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Reviews

Rebecca Hasselbach. *Sargonic Akkadian – a Historical and Comparative Study of the Syllabic Texts*. Wiesbaden 2005. XVI + 292 pp. Harrassowitz Verlag.

This most important book is a successor to I. Gelb's 1961 (first edition in 1952) "Old Akkadian Writing and Grammar" and it incorporates data found in the increased corpus, improved readings and progress in the understanding of early Akkadian and Proto-Semitic phonology and morphology. Originally this was a PhD thesis submitted to the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University.

Apart from the "Introduction" (pp. 1-25), there is the chapter on "The Sargonic Akkadian syllabary" (pp. 27-97), the chapter on "Sargonic Akkadian phonology" (pp. 99-146), the chapter on "Sargonic Akkadian Morphology" (pp. 147-229), and finally there are "Conclusions" (pp. 231-235), extensive "Bibliography" (pp. 237-250), a list of the "Corpus of Sargonic Akkadian texts" (pp. 251-262) and a very useful "Index of words cited" which includes also etymologies.

The authoress argues (pp. 233-234) that since Sargonic Akkadian features not shared by later dialects are retentions of an earlier stage of Akkadian, it is impossible to establish Sargonic Akkadian as an independent branch and she adds that "The subordinate marker /-a/ is exceptional in this text corpus and its interpretation uncertain". The final conclusions are (p. 235): "a. Sargonic Akkadian is subdivided into several clearly distinct sub-corpora, of which the dialect of the Diyala region is the most innovative; b. all sub-corpora of Sargonic Akkadian share morphological characteristics that have to be considered as Babylonian-type innovations, while Assyrian features found in this corpus are shared retentions. The dialect of the Diyala region shares the most isoglosses with Babylonian; c. At least the innovative branch of Sargonic Akkadian, that is, the dialect of the Diyala region as reflected in syllabic texts, is linguistically affiliated to Babylonian". In other words, according to the authoress, "Sargonic Akkadian, more specifically, the dialect of the Diyala region, most likely shares

a common ancestor with later Babylonian and might even be considered an early stage of Babylonian" (p. 234). This is possible indeed but nevertheless we have to be cautious since, contrary to the very popular view represented in Semitic linguistics in recent times mainly by Hetzron, s m a l l (and alleged !) innovations (like preposition *ana* which could have been simply lost in other, viz. Assyrian-like subdialects and a loss is also an innovation !) do not provide a hundred per cent reliable basis for genetic dialect classification and, moreover, retentions should not be underestimated. Isoglosses connecting and disconnecting c l o s e l y related dialects are contradictory actually by definition and a clear-cut, non-arbitrary classification of very closely related dialects is impossible. If such a clear separation, viz. classification is possible, this means that the two dialects are not very closely related.

In the syllabic writing of the period the doubling of consonants and vocalic length is only occasionally indicated (p. 37). So how do we know that, e.g. the Present ('Durative' according to Huehnergard) forms have always geminated consonants and that *qātala* form is absent ? I have already appealed in several publications for a critical check-up of the *iparras* (<*iparras-u*) forms since theoretically there could be some archaic forms without gemination as well as forms like *ipāras, *yupāris still actually surviving. Perhaps only *iparras* (which is an innovation of a part of Proto-Hamitosemitic dialects) survived but this should be verified. Actually only Ethiopic *yeqattel* supports the view that the expansion of the plural-multiplicative form with gemination could have been exceptionless but, although generally there can be no doubt that Ethiopic *yeqattel* is geminated indeed, even in this language there is no absolute guarantee that the inherited innovation was exceptionless and that the traditional regularity of *yeqattel* is not due to the later traditional pronunciation which could have unified the forms eliminating the use of the Old Imperfect without gemination at first only partially shifted to other functions.

It is a pity that especially (but not only !) in the sections on the so-called Ventive and the Subordinative ("Subjunctive") the examples have not been quoted in their contexts, viz. in sentences. Full quotations of the "Belegstellen" would enlarge the book to a quite limited extent but they would greatly facilitate the analysis of the functions of these forms, first of all the functions of the 'subordinate' marker -a which "is limited to a small text corpus from the Diyala region" (p. 103-104, 205 and 207) while "other texts from the Diyala region use -u" (p. 207). Why on p. 208, n. 170 the authoress says that "Another possible Proto-Semitic form in final -a, *yaqtula* is, for the moment, of no relevance for our discussion" ? Further on (p. 209 but n. 157 on p. 204 must be consulted!) we read that "If the forms in -a in West Semitic and East Semitic do share a common origin, the Sargonic forms might reflect a dialect or substrate influence that still preserves this otherwise lost form in East Semitic. It would be difficult to account for the -a with the function of a subordinate marker otherwise". What

"dialect or substrate influence" precisely? Why we should not consider these -a, viz. **yaqtul-a* forms in some sub-dialects of Old Akkadian simply as archaisms, viz. retentions ?

I am afraid that the authoress shows a typically Assyriological hypercriticism and aversion as far as the interpretation of the origin of both -a and -u forms and of the so-called Ventive is concerned. The "Ventive" cannot be separated from the Energetic with -an(na) well attested in Ugaritic, in Classical Arabic and in Ancient and Modern South Arabian (also having a cognate even in the most archaic Cushitic language, viz. in 'Afar !) and it is an Akkadian innovation that this original Old Preterite (cf. the examples on p. 207 like *yillik-am/yillik-am-ma* 'he came') and Old Jussive survived in Akkadian mainly with verbs of motion. "Egocentric" feature, viz. 'motion towards the speaker' in the "Ventive" forms is conditioned either by context or simply by the lexical meaning and a form like *allakam* "I will come" (p. 203) certainly means neither " *I will come to myself" nor "I will come here/I will return". I know that in her later publications the authoress does connect -am form with West Semitic Energetic to a considerable extent. Also the interpretation of *iparras-u* as "Subordinative" (which is correct only synchronically !) and not as the original form with Indicative -u which has been lost at the end of the sentence viz. before a pause where only *iparras* occurs is a typically Assyriologist prejudice. Hassebach does mention Present/Durative *'asakkan-u* 'I will place' (p. 138, 197, 284) explaining it as a Subordinative form only on p. 206 ! The forms with suffixed pronouns like *'anaddakkum* 'I will give to you" (p. 197) are probably due to the syncopation of -u in **'anadán-u-kum* caused by stress (cf. p. 196 *yiṭabbaẖ-sī-ma* 'he slaughters it' < **yiṭabbáẖ-u-sī-ma*; p. *'arris-ka* < **'arris-u-ka* 'I request from you', and see also pp. 154-156; on syncope see pp. 105-106 with pairs like *yublam/yubilam* 'he brought' going back to **yúbilam* and on apocope see n. 30 on p. 156) and first of all there are forms like *'agammalu-ū-su* (p. 197) where -u d o e s remain ! The "subordinative" forms with -u are simply original main clause forms (and *iprus-u* is just the cognate of the West Semitic Imperfect *yaqtul-u* !) surviving in dependent clauses where the final -u has been preserved (cf. only brief mention on p. 104) in non-pausal forms (cf. also p. 206 and 215, p. 206 *'agammal-ū-su* 'I will spare him', *tar'am-ū-su* 'she loved him', p. 205 *yiffin-ū-sum* 'he gave him', p. 157 *'anaddak-kum/'anaddan-ū-kum* 'I will give to you' where the vocalic ending survives before the suffixed pronoun). On Akkadian Old Imperfect *iprus-u*, non-pausal *iparras-u* I have written e.g. in my article "Tense, Aspect and Mood Categories of Proto-Semitic', Current Issues in the Analysis of Semitic Grammar and Lexicon I, ed. by L. Edzard and J. Retsö, 11-30, Wiesbaden 2005, and on one possible explanation of the origin of *yaqtul-a* from Energetic -a-n see my paper 'The Origin of subjunctive and energicus in Semitic languages, Incontri Linguistici 19, 69-76, cf. Studia Orientalia (Helsinki !) 99, 2004, 435-439.

On p. 198 we read that the "Durative" used for present and future events "In our texts occurs frequently in oaths and incantations". That Present is used also as Future is a banal, widely known fact and its use in oaths and incantations is also quite natural since future is naturally always more or less strongly modal, volitive. What matters, is this modal, volitive use which cannot be reconciled with the notion of durativity and, consequently, this is one of the reasons why the name "Present" for *iparras* is better than "Durative".

On p. 189 we read that the Stative... in Sargonic Akkadian describes present states and conditions or conditions resulting from an action in the past. ...(it) can furthermore be used with preceding *lū* to express positive injunctions such as 'may it be...' and 'it shall be...'. There are good examples (it is a pity that whole sentences have not been quoted !) of the injunctive or future/modal function, e.g. on p. 190 there is *lū tummu'āt* 'you shall be bound by an oath', *ay zuqqunā* 'they shall not be bearded', *lū ṣaġrā* 'they shall be young' and this natural secondary function ('Nebenfunktion' in German) is well compatible with the modal/volitive function of the West Semitic, e.g. Classical Arabic Perfect like in *raḥima-hu (A)llāh* which is one of the facts that prove the close relationship between the Akkadian Stative and West Semitic Perfect.

On p. 212 we read the "The N-stem is only rarely attested in Sargonic Akkadian" – so why not all the forms with their *Belegstellen* have been listed? It is remarkable that some Gt-forms have the same meaning as the G-forms, e.g. *šāpûm* 'to be silent', p. 198, cf. p. 213.

On p. 182 we read that "The unbound form of the nouns and adjectives regularly uses mimation. Exceptions are only found in personal names in which mimation can be absent". We should like to have the authoress' explicit opinion both on the synchronic function and the original function of the Akkadian mimation and to know also what does it mean precisely that in personal names mimation 'c a n be (sometimes ? AZ) absent'. We know that in Classical Arabic some personal names like Ḥasan-un occur with nunation and some do not. On the survival of nunation as the old definite article in Arabic personal names see J. Kuryłowicz, Studies in Semitic Grammar and Metrics, Kraków 1972, 132-134.

This polemics with some approaches and some opinions does not change the fact that Hasselbach has provided us with a splendid tool, a book which will be basic for Assyriologists and general Semitists.

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Klaus Wedekind, Charlotte Wedekind, Abuzeinab Musa. A Learner's Grammar of Beja (East Sudan) – Grammar, Texts and Vocabulary (Beja-English and English-Beja). Köln 2007. Rüdiger Köppe Verlag. 279 pp. Afrikawissenschaftliche Lehrbücher - Band 17. ISBN 978-3-89645-572-7.

This is the fourth published grammar of Beja since 1881 and the first book on this language since 1928 when its prototype, viz. E.M. Roper's 'Tu Bedawie Handbook' appeared. For linguists Beja is, thanks to its archaism, one of the most important Afroasiatic/Hamitosemitic languages in general and for other, more or less practical reasons it is also quite important as it is spoken by over 1 million native speakers in the Sudan, Eritrea and Egypt. The language is used in writing in Eritrea but it is still unwritten in the Sudan and in Egypt due to the negative approach of the responsible governments while the Beja themselves have spent too much time discussing the problems of the choice of the alphabet, spelling conventions etc. The study of the Beja language has been sadly neglected for decades and the appearance of this grammar is an important event after valuable contributions bu Hudson (1976) and Morin (1995, especially pp. 19-61). The book is intended for people who may be interested in learning Beja with a help of a native consultant. It provides an introduction into basic grammatical structures without being a course in spoken Beja. The attached CD contains Beja-English wordlist of about 7000 entries arranged alphabetically in an Excel file which can be downloaded on a PC and processed for further purposes, a Beja-English and English-Beja dictionaries and sound files.

The dialect described in this book is called "Atmaan" and the authors say only that this is "one of the Beja varieties which is mainly spoken in the Sudan" (p. 10) and that "it is spoken by large numbers of people in parts of Port Sudan and in Suakin" (p. 16). Other dialects are not indicated although there is a list and a table of 12 dialect features typical of this dialect (pp. 16-17, see also p. 14). The authors mention "Bishari", "Hadendowa", "Hadareb" and "Beni Amir" dialects but an uninitiated reader cannot know what these names actually mean.

In the part entitled "Language Basics" there are short sections on Phonology (pp. 11-16) and Morpho-Phonology (pp. 18-22; it is a bit surprising to find a short account of "Accent Rules" in this very section which, by the way, does not explain how two syllables, even contiguous syllables can have the same pitch/accent in a word as transcribed twice on p. 35 !) which can help in mastering the pronunciation of Beja since the texts have been recorded on the CD. Then basic information on Beja morphology follows (pp. 23-30), supplemented by data on "Basic Communications" (pp. 31-35) which include "Interjections", "Vocatives" , "Responses" (labeled a bit strangely and divided into "Responses", "Understanding", "Conversation Responses: Positive", Conversation Responses:

Negative", "Responses: Encounters with People", "Requests", "Offering and Taking" and "Vocatives and Requests"), and "Greetings" (p. 35). "Greeting people" is continued on pp. 38-39 and here it is a bit astonishing that a rather ambiguous morphological analysis is provided, e.g. the authors say that -a is typical for plural while this is true only for the first person akraa-b-a 'we are fine' but not so obvious for akraa-b-aa-na 'you (pl.) are fine'; the authors say that -b is typical for masculine while it occurs in plural irrespective of gender. It would be better to provide dialect variants here, viz. akeraab-i 'I am fine' for akraab-u (see Reinisch's Grammar par. 139; Roper's Handbook par. 63) since the information on p. 16 is too general. Another thing: masculine -b does not appear in front of -w- even after a vowel, so that there is akraawa but not * akraa-b-wa (see Roper, par. 63 and 4). In the example daayii-b-u "good-he-is" (sic !) -b- is due to a reinterpretation since this is an Arabic loan, viz. daayib < ṭayyib 'good'. I think it would have been better to provide systematic information on nominal sentences including third persons (these appear systematically on p. 45) after the presentation of personal and other pronouns and even nominal morphology. Why "Plural formation of Nouns" is included as a second paragraph in the section entitled "What is it ?" ? As far as nominal plural is concerned , there is no explanation of the difference between sh'**aa**t 'cow' and sh'**a**at 'cows" where bold print indicates pitch/stress (p. 43, cf. Roper par. 45).

It would have been better to give dialect variants of the pronouns in the relevant sections, especially since on p. 16 it is said that "instead of pronouns with a word final 'h', pronouns with a word final 's' may be used" while -s-variants occur also before -na, e.g. Halanga baraa-s-na 'they (masc.)', bataa-s-na 'they (fem.)' etc., cf. Roper par. 81 and par. 102 for possessive suffixes). I realize that this is a grammar of one particular dialect but in case of such important items as pronouns dialects variants should be given explicitly.

In the section on verbs the reader learns at first that 'there are only two basic paradigms for Beja 'tenses' or 'aspects: 1. 'past/perfect and 2. 'present/imperfect" (p. 89) but in the immediately following tables he finds also "Past Continuous" which is explained much later, viz. on p 101 and 155. The information "The so-called 'strong verbs' or 'class 2 verbs' are typical of 'Semitic' verbs" (p. 97) is rather incomprehensible for a beginner and it is surprising even for a Semitist. Even more surprising is the statement that "They have subject prefixes like a-, t-, i-." since n- of the first person plural is not mentioned here. There is no warning that in the 'present' of triconsonantal verbs including the verbs with final -y there is no prefix in the second and the third persons singular ! In the table No. 29 the suffixes of the weak or suffix conjugation (actually the auxiliary verb -n- conjugated with prefixes) are compared with the prefixes of the strong, viz. prefix conjugation but a beginner cannot understand why present forms of the suffix conjugation are compared with the past forms of the prefix conjugation ! This comparison

is incomprehensible without a diachronic explanation which is not provided although it is a big question whether such a comparison is useful for a beginner at all. I cannot accept the statement (p. 99) that "The tense/aspect which is used most frequently – especially in narratives (stories), is the past/perfect". Obviously it is the main 'tense' used in narratives but the quoted statement suggests that the 'present/imperfect' is less frequently used elsewhere which is certainly not the case. It is a pity that there is so little about the conjugations of derived verbs (e.g. multiplicative/plural forms with -aa- like aalima 'to draw lines', maasiwa 'to hear' etc., p. 126 and 156) especially since they differ in many respects at least according to Roper who provides more information although, quite regrettably, he has not given complete paradigms. I do not think that the label "Past Continuous" is justified (p. 101) although later on there is "Past Continuous/Pluperfect" (p. 155). There are two different definitions: ""The 'past continuous' forms express ongoing or habitual events in the past, as well as non-real events, especially in conditional sentences..." (p. 101) and " 'Continuous Past' is expressed by verbs with 'ii-' and refers to habitual, repeated actions of the (more distant) past..." (p. 155). I think that 'Pluperfect' is the best label since at least for speakers of languages like English it makes clear why this form is used also in conditional clauses with 'unreal' condition (see p. 183) and it can account also for the English translations of the past habitual (e.g. 'he used to...'). The use of 'Pluperfect/Conditional' (diachronically 'Old Past", see Zaborski 1976) for simultaneous action like English Past Continuous does not justify an emphasizing of this particular function in Beja where it shows only that this is an old past tense shifted to pluperfect function and to past continuous function after the rise of a new Preterite. In a very brief mention of "Temporal and other clauses" on p. 185 there are only two examples : baruuk waliikta-nhoob, ani tami "when you called, I was eating' with the weak verb *tam* 'to eat' and ugawooh shuuman-nhoob, Haamid tu'argin ihirid "When I came to his house, Hamid was slaughtering the sheep" with the strong verb *harid* (cf. Roper par. 233) in the form which does not show -ii- ! The Pluperfect is used to provide a background at the beginning of a story (e.g. even three times as in clause No. 1, 2 and No. 3 (p. 190); cf. No. 4, 8 and 10 (p. 207), No. 2, 4 and 5 (p. 211), No. 1 (p. 226), No. 1 (p. 230), No. 1 (p. 249), No. 1 (p. 254), No. 1 (p. 263), No. 2 (p. 269) etc. It is important that the actual action is introduced with a verb in the Perfect as in clause No. 12 (p. 208), No. 6 (p. 211), No. 3 (p. 230), No. 3 (p. 263 etc. But there is an exception in clause No. 1 (p. 257) where the story starts with the Perfect ! It is used also for 'past in the past' as in clause No. 26 (p. 192), No. 142 (p. 204), No. 11 (p. 207) etc. The English translation 'she used to say" is justified in the clause No. 7 (p. 249). The habitual occurs in the clauses No. 7 and 9 (p. 207) but the translation is 'that he poured water into it' instead of 'that he used to pour...) and there is 'that the milkman was cheating' while the meaning is 'that the milkman was always cheating'. The

translation with the English Past Continuous is justified in No. 17 (p. 227) "The mother was standing (there) and took out a dagger and..." but here the Beja Pluperfect indicates that the mother was standing there because she had come to the place previously and there is no expression of continuous action. The Pluperfect is not used for prior action or event where it could be expected as in clauses Nos. 57-60 (pp. 235-236). It is remarkable also that Pluperfect is used as an auxiliary in the phrase "they would have killed all flies" in the clause No. 86 (p.238, cf. No. 12 on p. 189) but not in the following sentence "Not one fly would have remained !" as in clause No. 87 (p. 238). Prior state is expressed with the Pluperfect in the clause No. 4 (p. 241) but actually this could be used at the very beginning to introduce the background. There is no Beja Pluperfect when the English translation obligatory uses the English Pluperfect as in the clauses No. 19 and 20 (pp. 242-243): "When I had passed one thousand, I did not keep an account of my years", cf. the clauses Nos. 23 and 25 (p. 243); the same in the clauses Nos. 21 and 22 (p. 251) and Nos. 10 and 11 (p. 270). In the clause No. 49 and the following No. 50 (pp. 253-254) the translation is "When it had broken it, it flew away" but the question is whether the verbal form *ikt'a* is really Pluperfect and not Perfect ? There is a clear example of the use of the Pluperfect in conditional clauses in Nos. 18 and 19 (p. 256): Diraatuuk oowawa tiiktiineek , kassooh ujawaab ka 'agriita ?, viz. "If your aunt had known the waw, wouldn't she have read the whole letter ?"; cf. clauses Nos. 51 and 52 (p. 274) where there is no Pluperfect since the condition is real (this is a 'mixed' conditional sentence).

All these examples show that no label is ideal for the Beja 'Pluperfect' – it is a kind of a past tense conditioned syntactically on the level of sentence and/or text syntax but certainly the label "Past Continuous" is not justified since it pertains to its secondary or even tertiary function.

There is very little on Purpose Clauses (p. 184) – just four short sentences as examples without any comment ! This is one of the syntactic problems which has been rather neglected in the existing studies on Beja. In the text No. 1, clause No. 9 (p. 189) and No. 17 (p. 190) there is a very interesting example of the use of the Pluperfect in a purpose clause which needs further investigation !

There are fourteen texts which are given both in normalized transcription and in a transcription in which words are p a r t i a l l y (the readers are not warned that the morphological segmentation is not complete !) divided into morphemes by hyphens, then there is "a morpheme-by-morpheme translation' and finally there is "a free translation".

The dictionary on the CD is quite useful although the arrangement of items is sometimes rather strange and controversial.

The publication of this "Learner's Grammar" is a success since both scholars and prospective learners have received an important new tool. We should bear in mind that old Roper can still be used by learners and must be consulted by

researchers. But we still badly need a systematic and detailed reference grammar of the dialects of the Beja language with complete paradigms of many irregular verbs, viz. a 'Beja Bescherelle'.

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