



Review

Reviewed Work(s): A Sketch of Neo-Assyrian Grammar by Jaakko Hmeen-Anttila

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the second millennium. As he points out (p. 2), this was not the first international system, but rather the earliest for which we possess sufficient material for detailed study. This thorough examination of that system will be of great value both to historians of the ancient Near East and Egypt, and to scholars and theorists of international relations.

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A Sketch of Neo-Assyrian Grammar. By JAAKKO HÄMEEN-ANTTILA. State Archives of Assyria Studies, vol. 13. Helsinki: THE NEO-ASSYRIAN TEXT CORPUS PROJECT, 2000. Pp. xiv + 174. \$32.50 (paper).

It is in the nature of a “sketch” to present a basic overview of essential facts, and its merits are generally gauged on the basis of clarity and accuracy. The particular *Sketch* here under review accomplishes these goals very well, and even exceeds them in one important respect: the documentation offered in support is far richer than one might normally expect for such an endeavor. For each heading, a good collection of examples is provided, with full references, which gives a special value to the work. The citations are drawn primarily from the letters of the Sargonid period, and to give an idea of the wealth of documentation offered, one may consider the following figures: 552 references from *States Archives of Assyria*, vol. 1; 356 from SAA 10; 292 from SAA 5; and 210 from R. Harper, *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters* (Chicago 1892–1914) (a title that is curiously omitted from the bibliography). Extensive indices and paradigms make the book all the more useful.

First completed in 1987 as a master’s thesis, the manuscript was revised on several occasions. The process resulted in a certain unevenness, which the author himself stresses in the foreword—for instance, in the imbalance of the various sections. But the primary aim of the work is certainly achieved, and for this we should be grateful to the author, the editor (S. Parpola, who was also the thesis advisor), and their assistants.

No attempt is made to highlight differences vis-à-vis other dialects. The organization of the material follows closely the standards of traditional grammar as embodied in von Soden’s *Grundriss*: some forty pages devoted to orthography and phonology, sixty to morphology, and thirty to syntax. But the length of the morphology chapter is deceptive, because the section devoted to the invariables takes up a total of twenty-two pages. This results in an imbalance which is not of the author’s own doing, but derives from the linguistic model adopted: what is said in these pages is in fact hardly germane to morphology, since the only statement that might be regarded as inflectional

in nature pertains to whether a pronominal suffix may or may not be affixed to a preposition (3.8.1). Otherwise, the space is devoted to a lexical listing with a wealth of examples. Useful though this may be, the question cannot be avoided as to the appropriateness of such an approach in a grammatical chapter on morphology. Why then not give, for the sake of consistency, a similar listing of nouns for, say, color or kinship in the chapter on nouns (which occupies a mere seven pages)?

Given the self-imposed limitations of a “sketch,” any discussion of the linguistic issues involved is on the whole eschewed, but there are hidden remarks that are of interest, and on a few occasions a short argument is developed. In such cases, the author’s sensitivity for a linguistic dimension (as different from a mere philological listing of examples) deserves special attention. Here are a few instances. In section 2.4.8, the author maintains that Neo-Assyrian has a doubly long syllable, of the type *madāktu* (see also 3.13.3). The author says that such a “medial doubly long syllable” may or may not be “resolved,” by which he means that a *plene* writing may or may not be avoided (e.g., *la-a-āš-šū* next to *la-šū*), and he also speaks of an “etymologically doubly long syllable,” for which no unequivocal criteria are available. He argues against Reiner and Woodington’s position, which denies the existence of “doubly long syllables,” saying that their arguments are “based mainly on theoretical considerations,” but the only support he provides is a comparison with Arabic (p. 34, n. 52).

This point has broad implications for Akkadian as a whole, and in this respect the following seems to me significant. The notion of a distinctive length feature wherein the articulation would be held longer in some cases than in others, i.e., a phonemic status for three types of length (short, long, extra long), can only be proven if convincing minimal pairs can be adduced—which, in my view, is not the case. It still seems to me that the traditional Assyriological triple length doctrine (*a, ā, â*), and even more the quadruple one (*a, ā, â, ā*), are based on a philological sensitivity for cuneiform orthography and a vague influence of Semitic comparativism, rather than on a conscious linguistic analysis of articulatory phenomena (such as they can be reconstructed through a careful graphemic analysis).

Another interesting point is the observation regarding the use of “conjunctive intonation” (2.4.10b, 4.4, and 4.4.1.1). The author points out that coordination may be marked not by any conjunction, but by a change in quantity and intonation, whereby an element of a clause, linked asyndetically with another that follows, is lengthened—as in *šūūr šēbila* “write send” = “write and send”; in this case, length is marked, according to the author, by writing the final syllable as open: *šū-ru*. The alternative interpretation would be to read this as a ligature (or sandhi) for *šūūr (ʔ)u šēbila*. But if one accepts the author’s suggestion, one may consider a link with the observation that the conjunctive *-ma* is lacking in NA (p. 122): *šūūr* can then be understood as an abbreviation for *šūūr-ma*. The reason for this suggestion is that the enclitic *-ma*, too, introduces

a stress change in the word that precedes the enclitic, and thus it may be surmised that it came to be replaced, on occasion, by simple lengthening, without enclitic: in other words, *šutūr-ma šēbila* would result in *šutūr šēbila*.

Some of the observations found under “Syntax” deserve special mention. The present is used with an aspectual value denoting the continuity of the process, e.g., *amaḥḥar* “I used to receive, I was normally receiving” (as opposed to *amtahar* “I received”); this feature is attributed to Aramaic influence (4.2.2.1.3). The subjunctive marker *-(ū. . .)ni* is described as an enclitic that can be added to any part of speech, including a prepositional phrase, e.g., *ša ina muḥḥiyāni* “which are in front of me” (4.2.2.2.2). The masculine of the third person is used for the verbal predicate when the subject is the (obviously feminine) queen mother (4.2.3).

For the sake of completeness, a few improprieties of expression may be noted. For instance, one cannot properly say that in a writing like *i-sa-ap-ar* for *lissapar* a “syllable boundary” is broken, since there is no indication of a phonological realization *lissapar*, but simply of a deviation in the writing practice, wholly inconsequential on the phonological level (in other words, there is a confusion between “syllable” and “grapheme”). In the examples given on p. 46 (see also p. 107), the independent personal pronoun is said to serve as a copula, but it is in fact the subject of a noun phrase (type *ina GN šūtu* “he is in GN”: if *šūtu* were understood as a copula, there would be no subject, which is impossible for a nominal sentence).

Similarly, the term “copula” is used improperly when applied to frozen constructions like *laššu* and *ibašši* (4.2.1.1.-2), and in the same way the terms “modality” and “auxiliary verb” (4.2.2.2.5) are used improperly for the adverbial expression of the type *lā emūqāšu*. I would rather interpret this as a noun phrase conjoined through hendiadys with the following phrase: *lā emūqāšu šabāni lā iraddi* “it is not within his capability and he does not direct the troops” = “he is not able to direct the troops” (p. 114). On p. 51 the form *minu* is understood as a pronoun, but it is really an attribute (*minu simunu lū tēru*? “at what time should she come in?”), and so also for the “quantifying” pronouns on p. 53. On the other hand, on pp. 64f., a plain and simple interrogative pronoun (*mīnu ša šarru bēli iqabbūni* “what is it that the king my lord commands?”) is considered, rather awkwardly, as an interrogative particle “used as subordinating conjunction.”

The concept of hendiadys is used too loosely to subsume any asyndetic pair of verbs, e.g., *nillik nēmur* “we went and (then) saw” (4.2.2.2.4 and 4.4.1). Stricter formal criteria for hendiadys are available, as applicable for instance to the suggestion just proposed for the construction with *lā emūqāšu*.

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Ur III-Texte der St. Petersburger Ermitage. By NATALIA KOSLOVA. SANTAG vol. 6. Wiesbaden: HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG, 2000. Pp. 415. DM 104.

The handsome volume under review presents transliterations of 385 Ur III texts from Umma that form part of the extensive collection (approximately 1580 Ur III texts) of the Hermitage Museum. Some of this collection has previously been published in *MVN 20* and *MVN 21* (a history of the collection appears in the introduction to *MVN 20*). The texts in this volume are arranged in chronological order (from Š 21 to IS 2, with an additional 43 texts lacking year names) and are offered in transliteration with partial hand copies of the difficult passages. A volume like this reinforces the great value of the continuing rapid publication of Ur III texts. The 385 texts provide information on a wide range of topics from cultic matters to the administration of the textile industry to the incarceration of prisoners.

The texts published here by Koslova will not change our picture of Umma, but they will certainly deepen our understanding of the Ur III state and its society. In particular, these texts further inform us about several important aspects of that society. We see once again the bias in the available source material from Umma. These texts document almost exclusively the administration of the provincial and temple economies at Umma under the direction of the local elite, and especially the families of the provincial governors. The royal sector is indirectly apparent throughout these texts (e.g., in seal impressions and in frequent references to the *ba la*, the resources of which were directed towards the crown), but it is rarely directly attested.¹ This is especially noticeable in the small number of military officials who appear in these texts.

Additionally, the texts published here show that while the institutional economy with which we are familiar for the province of Umma was vast in terms of the scale and breadth of its holdings, it involved primarily a limited circle of economic actors and decision makers. This volume supports many of the conclusions drawn by M. Stepien in his prosopographic study of Umma, and it highlights the value of such studies.²

¹ For the royal sector in Umma, see the forthcoming study of the province of Umma by P. Steinkeller.

² M. Stepien, *Animal Husbandry in the Ancient Near East: A Prosopographic Study of Third-Millennium Umma* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1996). In his conclusion, Stepien notes: “These examples of families whose members held so many key positions in the administration and the instances in which a post was passed from father to son, clearly reveal the local character of the administration at Umma, which was inseparably linked with the local aristocratic families and the local tradition of the organization of temple-operated economic structures” (p. 208). The texts in the volume under review provide numerous additional examples of the prominence of the families studied by Stepien