names . . . Thus the onomastic material is quoted fully for the Pre-Sargonic and Sargonic Periods but is quoted in selection in the Ur III Period when it was thought that the additional examples add nothing of importance to our knowledge of Akkadian in the Ur III Period.*¹⁸

§3.8 Despite these limitations, Gelb was able to take note of several orthographic and linguistic features specific to Ur III Akkadian, primarily those that appeared to constitute a deviation from the Sargonic Akkadian standard. He thus listed “a few points of general interest”¹⁹ that reflected largely isolated observations regarding the paleography, syllabary, morphology, and lexicon of Akkadian sources from the Ur III period.

§3.9 Some of Gelb’s observations could have had a remarkable impact on both the historical and dialectal classification of Ur III Akkadian, and the contemporary perception of 3rd millennium Akkadian as a whole; however, they were not cast in a systematic form and thus commanded only marginal interest at the time.

§3.10 More than two decades passed before the scholarly debate concerning the earliest linguistic periods of Akkadian received a stimulating, and ultimately decisive impulse. In an attempt to define the relative historical and dialectal position of the early Old Babylonian

¹⁷ *MAD 2*, p. 18.

¹⁸ *MAD 3*, p. viii.

¹⁹ *MAD 2*, pp. 18-19; see *IMGULA* 5, pp. 8-10.

language attested in cuneiform texts from the so-called *šakkanakkum*-period, A. Westenholz reviewed the traditional Assyriological concept that held 3rd millennium Akkadian to be a largely homogenous linguistic entity. As a result, he submitted the following, rather unconventional hypothesis:

*There is rather much evidence to suggest that the usual grouping of the Akkadian of these [namely, Ur III] texts with Sargonic Old Akkadian is faulty. The differences between Sargonic Old Akkadian and Ur III Akkadian are so numerous and so basic that it seems justified to consider them as separate dialects ... Moreover, all these differences make their appearance with suspicious suddenness after the downfall of the Sargonic Empire. The conclusion is, of course, that Ur III Akkadian is nothing else than archaic Old Babylonian, while Sargonic Old Akkadian is a different dialect which, at least in some areas, was used only as an official written language.*²⁰

§3.11 A. Westenholz did not remain the only scholar to recognize that a proper, well-founded linguistic classification of Ur III Akkadian, and its differentiation from the Akkadian of the preceding Sargonic period that necessarily derives from this classification, had assumed a pivotal role not only in debunking the phantom called “Old Akkadian,” but also in tracing the direct ancestry of Old Babylonian, in particular that of its early, pre-Hammurapi varieties. In 1987, R. M. Whiting was confronted with the problem of describing and classifying the Semitic language of a group of early Old Babylonian letters excavated at Tall Asmar, ancient Ešnunna. Written on clay tablets during the 20th century B.C., these cuneiform texts reflect a developmental stage of Akkadian that Whiting decided to name “archaic Old Babylonian,” specifically in order to distinguish this particular variety from other early Old Babylonian manifestations of Akkadian. Considering the position “archaic Old Babylonian” might occupy within the early history of Akkadian, Whiting reasoned:

Apart from a few features which will be discussed below, the language of the Tell Asmar letters seems to be descended from Ur III Akkadian and ancestral to early Old Babylonian. One of the problems involved in trying to determine whether the lan-

*guage of the letters is a descendant or continuation of Ur III Akkadian is the fact that documents in Akkadian from the Ur III period are also very rare and it is difficult to define Ur III Akkadian with precision. The general obscurity of the linguistic situation in Mesopotamia at this time complicates the problem of defining the language of the letters ... I propose that the language of the earlier letters from Tell Asmar, as well as contemporary texts from elsewhere in Babylonia, be termed “archaic Old Babylonian,” bearing in mind that it may eventually prove to be indistinguishable from Ur III Akkadian ... The fact that there are a number of well-attested changes between Old Akkadian of the Sargonic period and Ur III Akkadian suggests that the largest discontinuity comes at the end of the Sargonic Period, and that Ur III Akkadian is already the beginning of the Old Babylonian linguistic tradition.*²¹

§3.12 While Whiting’s remarks underscore the importance of defining the historical relationship between Ur III and Old Babylonian Akkadian, they also illustrate the necessity to define the linguistic characteristics of the Semitic standard language attested in cuneiform sources from the Sargonic period. For it goes without saying that questions concerning linguistic continuity and discontinuity, as well as dialect diversity in the late 3rd and early 2nd millennium B.C., should preferably be addressed on the basis of a detailed picture of all known forms of speech prevalent during this period.

§3.13 In this respect, recent contributions by W. Sommerfeld focusing on the orthography and grammar of Sargonic Akkadian have altered, and advanced the modern perception of the Akkadian dialect that served as the official means of written communication throughout the Sargonic empire. Summarizing Sommerfeld’s findings, it will suffice to concentrate on the concise description of two characteristic aspects that may be considered crucial for the historical classification of Sargonic Akkadian on the one hand, and pre-Sargonic, Ur III, Old Babylonian, and Old Assyrian Akkadian, on the other.

§3.14 First, almost the entire Akkadian textual tradition of the Sargonic period is marked by an orthographic system certain areas of which are rather strictly regulated. This system features individual pairs and sometimes even triples of syllabograms that are traditionally trans-

²⁰ A. Westenholz, “Some Notes on the Orthography and Grammar of the Recently Published Texts from Mari,” *BiOr* 35 (1978) 163, n. 24.

²¹ R. M. Whiting, *AS* 22, pp. 16-18.

literated as homonymic phoneme sequences. However, within Sargonic Akkadian orthography, they seem to represent *graphic oppositions* expressing phonological or morphological differentiations on the level of the spoken language. Typical examples of such pairs of syllabograms include i and i₃, bi and bi₂, ki and ki₂, ku and ku₈, li and li₂, ma and ma₂. To all appearances, the differentiations expressed by the two constituents of a syllabogram pair range from the distinction of vowel quality to the representation of varying syllable structures, such as C(onsonant)V(owel) and CVC.²²

§3.15 Second, the linguistic features of Sargonic Akkadian exclude this early stage of Akkadian as the common ancestor of both Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian, as is widely believed. While Sargonic Akkadian does share individual distinctive features with Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian, it also possesses several equally prominent characteristics that are not attested in either dialect. Correspondingly, some features typical of the Assyrian dialect are not, or only exceptionally, found in Sargonic Akkadian, e.g., the so-called Assyrian vowel harmony, the paradigms PaRRuS and šaPRuS of the D and Š Stem forms without conjugation prefixes, and the so-called “strong” inflection of the D Stem of II-“weak” verbs.

§3.16 In his article entitled “Bemerkungen zur Dialektgliederung Altakkadisch, Assyrisch und Babylonisch,” W. Sommerfeld therefore draws the following remarkable conclusion (translation by the author):

The [Akkadian] dialect predominantly documented during the Sargonic period is presumably the native tongue of the Akkade rulers and their elites, which was consistently introduced as the official language of administration. Originally the dialect of a peripheral region, it was significantly different from other dialects simultaneously prevalent in the Akkadian language area. In all likelihood, these dialects were more widely used as colloquial languages, but appear in the contemporary cuneiform texts to a very limited extent only. With the collapse of the Sargonic empire, this official standard

²² This aspect of the Sargonic orthographic system, with examples of pertinent syllabogram pairs and triples, is discussed by W. Sommerfeld in *IMGULA* 3/1, pp. 18-22, 26-28, and in “Bemerkungen zur Dialektgliederung Altakkadisch, Assyrisch und Babylonisch,” *AOAT* 274, pp. 572-576. For the widespread abandonment of these orthographic conventions in the Ur III period, see *IMGULA* 5, pp. 120-133.

*language is abandoned and the regional colloquial languages emerge as the linguistic basis for all written communication. These colloquial languages are the precursors of the later dialects Assyrian and Babylonian.*²³

§4 *Ur III Akkadian*

§4.1 Our preceding review of recent Assyriological research on both the early Old Babylonian varieties of Akkadian as well as on Sargonic Akkadian has demonstrated that in order to understand the evolutionary patterns characterizing the transition from the Akkadian language tradition of the 3rd millennium to the dominant manifestations of Akkadian in the 2nd millennium, i.e., Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian, the linguistic and historical classification of Ur III Akkadian is of pivotal significance. This is the case not only because Ur III Akkadian represents a practical chronological link between Sargonic Akkadian on the one hand and Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian on the other, but also because until very recently it was a matter of pure speculation what linguistic properties Ur III Akkadian did indeed possess. Was it an archaic form of Babylonian, a direct precursor of Old Assyrian, or neither? Does the pertinent linguistic evidence found in Ur III cuneiform texts render a distinct, largely homogenous picture or rather an inconsistent one?

§4.2 In a study entitled *Akkadisch in der Ur III Zeit*,²⁴ I addressed these complex questions and attempted to define the relative position of Ur III Akkadian within the early history of the Akkadian language. The feasibility of such an investigation, well over forty years after I. J. Gelb pronounced the available sources “not adequate” for a linguistic analysis, primarily hinges on two factors:

§4.2.1 Since the middle of the 20th century A.D., the number of published cuneiform sources from the 3rd Dynasty of Ur has more than quadrupled to form an imposing corpus currently comprising more than 60,000 individual texts.²⁵ In the context of an inquiry into the grammatical features of the Akkadian linguistic material surviving from this period, it is particularly

²³ *AOAT* 274, pp. 585-586.

²⁴ Published as *IMGULA* 5.

²⁵ The central database of the CDLI currently numbers over 57,500 published and unpublished Ur III texts, not including the ca. 1400 Ur III tablets from Garshana to be published by D. I. Owen and R. Mayr. Owen

important to note that the present corpus includes a considerable number of previously unknown administrative documents from sites in central and northern Babylonia, such as Tall as-Sulaima in the Diyala region, Tall Išān Mazyad, and Tall al-Wilaya. The clandestinely excavated business records from the so-called archives of SI.A-a and Tūram-ili doubtlessly stem from the same geographical region.²⁶ In general, this specific text group is characterized by a comparatively high ratio of Akkadian proper names and loanwords. Moreover, one may encounter mostly concise Akkadian phrases interspersed in the Sumerian standard formulae of legal and administrative documents. However, even more significant is the circumstance that the considerable increase in the number of central and northern Babylonian sources has been associated with a quantitative surge of Ur III cuneiform texts written entirely in syllabic Akkadian.²⁷ Thus, contemporary research on Ur III Akkadian may be carried out on the basis of linguistic evidence the quantity and quality of which have gained tremendously since the seminal contributions made by Ignace J. Gelb. This currently available evidence affords surprisingly promising perspectives for the gradual reconstruction of the Akkadian lexicon and grammar in the Ur III period.

§4.2.2 As described earlier, Assyriological studies published over the last two decades have effectively clarified the linguistic characteristics and historical categorization of the Akkadian language during the periods immediately preceding and following the Ur III period. In view of these past scholarly achievements, attempting a relative positioning of Ur III Akkadian within the early history of Akkadian is more realistic today than ever before.

§4.3 It was mentioned above that, in principle, linguistic evidence for an analysis of 3rd millennium Akkadian is not as readily accessible as the Akkadian tradition of later periods. This limitation characterizes specifically the disparate Akkadian sources of the Ur III period. The vast majority of Ur III cuneiform texts are Sumerian legal and administrative documents, the compositional structure of which generally adheres to rather rigid formulaic conventions. By comparison,

informs me that these texts include many Akkadian language elements.

²⁶ See *IMGULA* 5, p. 18.

²⁷ See the pertinent entries in the catalog of Akkadian cuneiform texts from the Ur III period provided in *IMGULA* 5, pp. 20-49.

the corpus of contemporary texts written partially or entirely in syllabic Akkadian is extremely small. At present, this corpus is made up of slightly more than one hundred individual cuneiform sources, including legal and administrative documents, letters, commemorative and votive inscriptions, as well as a few incantations.²⁸ Given both the quantitative and the qualitative restrictions this strictly circumscribed source material poses for any reconstructive approach to early Akkadian, the linguistic evidence provided by proper names, that is, primarily personal, topographical, and divine names, assumes crucial significance. Since a fairly large number of these proper names possess a complex syntactical structure, they yield substantial lexical and grammatical information.²⁹ Typologically similar evidence derives from Akkadian loanwords in Sumerian context, such as terms for objects of day-to-day use, crafted goods, official functions, cultic celebrations, and administrative categories.³⁰

§4.4 The topical focus of this paper precludes an otherwise necessary discussion of the methodological issues that invariably arise in the attempt to reconstruct any language on the basis of evidence substantially onomastic by nature. However, in light of a potential corrective represented by contextual language elements found in the contemporary Akkadian cuneiform texts and with due awareness of a generally high adaptability of Akkadian proper nouns with regard to linguistic³¹ and socio-cultural³² changes, the methodological path taken here has been chosen deliberately and appears to be reasonably justified.

²⁸ See *IMGULA* 5, pp. 20-49.

²⁹ For a concise typology of Akkadian proper names in the Ur III period, see *IMGULA* 5, pp. 51-65.

³⁰ See the examples and discussion in *IMGULA* 5, pp. 80-85.

³¹ For the extent and significance of innovative linguistic features in Akkadian personal names from the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st millennia, see M. P. Streck, "Sprachliche Innovationen und Archaismen in den akkadischen Personennamen," in M. P. Streck and S. Weninger, eds., *Altorientalische und semitische Onomastik* (=AOAT 296; Münster 2002) pp. 109-122.

³² For evident reflections of socio-cultural innovations in the contemporary Akkadian onomasticon, see M. Hilgert, "Herrscherideal und Namengebung: Zum akkadischen Wortschatz kyriophorer Eigennamen in der Ur III-Zeit," in N. Nebes, ed., *Neue Beiträge zur Semitistik* (=Jenaer Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 5; Wiesbaden 2002) pp. 39-76.

§4.5 A detailed lexical and grammatical analysis of all of the sources currently available for a dialectal and historical classification of Ur III Akkadian reveals a systematic pattern of orthographic and linguistic features that is both distinct and consistent. Given the extraordinary multitude, the degree of difficulty, and the disparity of the pertinent evidence, this result is rather surprising. When compared to those varieties of Akkadian that are sufficiently researched, equally distinct in their linguistic characteristics, and chronologically positioned immediately before and after the Ur III period—namely, Sargonic Akkadian and “archaic Old Babylonian” as attested in the letters from Tall Asmar—Ur III Akkadian may be assigned a specific, fixed place within the early history of Akkadian.³³ Accordingly, traditional theories about the linguistic properties and evolution of 3rd millennium Akkadian as a whole, and its relationship to the early 2nd millennium dialect varieties Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian have to be modified considerably.³⁴

§4.6 The historical position of Ur III Akkadian is conveniently defined through the following important characteristics:

§4.6.1 The Akkadian syllabary of the Ur III period differs substantially from that of the preceding Sargonic period as well as from the syllabogram inventory of the early Old Babylonian letters from Tall Asmar.³⁵ This difference is noticeable specifically in the proportionally frequent occurrence of CVC syllabograms employed to express Akkadian language elements in the Ur III period. Moreover, the Ur III Akkadian syllabary includes a surprisingly high number of syllabograms and sound values hitherto exclusively known from graphic representations of Sumerian forms, such as the sign *gab* with its proposed new reading *tu*₅, the compound *GIR*₃×*KAR*₂ with the values *gir*₁₆ and *qir*₈, and the sign *GU*₄ expressing the syllable /qu/ (proposed new reading: *qu*₇).³⁶

§4.6.2 With the exception of the signs *IA* and *QA*,³⁷ the Akkadian syllabary of the early Old Babylonian letters from Tall Asmar is already, albeit not exclusively, in

use during the Ur III period. Even syllabograms such as *DI*,³⁸ *KA*,³⁹ and *ŠE*⁴⁰ that may be considered standard constituents of the entire Old Babylonian syllabary occasionally occur in the graphic representation of Ur III Akkadian language elements. At the same time, the Ur III syllabary comprises a large number of CV, VC, and CVC syllabograms that are not attested in the Akkadian cuneiform texts from the preceding Sargonic period, e.g., the signs *TUR*,⁴¹ *ŠID* with the readings *lak* and *qir*₉,⁴² as well as the signs *KAL*,⁴³ *TA*,⁴⁴ and *UR*₂⁴⁵ with their respective values *kal*, *ta* and *ur*₂.⁴⁶

§4.6.3 A significant portion of the distinct orthographic conventions characterizing the better part of the Sargonic Akkadian textual tradition is abandoned completely in the Ur III period. This observation applies in particular to the graphic representation of the Akkadian sibilants. Regarding the orthography of Ur III Akkadian, universal and rigidly followed writing conventions cannot be detected. In fact, the seemingly arbitrary interchangeability of presumably homophonic syllabograms and syllabogram sequences may be addressed as the one overriding characteristic of the Akkadian orthography in the Ur III period.⁴⁷ However, strongly varying frequencies of individual, interchangeable spellings prompt the assumption of preferred or quasi “regular” graphic representations of Ur III Akkadian.⁴⁸

§4.6.4 The mimation of nouns occurs consistently throughout all Ur III cuneiform texts written partially or entirely in syllabic Akkadian. However, the graphic representation of the mimation may be lacking with Akkadian proper nouns—i.e., personal, divine, geographical, and month names—, individual elements of

³³ For the methodological justification of this comparison, see *IMGULA* 5, pp. 97-98.

³⁴ See *IMGULA* 5, pp. 97-168.

³⁵ See *IMGULA* 5, pp. 98-119.

³⁶ See *IMGULA* 5, pp. 101-102.

³⁷ Compare R. M. Whiting, *AS* 22, pp. 123-126, nos. 36 (*QA*) and 104 (*IA*).

³⁸ See *IMGULA* 5, p. 118, no. 266.

³⁹ See *IMGULA* 5, p. 112, no. 015.

⁴⁰ See *IMGULA* 5, p. 671a, s.v. *ŠE*.

⁴¹ See *IMGULA* 5, p. 104, no. 107.

⁴² See *IMGULA* 5, p. 106, no. 167.

⁴³ See *IMGULA* 5, pp. 106-107, no. 173.

⁴⁴ See *IMGULA* 5, p. 114, no. 102.

⁴⁵ See *IMGULA* 5, p. 115, no. 131.

⁴⁶ For a comprehensive list of these syllabograms, see *IMGULA* 5, pp. 103-119.

⁴⁷ See *IMGULA* 5, pp. 120-133.

⁴⁸ See, with examples, *IMGULA* 5, pp. 98-99, 330, n. 56.

proper nouns, and Akkadian loan words in Sumerian context. Within this latter group of Ur III Akkadian sources, spellings with or without mimation often alternate freely, without any distinct chronological and/or geographical distribution of the varying forms being perceivable. Thus, the consistent graphic representation of mimation in the Ur III period is limited exclusively to the fully inflected nominal constituents of a clause in the standard and literary language.⁴⁹

§4.6.5 Ur III Akkadian belongs to, and represents an early linguistic development level of the Babylonian dialect tradition of Akkadian. It differs fundamentally from the prevalent Akkadian standard language of the Sargonic Period. This fact is impressively illustrated by the inflection of the so-called “weak” verbs, which—except for the contraction of vowels in direct contact—already possesses the typical properties of the pertinent Old Babylonian paradigms. Nominal forms deriving from so-called “weak” roots render a corresponding picture.⁵⁰ Moreover, it should be noted that in Akkadian sources from the Ur III period there is currently no unequivocal evidence for lexical or grammatical features typical of the Assyrian dialect.⁵¹

§4.6.6 Ur III Akkadian shares numerous important linguistic features with the language of the early Old Babylonian letters from Tall Asmar. However, regarding individual morphological properties, Ur III Akkadian is more closely related to the “classic” Old Babylonian language of later times than to the archaic Old Babylonian of the Tall Asmar letters. This circumstance is exemplified by the inflection with *umlaut* of verbs I Alef and by the all but consistent use of the subordinate ending /-u/.⁵² In addition, leaving aside proper nouns, the dual as well as third person singular feminine forms with initial /t/-morpheme are no longer productive in the Ur III period. As a consequence, Ur III Akkadian has to be addressed as the immediate linguistic precursor of Old Babylonian.⁵³

§4.7 Essential differences separating Ur III Akkadian from Old Babylonian are:

- a) the extent and character of the syllabogram inventory used for graphic representation⁵⁴
- b) the apparent lack of an orthographic system standardized at least to some degree⁵⁵ and
- c) the phonological stability of vowels in direct contact.⁵⁶

§5 Conclusion

§5.1 Coming to a close, it may be appropriate to reflect on both the gist of what has been put forward in the preceding, as well as on the practical and theoretical consequences arising from these findings. First of all, we have to bring to mind the fact that at present Ur III Akkadian is the earliest, precisely identifiable developmental stage of the Babylonian dialect. Were we to transcend the level of phenomenological variations and argue in a broader linguistic context, we could furthermore assert that Ur III Akkadian differs only marginally from the Akkadian variety traditionally termed “Old Babylonian.”⁵⁷ This, of course, means that we have unveiled a rather remarkable, overall linguistic continuity of the Babylonian standard language stretching from the end of the Sargonic period well into late Old Babylonian times.

§5.2 Of course, the Akkadian varieties of speech existent during the Ur III period were presumably by far more plentiful, disparate, and subject to diatopic and diastratic variations than may be gleaned from the contemporary cuneiform sources. Still, it cannot

⁴⁹ See *IMGULA* 5, pp. 134-156.

⁵⁰ This fact was noted already by A. Westenholz, “Some Notes on the Orthography and Grammar of the Recently Published Texts from Mari,” *BiOr* 35 (1978) 163, n. 24.

⁵¹ See *IMGULA* 5, pp. 158-167.

⁵² For the currently attested exceptions from this rule, see *IMGULA* 5, pp. 163-164.

⁵³ See *IMGULA* 5, pp. 158-167.

⁵⁴ See §§ 4.6.1 and 4.6.2, above.

⁵⁵ See § 4.6.3, above.

⁵⁶ See, with examples, *IMGULA* 5, pp. 166-167 and n. 197; 263, n. 16; 271, n. 2; 419, n. 29; 462, n. 77; 487, n. 175.

⁵⁷ Whether the existing differences noted above (§ 4.7) are sufficiently distinctive to warrant a terminological differentiation between Old Babylonian and *Ur III Babylonian*—the introduction of the latter term was kindly suggested to me by Martha T. Roth—depends on the intended accuracy and specification of the historical categorization. Although it appears reasonable to presume the existence of Ur III Assyrian dialect varieties identical with or ancestral to Old Assyrian, unequivocal textual evidence supporting this hypothesis is still lacking (see §4.6.5, above); the use of the term “Ur III Babylonian” would at least allow us to distinguish between these hypothetically contemporary dialects.

be dismissed that in the period immediately following the downfall of the Sargonic empire, we are confronted by *Old Babylonian*, represented by its most distinctive linguistic features, as the prevalent standard language written throughout Babylonia proper.

§5.3 As a consequence, traditional theories concerning the early history of the Akkadian language that separate between the entire 3rd millennium Akkadian tradition as a fundamentally monolithic linguistic entity called “Old Akkadian” on the one hand, and the early 2nd millennium dialects Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian, on the other, must be considered inadequate, and therefore invalid. For the diachronic development of the Babylonian dialect can now be traced back to the beginning of the Ur III period, whereas equally immediate precursors of Old Assyrian are still not easily pinpointed within the corpus of 3rd millennium cuneiform sources.⁵⁸

§5.4 Does this line of argumentation necessarily imply, as R. M. Whiting has suggested, that the most conspicuous linguistic discontinuity occurs not with the end of the Ur III period, but in fact after the collapse of the Sargonic empire?⁵⁹ It appears this complicated question can only be answered partially at this moment. For it is obvious that there is indeed a significant discontinuity between the Sargonic and Ur III periods as far as the linguistic features of the respective standard languages and the conventions determining their graphic representation are concerned.

§5.5 However, if W. Sommerfeld is correct in his assumption that Sargonic Akkadian essentially derives from a peripheral dialect, originally the vernacular of the ruling elite and thereby consistently privileged to become the standard language of official administration and political ideology,⁶⁰ one could hypothesize that the Akkadian language actually *spoken* in at least some regions of Mesopotamia during the Sargonic period already belonged to the Babylonian dialect tradition.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Compare S. Parpola, “Proto-Assyrian,” in H. Waetzoldt and H. Hauptmann, eds., *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft von Ebla* (=HSAO 2; Heidelberg 1988) pp. 293-298.

⁵⁹ See R. M. Whiting, *AS* 22, p. 18.

⁶⁰ See W. Sommerfeld, “Bemerkungen zur Dialektgliederung Altakkadisch, Assyrisch und Babylonisch,” *AOAT* 274, pp. 583-586.

⁶¹ The development of a standard language on the basis of a regional language variety as a means of supraregional communication is a widespread and well-known sociolinguistic phenomenon. A “modernization” or “democ-

Furthermore, it stands to reason that reflections of such diastatic or diatopic variations would most likely occur in those cuneiform texts that generally deviate from the orthographic and grammatical standards of the contemporary literary language.⁶²

§5.6 There is textual evidence from the Sargonic period to back up this admittedly speculative notion. Sargonic cuneiform texts from a private archive excavated at Tall Asmar are not written in the official standard language characteristic of this period. Instead, they feature a number of grammatical forms that are typically “Old Babylonian”, such as *e-pi₅-i₅*⁶³ “I will do” and *te-er-ri₂-i₅*⁶⁴ “you desire.”⁶⁵

§5.7 What if these isolated forms are in fact indicative of a more widespread linguistic reality during the Sargonic period? The traceable history of the Babylonian dialect as represented by its early “Old Babylonian” varieties might then reach considerably further back than hitherto imagined, well into the Sargonic period, and possibly even beyond. With these intriguing possibilities in mind, a fresh look at the linguistic and historical classification of pre-Sargonic Akkadian promises to be fascinating.

ratization” of the occasionally obsolete standard language may occur through the influence of dialects and colloquial koines simultaneously used within the same socio-cultural or political sphere. For the development of standard languages and the socio-linguistic analysis of related processes, see the concise summary by F. Haneš, “Herausbildung und Reform von Standardsprachen,” in U. Ammon, N. Dittmar and K. J. Mattheier, eds., *Sociolinguistics/Soziolinguistik* (=Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft 3/2; Berlin, New York 1988) pp. 1506-1516.

⁶² For this line of argumentation, see W. Sommerfeld, *AOAT* 274, pp. 584-585.

⁶³ *OAIC* 53, 15; B. Kienast and K. Volk, *FAOS* 19, pp. 156-157.

⁶⁴ *OAIC* 52, 8; see B. Kienast and K. Volk, *FAOS* 19, p. 162.

⁶⁵ For these forms and their historical significance, see W. Sommerfeld *apud* M. Hilgert, *IMGULA* 5, p. 170, n. 205.

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