

THE VERB *√L(-)Ḍ ‘TO REMOVE’ IN EARLY ARAMAIC CURSES AND THE EVOLUTION OF ARAMAIC INTERDENTAL ORTHOGRAPHY AND PHONOLOGY

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Abstract

Several verbal morphologies including the core orthography {ld} are attested in ninth- and eighth-century BCE Aramaic texts from Sefire and Tell Fekheriyeh. From their similar contexts, all can be demonstrated to have the semantics ‘to remove’, but scholars are divided as to the root source and precise phonology of these verbs. The present paper demonstrates that these {ld} verbs belong to a cognate set descendant from proto-Semitic *√l(-)ḏ. The representation of the reflex of the interdental *ḏ by {d} is a precocious development only attested broadly in later Aramaic, but its surfacing here can be rationalized by appeal to diachronic phonology, phonotactics and linguistic typology. The consistent employment of developed orthography for this root is perhaps related to the existence of a broad and consistent early Aramaic curse tradition.

There occur in the eighth-century BCE Aramaic treaties from Sefire¹ a number of orthographies for verbal morphologies with {()ld()} in very similar contexts. These are as follows:

¹ The texts, representing a treaty or treaties between Maṭī’īlu of Arpad and Bar-Ga’yā of the enigmatic land {ktk} in the mid-eighth century BCE, are most frequently cited as *KAI* 222–4. Sefire I and Sefire II are in the Damascus National Museum, and Sefire III is stored at the National Museum of Beirut as inv. no. 2036. The most thorough edition is that of Fitzmyer (1995), with comprehensive previous bibliography. The most recent re-edition is that of Fales and Grassi 2016: 92–122. Other recent discussions of linguistic and historical aspects of the texts, not all relevant to the present question, include Quick 2018: 76–88; Dušek 2017a; 2017b; Dušek and Abousamra 2016; Na’aman 2016; Ramos 2016 and Dewrell 2010.

- {'hld} Sefire IC:18, in {wy'mr 'hld mn mlw/(19)h}
waya'mur 'HLD min millawhv
 '... or he will say, 'I will VERB some of its words'
- {hldt} Sefire IIC:2, in {(1) [wmn y]'/mr lhldt spry' [']ln b/(3)ty 'lhy'}
waman ya'mur liHLDT siparayya' 'illin ba(lā)ttay
'ilāhayya'
 '[... whoever will s]ay to VERB these inscriptions
 from the monuments'
- {ld} Sefire IIC:6, in {wyzhl h' mn ld spr/(7)[y] mn bty 'lhy'}
wayiḏḥal hū min LD siparayya' min ba(lā)ttay
'ilāhayya'
 '... and should he be frightened of VERB-ing the
 inscriptions from the monuments'
- {ld} Sefire IIC:9, in {(8)w[y]'/mr ld² [sp]ry' 'ln mn bt/(10)y [']lhy'}
waya'mur LD siparayya' 'illin min ba(lā)ttay
'ilāhayya'
 '... and say, 'VERB these inscriptions from the
 monuments'

All of these contexts involve doing something negative to words or particularly the representation of these on physical objects. It is thus virtually certain that {'hld}, {hldt}, {ld}₁ and {ld}₂ represent instantiations of the same verb.³ One can parse {ld}₁ and {ld}₂ from a combination of morphology and syntax: the former must be a G Infinitive

² The effaced section that follows {ld} has made this the only occurrence for which there are epigraphic difficulties involved. Dupont-Sommer and Starcky (1958: 122) argued that there was space for three graphemes between {d} and {r} and restored thus {ld[t sp]ry' 'ln} '[J'ai] effacé ces [inscriptions-ci' (thus also Fitzmyer 1961: 207–8, 211; Koopmans 1962: 61; Donner and Röllig 1968: 263). From copies and photos — e.g. Dupont-Sommer and Starcky 1958: pls. 25–6 — it appears as though the presence of three graphemes in the effaced section would make for a tough fit (thus also Fitzmyer 1995: 133). I thus prefer the restoration of {ld} alone (e.g. also Degen 1969: 19) and the general syntactic interpretation offered here and at greater length in Fitzmyer 1995: 125, 133–4.

³ Before texts beyond Sefire I were published, some scholars analysed {'hld (mn)} in isolation and arrived at conclusions that must now be set aside. For example, Bauer (1932–3: 15) suggested that {'hldmn} was C PC 1.c.s. + engeric {n} √ldm 'schlagen, ohrfeigen', by comparison with Arabic *ladama*, listed in some modern dictionaries with these semantics (e.g. Steingass 1882: 914). This hypothesis is adopted with hesitation in Hempel 1932: 181 n. 4.

and the latter a G Imperative. While the latter could be an instantiation of √nld, the former establishes by its orthography without {n} that these two verbs are likely from either √l(-)d⁴ or √ldd. As already mentioned, since the Sefire IC:19 and IIC:2 verbs appear in semantically and syntactically similar contexts, it seems likely that they are instantiations of the same root. But their {}h}s suggest that these are C-stem verbs: {'hld} a C PC 1.c.s. and {hldt}, given the preceding preposition {} and general syntactic context, certainly a C Infinitive.⁵ Both again admit of the root possibilities √l(-)d or √ldd (√nld already having been ruled out).

Before surveying the semantics and etymologies that scholars have proposed for these related verbal instantiations in Sefire, one notes that similar orthographies in similar contexts appear in the ninth-century Tell Fekheriyeh inscription, first published in 1982.⁶ These should thus be considered in tandem:

⁴ The issue of whether these roots had as their second and/or third radical *d or *ḏ is addressed below. 'd' is written here as reflecting orthography, and written representation of the phonological alternative is avoided so as not to clutter the text with copious backslashes.

⁵ The C infinitive in Old Aramaic usually has the preformative {h} *ha* and terminates in {t} *at* (summaries Degen 1969: 50, 70, 76; Martínez Borobio 2003: 80–1; Fales and Grassi 2016: 48). The nominal base that functioned as the C infinitive in this phase of the language was likely **haqt√l(at)* (see below), with the vowel after *R*₂ not completely certain. Among later Aramaic dialects that retain *h* (>) forms of the C infinitive, both biblical Aramaic הַקְטִיל (certainly < *haqtālāt*; Bauer and Leander 1927: 115 [§36n]) and Palmyrene forms like {'hbw'r} (Cantineau 1935: 89) may suggest a vowel *ā. This assumes that Palmyrene {w} here marks *o* < *ā, as is likely elsewhere in the language (Cantineau 1935: 51). {hskr} at Sefire III:2 is unusual (cf. Segert 1975: 261), but is probably simply a different (non-'feminine') base employed with identical syntax: **haskār*. Of course, the **haqt√l(at)* base for the C infinitive was largely displaced by **maqālāt/ūt* in later Aramaic dialects (with similar replacements in the D- and, earlier, G-stems) (summary Folmer 1995: 192–8; see also n. 8, below). It is worth stressing, first, that C and other infinitives that end in {t} *at* are not 'Infinitives Construct' in the sense of biblical Hebrew, i.e. as witnessing a nominal base contrast between G **q(u)ṭull** *qaṭāl*, D **qaṭṭill** *qaṭṭāl*, C **haqṭīll** *haqṭīl* [?], distributed largely according to syntax (cf. Fales and Grassi 2016: 48). The existence of such a distinction is not demonstrable for any language outside Canaanite (see recently Pat-El and Wilson-Wright 2016: 47–52). For possible evidence of its operation in non-Hebrew Canaanite, see Amadasi Guzzo 1999: 84 (§138) for Phoenician and Punic and possibly El Amarna {a-na : ū-bu-ud LUGAL} (EA 152:56 [Tyre]), to my knowledge not yet noted in connection with this question (cf. Pat-El and Wilson-Wright 2016: 52). Second, such infinitives are not certainly in the construct state, as is argued by e.g. Degen (1969: 49 n. 14, 70 n. 60). All *could* be, but they could also take following nominal clauses as direct objects.

⁶ The Tell Fekheriyeh inscription is an Aramaic-Akkadian bilingual dedication of Hadd-yi0'i of Gozan, c. 850–25 BCE, incised on a two-metre statue of a man on

- {mld} Tell Fekh 9, in {wlmld . mrq . mnh}
waliMLD marq minih
 '... and for VERB-ing illness from him'
- {yld} Tell Fekh 11, in {wzy . yld . šmy . mnh}
wa-ḏī YLD š(v)mī minih
 'Whoever VERBs my name from it'
- {yld} Tell Fekh 16, in {mn . yld . šmy . mn . m'ny' / ⁽¹⁷⁾ zy bt . hdd . mr'y}
man YLD š(v)mī min ma'nayya' ḏī bēt Hadad māri'ī
 'Whoever VERBs my name from the vessels of the house of Hadad, my lord'

Given these orthographies, one remains confined to derivation from either √l(-)d or √ldd and without any means of choosing between the two on the basis of orthography alone.⁷ The first, {mld}, is a *maqṭal*

a pedestal. It was discovered accidentally at Tell Fekheriyeh, in eastern Syria, in 1979, transported to the Damascus National Museum, and first published by Abou Assaf, Bordreuil and Millard (1982). Comprehensive bibliography to 1989 is collected at Fitzmyer and Kaufman 1992: 36–7 [no. B.2.2]. The dissertation of Yun (2008) aims to be a comprehensive re-edition but the depth of coverage is inconsistent. The most recent re-edition is that of Fales and Grassi 2016: 69–81. Other recent treatments, not all relevant to the present question, include Quick 2018: 71–6, 137–51; Dušek and Mynářová 2016; Quick 2016; Baranowski 2012; and Aster 2011.

⁷ Kaufman (1982: 166; see also *ibid.*: 156 n. 52) writes that 'were this a hollow verb we would expect to see the imperfect written **ylwd* in this inscription'. This is based on the observation that in Fekheriyeh, 'every long *ū* and *ī* is indicated, with the apparent exception of only [!] five words' (*ibid.*: 156). These exceptions are in three cases {n} for the m.p. absolute morpheme — {lhn} *'ilāhīn* 'gods' (l. 14), {nšn} *'unāšīm* 'people' (l. 14), and {š'rn} *š'ārīn* 'grains of barley' (l. 22) — and in one case the reflex of a monophthongized diphthong — {bt} *bēr* (l. 17). The other exception, though, is {lšm} (*)*lašīm* 'may he put', G precative 3.m.s. √l(-)m and leads to a set of phonological conclusions that are possible but may be resting a lot on one orthography: Kaufman (1982: 157) interprets {lšm} to indicate that 'if we assume scribal consistency [...] long vowels in closed syllables were shortened, as in Arabic and Proto-Hebrew (or else the vowels in these words, too, would have been long and thus reflected in the orthography)' (emphasis original), thus **lašīm* > *lašim*. But this requires the further hypothesis that word-final short vowels were still preserved in the dialect of Aramaic behind this inscription; otherwise such lexemes as {wyšym} *wayašīmu*? 'he will put' (l. 12) and — our present concern — {mld} *malladi*? and {yld} *yalludu*? would disallow any hypothesis of orthographic consistency. Kaufman himself, though, rightly wonders whether the preservation of final short vowels finds any confirmation or complication in the general orthography and morphology of

infinitive, probably G or C-stem.⁸ {yld} is in both cases likely G PC

the text; to this end, he quotes a personal communication of B. Zuckerman, who argues for the significance of the f.s. absolute morpheme {h} in {t̄bh} *tābā* 'good' (l. 5). I agree that it seems more likely that this orthography reflects *ā* < (apocoped) **at*, as often and independently throughout Northwest Semitic (Garr 1985: 59–61), rather than *ahV* < (lenited?) **atV* or *a(V)* < (syncopated) **atV* (both briefly entertained at Kaufman 1982: 157 n. 56), neither of which has clear parallels elsewhere. It is reasonable to conclude, then, that f.s. absolute {h} disallows the preservation of final short vowels (thus already Friedrich 1922: 10–11; Garr 1985: 62), which in turn disallows Kaufman's consistent orthographic hypothesis of {w/y} occurring for **ū*/**ī* only in open syllables, which in turn disallows any certainty that the root of {mld} and {yld} is geminate rather than II-w/y. (Yun [2008: 163] also addresses Kaufman's conclusion but writes only that 'the completely consistent orthographic representation of the long vowels, especially in the medial position, is beyond our expectation in the Old Aramaic inscriptions'. But Kaufman's detailed and plausible line of thought, which would allow for consistent vocalic orthography in this inscription, demands more thorough engagement.)

⁸ I discuss in n. 5, above, the development of the C Infinitive in Aramaic, with **baqtVl(at)* developed in some dialects to **aqṭVl(at)* and in others replaced by the *m*-prefixed infinitival base *maqṭālat/ūt*. Similar replacements occurred in the G (*qaṭāl* > *miqṭal*) and D stems (*qaṭṭāl* > *mVqaṭṭāl*), the former almost exclusively by the Achaemenid period (Folmer 1995: 189). The timing and localization of the D- and C-stem replacements are more complicated, beginning with variable realization in the Achaemenid texts (Folmer 1995: 190–8).

The significant point at present is that the Tell Fekheriyeh inscription preserves the only likely pre-700 BCE G *miqṭal* Infinitives (e.g. Fales and Grassi 2016: 48; Quick 2016: 423 n. 40; Yun 2008: 370–4; Martínez Borobio 2003: 80; Abou Assaf, Bordreuil and Millard 1982: 55; Kaufman 1982: 151). The regularity of the morphology in ll. 7–10 (see below) and, in particular, the absence of a syntactically non-infinitival *m*-preformative nominal instantiation of √lqh elsewhere in Aramaic precludes analysis of these as non-infinitival verbal nouns of variable or uncertain nominal base (esp. Muraoka 1984: 98–100). Regarding the morphological regularity, the sequence of ll. 7–10 is made up mainly of (a) roots expected on contextual grounds to be G-stem and showing {m} prefixed forms—{lmšm'} and {lmlqh}—and (b) roots expected on contextual grounds to be D-stem and not showing this prefix (therefore likely *qaṭṭāl*)—{lhyy}, {lkbr}, {lšlm} (3 times) (Muraoka 1984: 99; Kaufman 1982: 165–6; cf. Gropp and Lewis 1985: 49). The difficult cases are thus {lmld} and {lm'rk} in the phrase {wlm'rk ywmwh}, either G 'for the being long of his days', as has been generally argued (e.g. Fales and Grassi 2016: 75; Yun 2008: 159–60; Martínez Borobio 2003: 204; Lipiński 1994: 58; Andersen and Freedman 1988: 20; Gropp and Lewis 1985: 49; Muraoka 1984: 98; Zadok 1982: 122; Abou Assaf, Bordreuil and Millard 1982: 24, 31, followed by all reviewers) or, as I think more likely from parallel use of √'rk C elsewhere in early Aramaic (e.g. Nerab 2:3 [= *KAI* 226]) and the syntax of all parallel clauses here as including a direct object, C 'for lengthening his days'. Thus it would appear that *both* the G and the C infinitives of the Tell Fekheriyeh 'dialect' could be realized with a *m*-preformative (as *miqṭal* and *maqṭāl*?). At the same time, *√l(-)ḏ (see below) appears to have similar semantics in the G and C stems. Therefore, one can determine neither from

3.m.s., rather than C PC 3.m.s., since both occurrences lack any {h} after the verbal preformative.⁹

One thus has in the Sefire and Tell Fekheriyeh texts the following set of verbs from either √l(-)d or √ldd:

Stem	Conjugation	Orthography	Locus/loci
G	PC	yld	Tell Fekh 11 Tell Fekh 16
	Impv	ld	Sefire IIC:9
	Inf	ld	Sefire IIC:6
C	PC	'hld	Sefire IC:18
	Inf	hldt	Sefire IIC:2
G or C	Inf	mld	Tell Fekh 9

Looking at only the Sefire treaties and without recourse to etymology, one would simply extrapolate the semantics of the verbal instantiations from their contexts. But since Tell Fekheriyeh is a bilingual Aramaic/Neo-Assyrian Akkadian text, its addition provides the benefit of a parallel Akkadian text that can assist in establishing the semantics of each lexeme and total clause. For the clauses quoted above, the parallels are, respectively:

{⁽¹²⁾ ana **ZI-ah** GIG / ⁽¹³⁾ šá SU-šú}

ana *nasāh* *murši* ša *zumrišu*

‘for **removing** sickness from his body’

{⁽¹⁶⁾ ma-nu šá šu-mi / ⁽¹⁷⁾ ú-na-ka-ru}

mannu ša *šumī* *unakkaru*

‘whoever **removes** my name’

{⁽²⁶⁾ ma-nu šá šu-mi TA lib-bi / ⁽²⁷⁾ ú-nu-te šá É ^dIŠKUR EN-ia
i-pa-ši-tu-ni}

mannu ša *šumī* *issu libbi unūte* ša *bīt Adad bēliya ipaššituni*

morphology nor from expected semantics the stem of {mld} in Tell Fekheriyeh 9. I have retained this uncertainty in the chart below.

⁹ One expects the presence of {h} for retained *h in such forms (e.g. Degen 1969: 66 n. 46; Garr 1985: 55), but it is true that there are a few possible examples of *h*-syncope in the Old Aramaic C PC, even in Sefire (e.g. Sefire III:3 {yskr}, III:17 {y'brnh} and IA:39 {y'r} (twice) (see Fitzmyer 1995: 195; Martínez Borobio 2003: 70–1). At Zincirli, Tropper (1993: 183, 219) discerns five instances of C PC *h* syncope. For the development of this syncope in later Aramaic, see Folmer 1995: 123–33. Thus one cannot be *certain* that {yld} is G rather than C—especially since the semantics of the two stems appear to be similar for this root — but it is likely in view of prevailing trends in early Aramaic orthography.

'whoever **removes** my name from upon the vessels of the house of Adad, my lord.'

From these Akkadian parallels, the semantics of the Aramaic verb, if not its etymology, become clearer: it should have a range corresponding with some semantic field shared by Akkadian *nasāhu*, *nakāru* D and *pašātu*. The verb *nasāhu* is commonly used for removals of all types (*CAD* N.2 [1980] 1–10; *AHw* 749–51). Similarly, *nakāru* D (i.e. *nukkuru*) is very well attested for 'to discard an object (tablet, stela, etc.) [...] to remove an inscription' (*CAD* N.1 [1980] 159b, 166–7; *AHw* 719–20). The marginally more specific *pašātu* is restricted to particular modes of removal, especially effacement and erasure, often of names in inscriptions (*CAD* P [2005] 249–51; *AHw* 844).

The semantics 'to remove' — perhaps particularly by erasure or other effacement — are thus highly likely for the Aramaic verbs written with {()ld()} paralleling these Akkadian verbs. And yet, there is still no solid evidence as to what the root of these verbs is,¹⁰ nor has it yet been considered whether there are any cognate lexemes that might help ground in etymological considerations the semantics reached above.

¹⁰ A number of scholars have, indeed, asserted that the verbs are derivatives of a particular root, but do not provide any rationale for this assertion. The following scholars claim the Tell Fekheriyeh and/or Sefire forms to be from √l(-)d without explicit reasoning: Greenfield 1968: 241; Gibson 1975: 43; Abou Assaf, Bordreuil and Millard 1982: 32, 52 (with minimal discussion and reference only to Fitzmyer 1967: 76 on Sefire; none of the reviews of this volume addressed this verb); Cathcart 1996: 141–2; 2013: 249; Martínez Borobio 2003: 102–5, 205, 207, 331, 342, 344; Baranowski 2012: 175; Fales and Grassi 2016: 75, 111, 112; and Quick 2018: 146. The verb is filed as 'lwd' in Hoftijzer and Jongeling (1995: 568–9), with typically extensive citation of previous scholarship but minimal etymological and morphological discussion. Gropp and Lewis (1985: 50) explain their preference for √lyd over √lwd — the latter are claimed to be 'almost exclusively process or intransitive in meaning' (cf. also Yun 2008: 163) — but not their preference for a II-w/y over a geminate root.

From the vocalizations *walamallad*, *yal(l)id*, and *yalid*, Andersen and Freedman (1988: 11) prefer √ldd, but they do not defend this and have a longer discussion at *ibid.*: 25 where they suggest the possibility of a 'simple biconsonantal, rather than a "hollow" root' given the absence of long vowel representation. As most will be aware, scholars generally suggest II-weak verbs to have been originally triconsonantal, with syncopated glides (Brockelmann 1908: 607–8 [§270 B]; recently Suchard 2016) or to have had a vocalic internal element *ū/u or *ī/i (e.g. GKC 194 n. 1 [§72a]). *Pace* Andersen and Freedman, there is no significant morphological reason to suppose distinct classes of 'hollow' and 'simple biconsonantal' roots, so that the above assertion merely introduces an unproven category into the discussion.

It has already been noted that the orthographies admit derivation from either a II-weak or a geminate verb. When one searches related languages for $\sqrt{\text{L}}(-)\text{d}$ and $\sqrt{\text{Ldd}}$, however, one finds only verbs that are more distant semantically and therefore less likely cognates.¹¹ Certain less defensible etymologies have also been mentioned in the literature.¹² By far the most plausible line of thought involves expanding

¹¹ There is the possibility that Semitic * $\sqrt{\text{L}}(-)\text{d}$ and * $\sqrt{\text{L}}(-)\text{d}$ are a root pair, with two constituents exhibiting similar phonology and semantics, to the extent that substantial orthographical, morphological and semantic overlap (or ‘contamination’) might have occurred. One likely example of such overlap with the * d and * d phonemes is the pair * $\sqrt{\text{ndr}}$ and * $\sqrt{\text{ndr}}$, both ‘to vow’ or similar, with the latter attested solely in BH נדר (but also נדר) and Phoenician $\sqrt{\text{ndr}}$, with nominal instantiations (Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 717–19). In the present case, * $\sqrt{\text{L}}(-)\text{d}$ is sufficiently poorly attested, especially in West Semitic of the relevant chronological and geographical ranges, that invocation of such a root for the present {(l)d()} orthographies seems less compelling than the hypothesis of early * $\text{d} > \text{d}$ shift. Outside the {(l)d()} orthographies considered here, one finds only rare Akkadian *lādu* as evidence for * $\sqrt{\text{L}}(-)\text{d}$ and only semantically distant Arabic *ladda* as evidence for * $\sqrt{\text{Ldd}}$. Akkadian *lādu* ‘to bend, to be shamed(?)’ (CAD L [1973] 36) is mentioned — as is noted below in n. 24 — as one element of a possible cognate set by Greenfield and Shaffer (1983: 114) and Lipiński (1994: 59), but it is not very common even in Akkadian, it occurs exclusively in the G stem and it almost always denotes physical bending downwards (by people, trees, etc.); the exception occurs in an omen (KAR 440:r4), predicated of the *padānu* ‘path’. Arabic *ladda* ‘to be violent, esp. in argument’ (e.g. Lane 1863–93: 2656) is even more distant in semantic and chronological terms. One can imagine a path by which shifting semantics might allow this Arabic and the present Aramaic verbs to be cognate, but the connection seems tenuous.

Within Northwest Semitic, Sperling (1988: 329 = 2017: 77) has claimed the occurrence of {l|dm} in the Phoenician text of Kulamuwa (KAI 24:6); he says this is ‘a suffixed infinitive of *lwd* “eradicate” and translates ‘to their extirpation’ (1988: 324 = 2017: 71). The sense of this verb is derived from the Aramaic verbs under consideration in the present paper. Tropper (1993: 35), however, reads Sperling’s {d} as {h}, thus {l|h’m} ‘for battle’ (less commonly ‘to consume [it, Kulamuwa’s father’s kingdom]’); many others already assumed a restoration {h} and analysed similarly (e.g. Donner and Röllig 1968: 32; Gibson 1982: 34, 36). The relief-carved grapheme itself is now obliterated, but one can still see the square outline where it formerly stood (autopsy; Tropper 1993: 35). Photos of the stele from before it suffered damage in World War II (e.g. Donner and Röllig 1969: pl. 27) appear to show the upper and middle horizontals of the {h} and its rightmost vertical; the relative angles and positions of all these excludes reading as {d}. Sperling’s reading and the putative Phoenician cognate of Aramaic $\sqrt{\text{L}}(-)\text{d}$ are therefore spurious.

¹² In addition to the more straightforward cognate sets, Kaufman (1982: 156 n. 52) cites personal communication from F. Rosenthal as suggesting a cognate in ‘Arabic and Hebrew *rd* “to repel?” The geminate root $\sqrt{\text{rdd}}$ is indeed well attested in classical Arabic (as *radda* ‘turn back’, e.g. Lane 1863–93: 1061–2) and biblical Hebrew (as רדד ‘drive back’, e.g. HALOT 1189), as also in Akkadian *radādu* ‘to pursue’ (CAD R [1999] 58–9). The real question, though, is whether one can justify

the etymological possibilities to allow an Old Aramaic orthographic rarity: the representation of **ḏ* by {d} (see below). Reflexes of a root *√lḏ again yield only semantically unlikely cognates, but *√l(-)ḏ is more promising, mostly due to the existence of a biblical Hebrew verb לרץ,¹³ attested in the following passages, mostly in the book of Proverbs:

Qal

Prov. 3:21

בְּנִי אַל-יִלְּזוּ מֵעֵינֶיךָ נֹצֵר תִּשְׁיָה וּמִזְמָה:

‘My son, may they not **depart** from your eyes. Guard competence and discretion.’¹⁴

Niphal

Isa. 30:12

לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל יֶעַן מָאַסְכֶּם בְּדַבָּר הַזֶּה וּתְבַטְחוּ בַעֲשֶׂק וּנְלִיזוּ וְתִשָּׁעֲנוּ עָלָיו:

‘Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel: ‘Because of your having rejected¹⁵ this word, you trusted in a **per-verse** oppressor and relied on him.’¹⁶

**r* > *l* in early Aramaic, especially in lexeme-initial position. There is no condition common to all tokens that could trigger assimilation or dissimilation, so one must reckon with an *ad hoc* sound shift in this lexeme alone. A similar spontaneous shift is documented for modern Arabic by Brockelmann (1908: 137), but one has trouble seeing how this distant parallel would be more compelling than the hypothesis of early {d} for **ḏ*, which is well attested already in only marginally later Aramaic.

¹³ Discussions of לרץ in the standard dictionaries of biblical Hebrew are BDB 531; *TDOT* VII.478–9 (Ringgren 1995 [1982–4]); *HALOT* 522b; *DCH* IV.523–4; *Gesenius*¹⁸ 600 (Meyer and Donner 2013). Other than in the commentaries and in discussions of the Aramaic verb under consideration in this paper, I am not aware of any additional lexicographical scholarship on לרץ.

¹⁴ The subject of the verb is unclear within this verse and in its broader context. Some assume a transposition of v. 21a and v. 21b (Toy 1904: 73–4; Whybray 1994: 70). Others assume for the first half of the verse an independent clause with a subject in vv. 19–20 (e.g. Waltke 2004: 252 n. 15) or simply suggest an implied subject, such as דְּבָרִים ‘words’ (e.g. Fox 2000: 162–3). Prov. 4:21 is very similar, but the verb in question has a clear subject in the preceding verse; see below.

¹⁵ This gerund translation of יֶעַן + infinitive construct is preferred since it preserves a reflection of the Hebrew syntax including a nominal and can be differentiated in understanding and translation from constructions with יֶעַן אֲשֶׁר + suffix-conjugation (cf. for this passage e.g. GKC §114d; Blenkinsopp 2000: 414).

¹⁶ Given the singular pronominal suffix of עָלָיו, it is reasonable to construe עֲשֶׂק וּנְלִיזוּ as meristic (or, more simplistically, to imply that the conjunction is erroneous, e.g. Blenkinsopp 2000: 414–15).

Prov. 2:15

אֲשֶׁר אָרַחֲתֵיהֶם עֲקָשִׁים וְנִלְוִים בְּמַעֲגֻלֹתָם:
 ‘(...) whose paths are crooked, and who are **twisted** in
 their tracks.’¹⁷

Prov. 3:32

כִּי תוֹעֵבֶת יְהוָה נִלְוֹ וְאַתִּי־יִשְׁרִים סוּדּוֹ:
 ‘A **twisted one** is an abomination to Yahweh, but his
 communion is with the upright.’¹⁸

Prov. 14:2

הוֹלֵךְ בִּישְׁרוֹ יֵרָא יְהוָה וְנִלְוֹ דְרָכָיו בּוֹהֶוּ:
 ‘The one walking in uprightness is a fearer of Yahweh,
 but one whose ways are **twisted**¹⁹ despises him.’

Hiphil

Prov. 4:21

אֶל־יִלְיוֹן²⁰ מַעֲיִינָה שְׁמֶרֶם בְּתוֹךְ לִבְכָּה:

¹⁷ Thus or similarly, with the understanding that the relative clause extends to the end of the verse, Waltke 2004: 215; Fox 2000: 117; Pardee 1988: 70. Many others assume that the preposition ב was inserted or is somehow non-essential, but this is arbitrary (cf. Toy 1904: 44; Murphy 1998: 13, without comment).

¹⁸ Thus or similarly Waltke 2004: 254; Fox 2000: 167; Murphy 1998: 23; Whybray 1994: 73; McKane 1970: 300–1; Toy 1904: 79–80.

¹⁹ This is certainly of the type of bound phrases in which the *nomen rectum* is characterized by its *nomen regens* with adjectival sense, called by GKC (§128x–y [this passage cited]) and by Waltke and O’Connor (1990: 151 [§9.5.3c]) the epexegetical genitive. The employment of semantically passive nominals — including the Niphal participle, as here — as *nomen regens* in these constructions is catalogued by GKC §116k (this passage cited).

²⁰ The Hiphil prefix-conjugation (*inter alia*) of II-w/y roots (also geminate roots) with gemination of R₁ is generally understood to involve either metathesis of quantity, i.e. *yahaliz > *yāliz > *yaliz > yalliz (Bauer and Leander 1922: 399–400 [§56i]; this verb cited), and/or analogy to I-n roots (Joüon and Muraoka 2006: 210 [§82h]). Since this is the majority morphology for geminate roots in Aramaic (e.g. for Syriac Nöldeke 1880: 116–17 [§178c]), this is often described as an Aramaizing morphology (e.g. GKC §72ee [this verb cited]). There is, however, no agreement as to whether the morphology is inherited from the parent of both languages or represents morphological borrowing from one to the other — usually understood to be from Aramaic to Hebrew (e.g. Blau 2010: 258; Joüon and Muraoka 2006: 202 [§80p], 209–10 [§82h]). There is no need to suggest that the Hiphil here is an error for Qal, especially since the Aramaic cognate argued in this paper shows clear G/C alternation with, it appears, more or less identical semantics for both stems (cf. Fox 2000: 184–5). The syntactic understanding adopted here is similar or identical to that of e.g. Waltke 2004: 293; Fox 2000: 184–5; Murphy 1998: 25; Whybray 1994: 81; Toy 1904: 96–7.

'May they not **depart** from your sight. Keep them in your heart.'

A *hapax legomenon* noun לָזוֹת is also attested in Prov. 4:24: הָסֵר מִמֶּךָ עֲקָשׁוֹת פִּה וּלְזוֹת שְׁפָתַיִם הִרְחַק מִמֶּךָ: 'Remove crookedness of mouth from yourself. Distance yourself from **perversion** of lips.'²¹ The semantics of the non-participial verbal instantiations at Prov. 3:21 (Qal) and 4:21 (Hiphil) are — despite minor syntactic difficulties — more determined by context and assist in establishing those of both this *-ut* abstract nominal and the group of Niphal participles cited above. Both seem to designate contextually undesirable movement away. When such movement is envisioned as counterposed to the deity, Yahweh, it becomes turning aside or, more metaphorically, perversion (Ringgren 1995: 479).²²

The root לִר' continues to occur in Ben Sira, Qumran (1QH^a XIII:26 [ed. DJD 40: 168, 180, 361–2]; 4Q166 I:5 [= 4QpHos^a; ed. DJD 5: 31]; 4Q424 frg.1:9^{2x} [ed. DJD 36: 336, 340]), Rabbinic (rare, Jastrow 1903: 696), and further postbiblical Hebrew, generally with the semantics 'turn away' and somewhat frequently in the Niphal participial form נִלְוֹ 'perverse' (Ben Yehuda 1959: 2637–8; Even-Shoshan 1986: 588). Likely cognates of Hebrew לִר' are Arabic *lāda* 'to seek refuge, shelter, sanctuary, asylum, in a th., to take flight, run away, to a th., to flee to, into, a th.' (Ullmann 1999 [WKAS II.28]: 1730–47) and Ge'ez ላሠ *loza* 'twist, wrap around, deviate from the road' (Leslau 1987 [CDG]: 322). The latter is, of course, closer semantically to its Hebrew cognate, but all are mainly or often verbs of motion. Furthermore, all show the expected reflex of a proto-(West) Semitic root * $\sqrt{L(-)}$ 'to move away'.²³

The morphology and semantics of the Hebrew verb ḥl(-)z and its cognates do thus appear close enough to those of the Old Aramaic orthographies with {()ld()} that one can reasonably hypothesize the

²¹ Similarly e.g. Waltke 2004: 293; Fox 2000: 184; Murphy 1998: 25; Whybray 1994: 82; Toy 1904: 96–7.

²² Within biblical Hebrew, both סִרָּג (e.g. Zeph. 1:6) and סִרָּר (e.g. Exod. 32:8) are among roots that show similar metaphorical extensions, from 'turn aside' to 'turn aside from particularly the good, e.g. Yahweh or his laws [etc.]'.

²³ This gloss for the proto-(West) Semitic root is suggested on the basis of the hypothesis that 'seek refuge' and 'twist' developed secondarily from basic movement semantics. Some element of movement is common to cognates in all languages, and the various results or methods of such movement more plausibly developed divergently than converged on 'move away'.

verbs to be cognates. Indeed, some scholars²⁴ have postulated such a connection. Some of these scholars²⁵ have joined those who refuse derivation from $\sqrt{\text{L}}(-)\text{D}$ ²⁶ in explicitly noting the major difficulty of proto-Semitic * ḏ represented by Aramaic {d} at such an early date (mid-ninth century and late-eighth century for Tell Fekheriyeh and Sefire, respectively). But like the present author, the former group felt the connection too compelling to discard even though it requires the hypothesis of unusual orthography.

The orthography {z} for the reflex of * ḏ is indeed nearly exclusive through at least the sixth century BCE²⁷; this has given rise to the understandable generalization that {z} (and other graphemes for

²⁴ Scholars who have connected the Sefire and/or Tell Fekheriyeh verbs to biblical Hebrew $\sqrt{\text{L}}(-)\text{z}$ are Dupont-Sommer and Starcky 1958: 92–3; Fitzmyer 1961: 208; Donner and Röellig 1968: 258 (cp. *ibid.*: 262–3); and Fitzmyer 1995: 119. Gevirtz (1961: 144 n. 2) seems to assume that biblical Hebrew $\sqrt{\text{L}}(-)\text{z}$ is a different verb from 'Mishnaic Hebrew *lwz* "to slander, to pervert"', but does indeed compare the latter to arrive at 'I will detract' for {hld}. Greenfield and Shaffer (1983: 114) posit a cognate set that includes 'Hebrew *lwz* and Arabic *lāḏa*', as do I, but suggest also Akkadian *lādu* 'to bend' (CAD L [1973] 36), the semantics of which are distant enough that the relationship is doubtful given the phonological difficulty (Akkadian *d* as the reflex of proto-Semitic * ḏ). Lipiński (1994: 59) similarly suggests that '[t]he Aramaic verb *lwd* with *d* corresponds to Akkadian *lādu*, while Arabic *lāḏa* and Hebrew *lwz* are based on a variant with interdental *ḏ*'. The phonetic process by which this 'variant' arose is not explored, nor does Lipiński note that the Akkadian verb is, by its semantics, not a certain cognate, whereas Arabic *lāḏa* and Hebrew *לָזַח* are more likely to be cognates.

²⁵ Koopmans (1962: 58) was the first to explicitly address this problem: 'das ursem. *d*, das im BH ḏ geworden ist, sollte auch im älteren Aram. zu ḏ werden, und erst später im BA usw. zu ṣ ', but he then adduces some additional examples for dental-graphemic representation of proto-Semitic interdental phoneme reflexes in Sefire (see n. 34, below). Fitzmyer (1995: 119) merely calls this possibly 'an interesting case of the early shift of *z* to *d* in the writing attested here'. The problem has also been noted by Stefanovic 1987: 86, 89–90, 124, 152 n. 2, 220; 1992: 73–4, 76 n. 2.

²⁶ Degen (1969: 32 n. 10) writes regarding the Sefire items, 'Eine gemeinsame etymologische Herkunft [for Old Aramaic $\sqrt{\text{L}}(-)\text{d}$ and Hebrew $\sqrt{\text{L}}(-)\text{z}$] ist aber ausgeschlossen, da ein hebr. *z* nur auf ursem. */ḏ/* oder */z/* zurückgehen kann, ein aa. *d* dagegen nur auf */d/*'. Gropp and Lewis (1985: 49) also begin their discussion of {mld} etc. by noting this difficulty. Yun (2008: 162) writes that '[n]umerous attempts have been made to etymologically connect *lml* [...] with known Semitic words, but none seems to be satisfactory'; the reason proposed cognates are unsatisfactory is not, however, explored.

²⁷ Strangely enough, the orthographies discussed here are often omitted without comment in surveys of exceptions to interdental-reflex orthographic norms, e.g. Segert 1964: 119–20 (discussing Sefire itself!); Beyer 1984: 100; 2004: 51; and Gzella 2015: 38–9.

'sibilants') are employed for the reflex of **ḏ* (and the other 'interdental' or dental fricative phonemes) throughout 'Old Aramaic', whereas {*d*} (and other graphemes for plosives) are employed throughout 'Imperial Aramaic' and beyond.²⁸ But 'nearly exclusive' is not the same as 'exclusive', and anomalies require attention especially in corpora as tiny as those with which one works in early Northwest Semitic studies. Including Aramaic on tablets²⁹ — which one might expect to reveal vernacular phonology by less formal orthography — the only other likely pre-700 BCE use of {*d*} for **ḏ* occurs in the summary formula of an incantation recently discovered at Zincirli (Sam'al).³⁰ This text concludes with {*mnw d'l'y*} *minū dīlī* 'my incantation' (compare Arslan Tash 2:13 {*mnty kmgl*} 'my incantation, according to the scroll').³¹ The next clear orthography {*d*} for **ḏ* in Aramaic itself is {*ḥdwhy*}, G SC 3.m.p. *√ḥd* (< **√ḥḏ*) + accusative pronomi-

²⁸ The situation for Old Aramaic generally is afforded simplified presentation in Garr 1985: 24–6; Folmer 2011: 133. Folmer (1995: 49–63) is a more detailed discussion of Achaemenid Aramaic, with comparisons to other stages and dialects; at *ibid.*: 62 n. 89, Folmer specifies that she 'ignore[s] the enigmatic verb *lwd* (or perhaps *ldd*)' and refers simply to Kaufman's (1982: 166) analysis (similar brief note at Folmer 2011: 148). {*z*} for **ḏ* in Sefire is documented best by Fitzmyer (1995: 187), with a note of the present problem on the following page. The relevant lexemes are {*zkrn*} 'reminder' (IC:2), {*yzqn*} 'he will be old' (IIC:8; root **√ḏqn*), and {*yzhl*} 'he will fear' (IIC:6; root **√ḏhl*), along with forms of the demonstrative/relative pronoun {*zy*}, {*znh*} and {*z*} (*passim*). In light of possible conditioning factors (see below), it is perhaps notable that all of these {*z*}s occur in root- or word-initial position, and the only token that co-occurs with {*l*} for **l* is separated by another consonant. The use of {*z*} for **ḏ* in Tell Fekheriyeh generally is documented — with no note as to the present problem — by e.g. Abou Assaf, Bordreuil and Millard 1982: 43; Fales 1983: 241; and Greenfield and Shaffer 1985: 50. The relevant lexemes are {*l'hz*} 'may he seize' (l. 19; root **√ḥḏ*) and forms of the demonstrative/relative pronoun {*zy*} (*passim*) and {*z't*} (l. 15). Again, there are no occurrences in which *l* and **ḏ* are separated by merely a vowel.

²⁹ A summary of evidence in Aramaic-script personal names from tablets and seals is available in Kottsieper 2000: 377 n. 44. I agree with the opinion professed there that the PN in AO 25341:7 (= Fales 1986 no. 58) is to be read {*wyr*} rather than {*wyd*} and analysed from **√'(-)r* (Fales 1986: 254, 258) rather than **√'(-)ḏ* (Maraqten 1988: 95, 196).

³⁰ The text was discovered in August 2017, and an edition is forthcoming (Pardee and Richey forthcoming). On palaeographic grounds, it can be dated to the late ninth century. Nevertheless, the text also witnesses a few additional 'developed' orthographies, for which see the forthcoming edition.

³¹ With the exception of {*l'*}, the graphemes are easily legible. See the discussion in the forthcoming edition of the Zincirli text as described in the preceding note. Parallels in Arslan Tash 2:13, throughout the Ugaritic corpus, and even the polar-opposite assertion in many Akkadian incantations — *šiptu ul yattu šipat* DN 'the incantation is *not* mine; it is the incantation of DN' (recent detailed study in Lenzi

nal suffix 3.m.s., in l. 8 of the unprovenanced 'Beirut decree' published by Caquot (1971) and dated palaeographically to c. 600 BCE.³² Contemporary cuneiform writings of Aramaic PNs appear to employ {dV} and {Vd} signs for *ð in most instances,³³ but this does not allow a decision as to whether the phonological shift *ð > d had or had not yet occurred. The writing {d} for the reflex of *ð is widespread in Achaemenid and later Aramaic dialects, but the tradition of writing {z} was 'tenacious', and not only in the complementizer *ðī (Folmer 1995: 49–63). Conversely, it should be noted that dental graphemes for proto-Semitic interdental reflexes do sporadically occur in Old Aramaic. The writing {t} for *θ occurs at least a few times in pre-600 BCE Aramaic, including possibly twice in the Sefire inscriptions themselves.³⁴ One writing {ṭ} for the reflex of *ṣ (the glottalized inter-

2010) — compels this or a very similar interpretation, even if the orthography {d} for *ð is quite unusual.

³² The inscription was seen on the Beirut antiquities market and photographed and squeezed by H. Seyrig (with D. Sourdel) in 1953 (Caquot 1971: 9; Teixidor 1972: 437). The squeeze resides in the Institut français d'archéologie de Beyrouth (Caquot 1971: 9; Teixidor 1972: 437), but the whereabouts of the actual text are unknown. A bibliography to 1978 is compiled in Fitzmyer and Kaufman 1992: 25. Since then, the major contributions are Wesselius 1995; Kottsieper 2000; and Bhayro 2008. The text is sometimes referred to as *KAI* 317 (from inclusion of a transliteration in the fifth edition of this compendium). The reading of this particular verb is confirmed by Kottsieper (2000: 375).

³³ There is still no reference work that systematically collects Aramaic names in cuneiform and analyses them for their linguistic content. (B.J. Simonson is currently compiling 'An Aramaic Onomasticon of Syro-Mesopotamian Texts and Inscriptions' [presentation at the SBL Annual Meeting, Boston, November 18, 2017].) This gap has resulted in polar opposite assertions regarding transcription norms, e.g. on the one hand Lipiński's (2010: 209) documentation of cuneiform {d} as usual for *ð in the Ma'lānā tablet corpus versus Pitard's (1987: 105) unsubstantiated claim that 'in standard Akkadian transcription, etymological *d* was normally written with *z*'. Without undertaking an exhaustive study, it does seem easier to find data that support Lipiński's already better documented assertion. For example, if one looks at the *Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* entry for 'Adda-idri' (Schwemer 1998: 46–7), one finds only one of dozens of spellings of this name with a {z}-sign: {l10-iz-ru} (KB 4 124:2, 12, dated 679 BCE); all others cited, for at least ten individuals, use {id}.

³⁴ I have surveyed these recently in exploring the likelihood of analysing BM E48341 {trztñ} as including a reflex of the lexeme *θawr 'bull': (1.) Sefire IA:32 {btñ} 'snake' (< *baθn; e.g. Fitzmyer 1995: 89, 120, 188, but complex etymology and word division); (2.) Sefire IC:24 {yrt} 'he will inherit', G PC 3.m.s. *√yrθ (e.g. Fitzmyer 1995: 89, 120, 188, but perhaps the result of dissimilation across word boundaries); (3.) Aššur Ostrakon (= *KAI* 233; c. 650 BCE) 11 {yhtb} 'he will (cause to) return', C PC 3.m.s. *√θ(-)b (Fitzmyer 1995: 188); and (4.) ND 1989/158 (= IM 115432; Nimrud Royal Tomb II duck weight) {štt} 'one-sixth' < *šudθat

dental) is clear in {lnṭr} in l. 2 of the Pazuzu statuette inscription (DeGrado and Richey 2019; preliminarily Moorey 1965).³⁵ The main point to be made here is that 'unexpected' orthographies for interdental reflexes are cropping up with surprising regularity as the early Aramaic corpus expands, and our paradigms for understanding the phonetic and orthographic development of the early dialects need to expand accordingly.

It is understandable that scholars have avoided forwarding hypotheses that assume chronologically unusual orthography. Even if there are no better options available, one opens oneself up to charges of cavalier disregard for well-established scientific controls. It will have been clear above, though, that I regard the case for a cognate relationship between Old Aramaic {(l)d()} verbs and Hebrew לִרְצֹא to be very well-grounded despite the orthographic deviance this case introduces. There is a significant difference between hypothesizing orthographies that are *never* attested — e.g. the claim that Ugaritic {d} can represent the reflex of *s₂ or of *θ, which I have recently disputed (Richey 2017: 154–71) — and those that were or will be normal in other phases or dialects of a given language. It is, as has been noted already above, demonstrable that in various post-600 BCE Aramaic dialects, the reflex of *ð came to be represented by {d}. The question is simply whether the earliest attestation of such an orthography is from c. 600 BCE (the Beirut decree) or from c. 850 BCE (the Tell Fekheriyeh inscription).

In general, orthographies develop gradually and constitute uniform representation of all phonemes less often than one might imagine. In particular, when a phonemic merger occurs — as in the case of *ð and *d > d in early Aramaic — the orthographic representation of both phoneme reflexes also develops gradually. Russ (1986: 171) articulates this in a Germanic context:

The first sign of a phonemic merger is that two signs, which hitherto have been kept carefully apart, become used wrongly, e.g. *das* is written for MHG [Middle High German] *daz*, and *allez* for MHG *alles* [...]. At the beginning of the orthographic recognition of a merger, this may

(Al-Rawi 2008: 127–30). The writing {t} for the reflex of *θ becomes even more common than {d} for *ð in Achaemenid and later Aramaic (Folmer 1995: 70–4).

³⁵ Deir Alla 1:7 {'tm} (van der Kooij 1976: 106; 1991: 260) is sometimes interpreted as a reflex of *√'zm 'to be mighty', but others read the {t} instead as {l}, thus the common lexeme {'lm} (e.g. Hackett 1984: 44). Of course, the dialect of this text is also much disputed, so that this could be of minimal importance for a discussion of interdental reflexes in 'Aramaic' proper.

not happen very frequently and then such variations, or ‘slips’, are often called occasional spellings.³⁶

In the present case, the phonetic process is one of progressive defricativization of * δ , leading gradually to phonemic identity with the reflex of * d , i.e. still [d]. The phonetic process was certainly gradual. Not everyone defricativized their [ð] at exactly the same moment, nor did every individual, especially in the transitional period, routinely produce *only* [ð] or [d] for the reflex of * δ , nor was every lexeme routinely realized as having *only* [ð] or [d].³⁷

The possibility of a phonological conditioning factor here is worth mentioning: from typological linguistic evidence, it is possible that, for all or many speakers, the phoneme * δ passed through a period of predominant realization as a voiced dental approximant [ð̞]. Many interdental phonemes exhibit such an allophone, and many similar phonetic shifts exhibit such an approximant stage.³⁸ The phonemes [ð̞] and [l] are, in turn, proximate enough that the former is occasionally attested as an allophone of the latter.³⁹ In a study of dental fricative developments in Old Frisian, Laker (2017: 255 and n. 23) observed that ‘[dental fricatives] are more prone to change (i.e.

³⁶ This orthographic fact and its implications for the study of historical phonology are also noted by e.g. Penzl (1987: 229), who summarizes ‘Zeichenwandel und Phonemwandel sind nicht immer gleichzeitig und parallel’. For the gradual and geographically and dialect-conditioned dental fricative shifts in Germanic, see Laker (2014: 264–8) and the following notes.

³⁷ Dental fricatives are not particularly common in world languages, as documented by Maddieson’s (2008) broad survey, ‘Dental or alveolar non-sibilant fricatives are just as rare as labial-velar plosives, occurring in just 43 (or 7.6%) of the languages surveyed’. The development of the phonemes [ð] and [θ] is, however, well-known from various historical phases of the Germanic languages (recent overviews in Laker 2017; 2014). Dutch represents a particularly close case to that considered here in that proto-Germanic * θ and * δ merged with inherited * d as d in that language (and other Low Franconian dialects). In Germanic, the gradual nature of the phonological development and its variable representation in orthography is well documented by manuscript evidence over hundreds of years from dozens of scribal centres; even in speaking of the ‘quite rapid’ merger in Dutch, Laker (2014: 265–6) is referring to a phonetic and lagging orthographic change over the entirety of the twelfth century CE.

³⁸ Olson et al. 2010: 211–12 is a useful catalogue of the dental fricatives and the ways in which they tend to develop. It is notable that many occurrences of the dental approximant are allophonic developments of original [ð̞]. Velupillai (2012: 75) notes briefly the development [ð̞] > [ð] in California English: ‘the tongue blade moves towards the upper teeth without closing off the air passage’.

³⁹ See the preceding note. Olson et al. (2010: 208) draw special attention to the Austronesian language Kagayanen (Philippines) in this respect.

changed earlier) when next to /l/ than when next to /r/, /m/; he observes that this is in agreement with the general theory of consonantal hierarchy (ibid.).⁴⁰ The conditioning factor in the Aramaic lexemes including {()ld() } and in {d'l'y} of the new text from Zincirli might thus have been the presence of [l], the alveolar approximant. The typological comparanda suggest that its approximant nature might have triggered dissimilation of the interdental fricative (now approximant?) [ḏ] (or now [ḏ]?). Because, however, the data are so sparse and such a condition does not straightforwardly account for *all* environments in which a dental fricative reflex and *l* co-occur,⁴¹ one must conceptualize even possible *l*-dissimilation as itself both phonologically variable and variably represented in orthography, rather than as a hard and fast 'rule' operative across Aramaic of a given period. The point remains that it makes good cross-linguistic sense for early writers of Aramaic to be representing complex phonological processes with some variability, even if one can trace a possible phonotactic rationale for which types of lexemes show {d} for *ḏ first.

The present study does not allow one to say absolutely whether the phonemic merger of *ḏ and *d had occurred (a) in some locales, (b) for some speakers, (c) in some lexemes, or some combination of these. It is possible that the orthography of *√l(-)ḏ as containing {d} was fixed even in areas within which and for speakers for which the shift [ḏ] > [d] had not yet occurred. The similarity of various curses — especially the futility curses (maximal effort for minimal gain) — in the Tell Fekheriyeh, Bukan and Sefire inscriptions has suggested to many that each is the product of a broad 'Aramaic curse tradition' (recently Quick 2018: 68–70, 106). One can imagine various mechanisms for the spread of this tradition, both written and oral, the former perhaps including scroll or tablet copies made from the oldest monuments or less permanent drafts on which these themselves were

⁴⁰ In a previous study, Laker (2014: 270) had observed that innovative {t} and {d} spellings initially 'mainly appear in specific phonetic environments, especially adjacent to /r/', i.e. the alveolar approximant.

⁴¹ None of the orthographies of {z} for *ḏ in Sefire, Tell Fekheriyeh (for these see n. 28), or elsewhere in early Aramaic are adjacent to {l} / (i.e. separated by only a vocalic element). The only lexeme in which {z} for {ḏ} and {l} co-occur are forms of *√ḏhl 'to fear' in Zakkur A:13 (= *KAI* 202; {l t'z'h} 'do not fear') and Sefire IIC:6 ({yzhl} 'he will fear'). But the situation of {š} for *θ is less straightforward. The obvious co-occurrence of {l} and {š} for *θ twice (!) in {šlšn} *θalāθīn 'thirty' in the Barrakib fragment *KAI* 219:3' (Tropper 1993: 148) speaks against the straightforward formulation of a condition that would account for both dental fricatives and function across Aramaic at a given point in time.

based. Any written mode of transmission might thus have involved stereotyped Aramaic orthography, perhaps once representative of a given city dialect but less so as time went on and/or as traditions spread away from the source. This introduces the additional broad variable of text transmission and reminds that even when one possesses excavated epigraphic material, this epigraphic material is not an uncomplicated witness to the sounds and speech of a particular city in a particular year.

If one takes a linguistic or dialectal perspective, the core argument advanced above constitutes further illustration of the purely heuristic nature of formulations that divide ‘Old Aramaic’ from later varieties of the language. A major feature of ‘Old Aramaic’ — by which is generally meant the heterogeneous varieties of the language that obtain pre-700 BCE, usually with the exception of ‘Sam’alian’⁴² — over against ‘Imperial Aramaic’ — by which is generally meant the post-600 BCE (sic) epistolary and other documents concentrated in Egypt — involves the orthography of the interdental reflexes: usually *ḏ as {z} (‘Old’) versus {d} (‘Imperial’), *θ as {š} (‘Old’) versus {t} (‘Imperial’), and *z̥ as {š} (‘Old’) versus {t} (‘Imperial’).⁴³ Folmer (1995: 49–74) has already demonstrated that the degree of orthographic variation visible in Achaemenid-period Aramaic severely complicates the simplistic formulation. One certainly cannot assume that the interdental reflexes were *always* written with the dental graphemes, and a few distributions suggest that particular dialects observed phonemic mergers long before others did (e.g. Folmer 1995: 62) or that mergers occurred in some phonetic environments before others (e.g. Folmer 1995: 60–1, 68). Just as one cannot assume the presence of *only* developed orthographies in Achaemenid-period (and later) Aramaic, one cannot assume the absence of *any* developed orthographies in early (pre-700 BCE) Aramaic. From an empirical perspective, there are too many troubling dissensions from the majority orthographies (see above), and from a typological perspective, languages and orthographical traditions have proven unlikely to maintain strict phoneme-grapheme correspondence. I would stress that I agree it often makes

⁴² This dialect is probably confined to the two lengthy texts, the so-called Panamuwa (KAI 214) and Hadad (KAI 215) inscriptions, from the Sam’alian necropolis at Gercin. The Ördekburnu inscription (Lemaire and Sass 2013) is perhaps to be added.

⁴³ To these are usually added the description of orthography for the glottalized lateral *ḏ̥ as progressing from {q} (‘Old’) to {t} (‘Imperial’). There are a few problems with the simplistic formulation, e.g. the odd {šmrg} at Panamuwa 16, possibly for a reflex of *√mrd̥ ‘to be ill’ (e.g. Tropper 1993: 170).

good sense to present the system as, in general, characterized by interdental graphemes in ‘Old Aramaic’ versus dental graphemes in ‘Imperial Aramaic’, and many scholars have defensibly and usefully done just this.⁴⁴ But when it comes to the evaluation of difficult lexemes, the sub-hypothesis of a precocious or archaic orthography cannot be allowed immediately to disqualify a broader etymological hypothesis. The linguistic situation in pre-700 BCE Syria and western Mesopotamia is too complex for the presumption of impermeable chronological and geographical boundaries or of universal or abrupt phonetic and orthographical processes.⁴⁵

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⁴⁴ For such summary and introductory presentations, see e.g. Segert 1997: 118–19; Fales 2011: 566; Folmer 2011: 133–4, which is actually quite detailed; and Gzella 2014: 77, 79–81. Summary statements like ‘in OA [Old Aramaic] (a) the interdental /ð/, /θ/, and /ʔ/ have not yet merged with the dentals’ (Folmer 2011: 133) are thus defensible conclusions given the majority of available data and constitute useful presentations for learners and general audiences.

⁴⁵ I would like to thank Andrew Burlingame, Rebecca Hasselbach-Andee and Dennis Pardee for their suggestions and corrections on earlier drafts of this paper, as well as Jessie DeGrado for ongoing conversation on this and related matters.

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