



Studies in Semitic Grammar and Metrics

Review Author[s]:
Edward Ullendorff

Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Vol. 37, No. 2 (1974), 449-450.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0041-977X%281974%2937%3A2%3C449%3ASISGAM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-H>

Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London is currently published by School of Oriental and African Studies.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/soas.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

which s^2 is the first consonant, we find that there are approximately 65; 21 out of that number have Hebrew cognates; within the latter number there are three (H *šaloš*, *šoreš*, *šemeš*) where a factor of assimilation or dissimilation must manifestly be allowed for; there is one (s^2w/s^2y) which could be plausibly regarded as cognate with Hebrew *šw*; but the remaining 17 all have Hebrew cognates spelt with *šin*. To this one must add the evidence of Mehri, where a high percentage of all instances of lateralized [g] likewise have cognates showing either in Hebrew *šin* or in Arabic *š*. In the face of this statistical evidence, I do not see how it is possible to resist the conclusion that a three-term system in this phonemic domain (whatever its phonetic nature might have been) is not exclusive to South Arabian but must underlie at least North-west Semitic, even though it may perhaps not be proto-Semitic in the full sense.

On p. 58, the author cites a Semitic name *ἱθαλλάμμωνος* occurring in a Greek inscription of the first century B.C., and very plausibly assigns its initial element to the Aramaic root *ṭll*. But his deduction that 'the unusual ("singolare" in the original Italian) spelling *ṛθ* shows that such a consonant was pronounced as a fricative' is a very dubious one indeed. In most varieties of pre-Christian Greek the series *θ φ χ* were unquestionably aspirated stops, and *not* fricatives. My colleague Anna Davies, Professor of Comparative Philology at Oxford, tells me that no clear evidence for the shift from aspirated stops to fricatives is to be found before the first century A.D. Nor is there anything in the least 'unusual' about the spelling *ṛθ*: it is the absolutely regular way in pre-Christian Greek of indicating gemination of an aspirated stop (*Ἀρθῖς*, *Σάρφω*, *Βάκχος*). Besides being regular and conventional, it is also phonetically exact; gemination of a stop means prolonging the period of closure, and aspiration can only be introduced after the termination of the closure, it is impossible to insert it into that period, so that the phonic group is in fact /t^h/ etc. All that one could legitimately infer from the spelling of the inscription is that it *might* represent a geminated pronunciation. This, however, would point to an Ethpael stem, which would be semantically surprising ('Ammon is sheltered' instead of the expected 'Ammon shelters'), and is not in fact a necessary inference, for (I quote Professor Davies again) 'there is a certain amount of evidence that starting with the late third century B.C. all geminate consonants in Greek were simplified'.

It is by no means clear to me what justification there is for drawing a sharp distinction (p. 63) between Mehri and Ethiopic on the one hand and Arabic on the other in respect of the verbal tense system, by claiming that the

former have a three-tense system contrasting with a two-tense one in Arabic. If one is prepared to term Ethiopic *yegattel* and *yegtel* two different tenses there is no justification for refusing to class Arabic *lam yaqtul* as a different tense from *lā yaqtulu*.

It is not without interest to note that the author's basic hypothesis of an ethnic differentiation between nomad 'Amorites' and the sedentaries, is totally denied by another Italian scholar, M. Liverani, who writes (in D. J. Wiseman (ed.), *Peoples of Old Testament times*, Oxford 1973, 107), 'it is now known that nomadism during the Bronze Age was more a pastoral transhumance over short distances by groups belonging to a "dimorphic" society which was both agrarian and pastoral; the differentiation between the two components was purely technical and economic. The nomads and farmers formed together one ethnic unit'.

A. F. L. BEESTON

JERZY KURYŁOWICZ: *Studies in Semitic grammar and metrics*. (Polska Akademia Nauk. Komitet Językoznawstwa. Prace Językoznawcze, 67.) 190 pp. Wrocław, etc.: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk; London: Curzon Press Ltd., 1973. £3.15.

Professor Kuryłowicz is one of the few men who have written widely on Indo-European and Semitic languages as well as general linguistics. In all three fields he has won international recognition by his distinguished contributions. In 1965, to celebrate his seventieth birthday, a wide circle of his admirers contributed to a volume that marked his retirement from his chair in the University of Cracow.¹

The volume at present under review constitutes further testimony to K.'s deep learning in the domain of the Semitic languages. The preface explains that this is, in a sense, a second edition of the author's well-known *L'apophonie en sémitique* (1962). A comparison of the two versions shows that, while the present volume is no larger in size, it contains a good deal more material that is of central interest to Semitists. The most important addition is concerned with the structure of the verbal root, and it is, therefore, to this subject

¹ I am grateful to my colleague Stefan Strelcyn of Manchester University for sending me a copy of a brief biographical sketch of Kuryłowicz together with his bibliography, 1925-65.

that the present notice will be principally devoted. K. has also introduced a good many changes, mainly from a structuralist point of view, into the sections dealing with apophony, particularly as regards its origin and the mechanism of differentiation.

It may be helpful to explain what this essentially new work contains: after the first chapter concerned with the verbal root (see anon), ch. ii deals with the rise and role of vowel gradation in Semitic; ch. iii with the Akkadian verbal system, including some very perceptive observations on the type *iptaras*; chs. iv and v with the West Semitic verbal system and the problem of 'aspects' of the Semitic verb, particularly with the opposition *yaqtulu*: *qatala* as well as the Hebrew *waw*-tenses; ch. vi with deverbative nouns and adjectives; ch. vii with case and determination; ch. viii with gender and number; ch. ix with denominative derivatives; and ch. x with Semitic metrics. Each section is full of fresh insights into the system and its structural balances and reveals the fruitful approach of one not exclusively reared in the field of orthodox Semitics.

The want of indexes is very inconvenient, for it would have been helpful to look up individual words that have been discussed in the book. It is also a pity that there is a well-nigh complete absence of bibliographical data and references.

K.'s point of departure is the enlargement of verbal roots in Semitic which may go back to original biconsonantal formations.² In this connexion he adduces a large number of examples which deserve the most careful study and scrutiny. But K.'s basic contention that the enlarging elements, while their semantic function cannot be determined, must have a formal and morphologically definable origin, seems to me rather curious. Thus he spurns examples of the *prd*, *prm*, *prs*, *prš*, *prq*, *pr* type—despite their formal and semantic cogency—and adduces instead instances where the added consonants are affixes (such as *t*, *n*, *š*, *'*, *h*, etc.) 'which continue to be productive in historical verb-formation' (p. 8). Yet I would have thought that all such affixes are devoid of any intrinsic value but gain their significance merely from specific collocations within the system.

Impressive is the long list of semantic cognates patterned on the $R_1-R_2-R_3$: $R_1-y/w-R_3$ syndrome, such as *hmm*: *hwm* 'to disturb', *mll*: *mul* 'to circumsise', *rm*: *rw* 'to rise', etc. Equally valuable are the many examples of enlargements occurring in other

positions, but K.'s assignment of these root-extensions to three exclusive groups (petrified prefixes; internal lengthenings of vowel or consonant; old suffixes—p. 12) seems to me to be confining these phenomena within limits that are so palpably transgressed by so many securely established data.

K. then continues with a detailed statistical study of incompatibility between verbal radicals and takes Greenberg's justly renowned article (*Word*, vi, 2, 1950) a good deal further. This is a major contribution to our understanding of the structure of the Semitic verbal root.

The entire book is a mine of acute observations and challenging views. There is no need to agree with everything Kurylowicz says, but all his statements have style and carry authority. The monograph can serve as an excellent companion to a university course in comparative Semitics from which teacher and taught can equally benefit. The present reviewer has attempted this and has discovered in this book a foil that has set off many valuable discussions.

EDWARD ULLENDORFF

RONALD HERBERT SACK: *Amēl-Marduk, 562–560 B.C.: a study based on cuneiform, Old Testament, Greek, Latin and Rabbinical sources.* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament. Sonderreihe, Bd.4.) x, 138 pp., 10 plates. Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon und Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1972. DM 70.

There can be no doubt that a full and critical edition of all sources relating to any person or period, especially when it is a little-known successor to so influential a ruler as Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon, is an essential tool for any subsequent research into the period.

Dr. Sack has expanded his doctoral thesis on the brief reign of Amēl-Marduk, king of Babylon (562–560 B.C.) with a detailed presentation of 95 cuneiform texts, including 25 previously unpublished from the British Museum and two from the University Museum, Philadelphia. These texts are given in transliteration and translation but mention the king only in the stereotyped date formula (with the exception of an oath taken in his name and four 'vase fragments').

The treatment of the 'classical sources' is less critical. His citation of Megasthenes seems to be confused or badly worded, perhaps following a poor translation of Eusebius who is quoting Abydenos who refers to Megasthenes

² K.'s reference at this point (p. 6) to H. Fleischer, *Traité de philologie arabe*, should of course read Fleisch: and 1964 should be 1961.