CHAPTER 8

# Aramaic Names

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## Introduction

The Aramaic onomasticon found in Babylonian sources linguistically belongs to the West Semitic languages while it is written in cuneiform script used to express Late Babylonian Akkadian, an East Semitic language (see Figure 8.1). Among the languages classified as West Semitic, four are recognisable in the Late Babylonian onomasticon: Arabic names, generally viewed as representing the Central Semitic branch; Phoenician; Hebrew (or Canaanite); and Aramaic names representing its Northwest Semitic subgroup.[1]

Aramaic names make up the largest part of the West Semitic onomasticon in the Neo- and Late Babylonian documentation. They will be the focus of this chapter. Chapter 9 deals with Hebrew names, Chapter 10 with Phoenician names, and Chapter 11 with Arabic names from this period. The Aramaic onomasticon of the preceding Neo-Assyrian era, which has been researched by Fales, is not included here.[2] A given name may be recognised as Aramaic on the basis of patterns and trends regarding patronym, the occurrence of an Aramaic deity, and the socio-economic context of the attestation. Despite the fact that these factors provide valuable background information (see section on 'Aramaic Names in Babylonian Sources'), the most secure way of deciding on the Aramaic nature of a name is based on linguistic criteria:

- phonological: phonemes of Semitic roots are represented in a way specific for Aramaic;
- lexical: words are created from roots that solely appear in Aramaic;

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[1] For a somewhat more detailed classification along these lines, see Huehnergard and Rubin 2011, 263. The matter is debated; however, linguists may prefer a model that accounts for the similarities between West Semitic – the Canaanite languages (particularly Hebrew and Phoenician) and the Aramaic language group – in contrast to languages such as Arabic and Ethiopic that form a southern group (see also Gzella 2011, 425–6; 2015, 16–22).

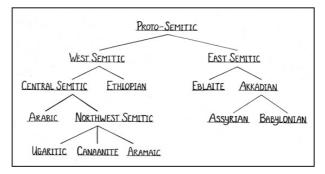[2] See 'Further Reading' section for references, and Chapter 7.

Figure 8.1  A family tree model of Semitic languages (drawing by Rieneke Sonnevelt).

- morphological: forms and patterns used are peculiar for Aramaic;
- structural: names are constructed with, for instance, Aramaic verbal components.[3]

Opinions differ as regards the nature of the Aramaic language in Babylonia during the Neo-Babylonian era. Aramaic attestations from this timeframe are – together with those from the preceding Neo-Assyrian period – variously evaluated as belonging to Old Aramaic as found in sources from Aramaean city states, as manifestations of local and independent dialects, or as (precursors of) Achaemenid Imperial (or Official) Aramaic.[4]

Defining the variety of Aramaic used in Babylonia is hindered by the fact that direct evidence from this area is generally scarce and textual witnesses from its state administration, which presumably was bilingual Akkadian–Aramaic, are non-extant. Aramaic texts mainly appear as brief epigraphs written on cuneiform clay tablets.[5] Moreover, a small number of alphabetic texts were impressed into bricks by those working on royal buildings in Babylon.[6]

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[3] Zadok 1977, 21–8; Coogan 1976, 4–5. For an overview of the basic grammatical system of Aramaic, see Gzella (2015, 23–37).

[4] Depending on a diachronic or synchronic linguistic perspective and the extent to which factors of geopolitical nature and/or typology of genre are taken into account (Folmer 2011a, 129–31).

[5] For an overview of tablets with Aramaic epigraphs, c. 300 in total, see Zadok (2003, 558–78) and Oelsner (2006, 27–71). The chronological distribution shows an increase of tablets with epigraphs in the Late Babylonian period (Zadok 2003, 570).

[6] Contrary to Aramaic epigraphs on clay tablets, the impressions on bricks merely consist of names. Most of these are Akkadian, while 30 per cent qualify as Aramaic. Examples of the latter are: *bytʾldlny*, Bīt-il-dilinī 'Bīt-il, save me'; *zbdy*, Zabdī which is a hypocoristic form of 'DN has given'; *nbwntn*, Nabû-natan 'Nabû has given'; and *nbwʿzry*, Nabû-ezrī 'Nabû is my help' (Sass, Marzahn, and Zeʾevi 2010, 173–7).

Chronologically, the major part of the Aramaic onomasticon appears in cuneiform texts dating to the latter half of the fifth century – a period in which the use of Aramaic as chancellery language of the Achaemenid Empire seems to have been established in all parts of its vast territory. Achaemenid Imperial Aramaic is attested in a large variety of literary genres across socio-economic domains and is written in alphabetic script on various media, such as papyri, ostraca, funerary stones, and coins.[7] Overall, the orthography of this language variety is marked by consistency (especially in administrative letters), its syntax displays influences from Persian and Akkadian, and its lexicon contains an abundance of loanwords from various languages.[8]

## Aramaic Names in Babylonian Sources

Aramaic names can be found in cuneiform economic documents from all over Babylonia, but they appear most frequently in texts from the villages Yāhūdu, Našar, and Bīt-Abī-râm, dating to the sixth and early fifth centuries,[9] and in the extensive Murašû archive originating from the southern town of Nippur and its surroundings, which covers the second half of the fifth century.[10] By contrast, the proportion of West Semitic names in city-based cuneiform archives is relatively marginal: about 2 per cent of the c. 50,000 individuals appearing in this text corpus bear an Aramaic name if the Murašû documentation is disregarded; this amounts to 2.5 per cent if the latter archive is included.[11] The proportion of Aramaic names in the Murašû archive is ten times higher than the norm (see Figure 8.2).[12]

One of the reasons behind the marked difference in the proportion of non-Babylonian names between the rural archives and the Babylonian

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[7] Gzella 2015, 165–8; Folmer 2011b, 588–90.     [8] Folmer 2011b, 593–6.

[9] The text editions published by Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch (2014) in CUSAS 28 are preceded by an analysis of the names that includes data found in the forthcoming second volume. The latter texts mostly originate from the settlement of Bīt-Abī-râm.

[10] The 700+ Murašû documents are published in different text editions (BE 8/1, 9, and 10; PBS 2/1; IMT; EE) and various articles. As these texts have served as the leading corpus in Ran Zadok's investigation into West Semitic names, this chapter draws heavily on his onomastic authority.

[11] The documentation from Yāhūdu, Našar, and environs (CUSAS 28) has not been included in this count either (Zadok 2003, 489).

[12] In the Murašû corpus 2,180 individuals are attested. They are considered as bearers of a West Semitic name if their given name and/or their patronym qualifies thus. The category labelled 'ambiguous' contains names that may be Akkadian or Aramaic. The category labelled 'various' includes Iranian (2%), Arabian (1–2%), Phoenician (0.1%), Egyptian, Lydian, Cimmerian, and other names (Zadok 1977, 24).

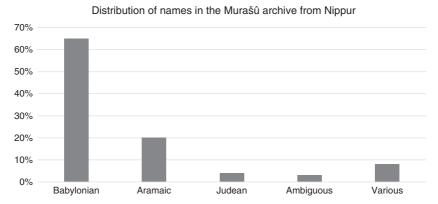Distribution of names in the Murašû archive from Nippur



Figure 8.2  Distribution of names in the Murašû archive from Nippur.

sources in general is the fact that the former are characterised by less formative influence – and thus representation – of Babylonian elites, who formed a relatively homogenous social group. They lived in the city; were directly or indirectly connected to its institutions, most notably the temples; and virtually always bore Babylonian personal names, patronyms, and family names (see Chapter 1).[13] Unsurprisingly, they appear as protagonists in the urban documentation, while individuals with non-Babylonian names tend to have the passive role of witnesses.[14]

Onomastic diversity thus correlates with a decidedly rural setting. This is underlined by the fact that Murašû documents not written up in Nippur, but in settlements located in its vicinity, display larger proportions of both parties and witnesses with non-Babylonian names.[15] Likewise, texts from the rural settlements of Yāhūdu, Našar, and Bīt-Abī-râm contain a substantive amount of West Semitic names. Indeed, the multilingual situation in Babylonia's south-central (or possibly south-eastern) region, whence these two cuneiform corpora originate,[16] already stood out during

[13] Nielsen 2011; Still 2019; Zadok 2003, 481–4. Contrary to the widespread use of family names among elites from other Babylonian cities, Nippureans hardly adhered to this practice. According to John P. Nielsen (2011, 163–72) this is one of the manifestations of antagonism between Nippur and the cities to its north, which resulted from various historical incidents.

[14] Out of 2 per cent of individuals with non-Babylonian names, only 0.8 per cent appear as protagonists (Zadok 2003, 552).

[15] Sonnevelt 2021.

[16] There are various indications suggesting that the settlements of Yāhūdū, Našar, and other places attested in this corpus were located in Babylonia's south (like Nippur) or south-east (Waerzeggers 2015, 181).

earlier centuries. Letters in the archive of Nippur's 'governor' written between c. 755 and 732 BCE attest to the connections between powerful leaders of Aramaean tribes and feature many Aramaic-named individuals, as well as Aramaisms.[17] Moreover, a letter dated to king Assurbanipal's reign (seventh century BCE) mentions speakers of multiple different languages living in the Nippur area (roughly indicated by the brackets in Figure 8.3).[18]

Various forms of migration contributed to the multi-ethnic character of the population in this region. First, non-Babylonian sections – among which were Aramaean groups – migrated into the territory east of the Tigris (the area indicated by the arrows in Figure 8.3).[19] Second, the diverse populace was a result of forced migration. For instance, the Babylonian
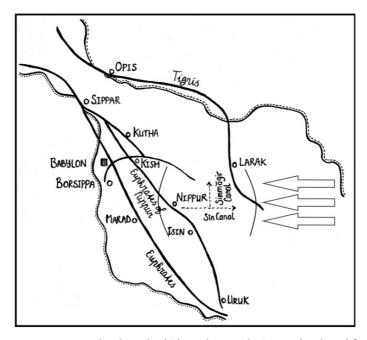


Figure 8.3  Nippur and its hinterland (drawn by Rieneke Sonnevelt, adapted from Zadok 1978, 332).

[17] Cole 1996 (OIP 114), 1–14.
[18] King Assurbanipal reigned from 669 to 627 BCE. SAA 18 192: r. 6' mentions the speakers of 'the many tongues' (Zadok 1977, 1).
[19] Beaulieu 2013, 45–7.

king Nabopolassar (626–605 BCE) took many prisoners of war – most of them Aramaeans – from settlements in upper Mesopotamia and the middle Euphrates region and relocated them to the Nippur area in 616 BCE. Not long before, Nippur itself had been an Assyrian town where a garrison was stationed; it was only besieged and conquered between 623 and 621 BCE. Campaigns led by subsequent kings, most notably Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 BCE), resulted in deportations of communities from Syria and the Levant and their resettlement in the same region around Nippur.[20] The state provided the deportees with fields and in return levied taxes and/or rents and conscripted the landholders as troops. The process is documented in its early stages in the cuneiform texts from Yāhūdu and its environs. Also, the Murašû archive depicts individuals active in this so-called land-for-service system.[21] Due to these migratory flows, not only the onomasticon is diverse: many toponyms in this region are non-Akkadian or Akkadian – West Semitic hybrids as well. They may refer to Aramaean tribes, eponymous forefathers, or places of origins in Syria or the Levant.[22] Finally, Aramaic epigraphs are quite well-attested in these archives.

During the Achaemenid period, the southern region functioned as a passageway between the Persian heartland and the Empire's western provinces. Through the Kabaru Canal the Babylonian waterways were directly connected with Susa, the Persian capital in Elam. Except for thus being of geopolitical importance, this area hosted travellers from Babylonia and far beyond who began the last stage of their trip to the capital here, upon changing boats in the settlement of Bāb-Nār-Kabari.[23]

## Spelling and Normalisation

The normalisation of West Semitic names written in Babylonian Akkadian, for which no academic standard has been formulated, is challenging. First, it is not always straightforward whether a name is Akkadian

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[20] Alstola 2020; Zadok 1977, 9–14.

[21] For the advancement and (re)organisation of the land-for-service system in the Achaemenid period, as well as the role of the Murašûs and their agents in this sector, see Stolper (1985) and van Driel (1989).

[22] Toponyms are mostly non-Akkadian in the Nippur region during the Late Babylonian period: 25% Akkadian, 36% West Semitic, 17% Akkadian – West Semitic hybrid, 5% ambiguous, 17% other (Zadok 1978; Lämmerhirt 2014, 116–17). A toponym referring to place of origin in Syria is Ḥamat; examples of Levantine twin towns are Ashkelon, Gaza, and Qadesh (Pearce 2014, 13, n. 27; Waerzeggers 2015, 190).

[23] The journey from Babylonia to Susa seems to have followed a fixed itinerary (Waerzeggers 2010, 790, 796).

or Aramaic; for instance, ^I^*ba-ni-a* can be read as Akkadian Bānia and as West Semitic Banī, a hypocoristic form of the sentence name 'DN-established'. Second, there are many ways to approach the transcription of Aramaic names, based on the question of whether an attempt should be made to reconstruct the characteristics of an Aramaic name and, if so, to what extent. This could pertain to relatively straightforward issues, such as phonemes not represented in Akkadian (for instance, the gutturals) or those rendered differently (for instance, /w/ written /m/, as visible in the Judean theophoric element Yāma). However, it also relates to features such as vowel quality, vowel length, and stress, which are often not easy – or are downright impossible – to reconstruct due to incongruity of the writing systems and the inconsistency in which Aramaic names are converted into Akkadian.[24] Therefore, taking the Akkadian spelling as a point of departure and including only the most basic features rendered by it in a relatively consistent manner is my preferred modus operandi for transcription.

At the same time, some degree of harmonisation is necessary as, for instance, the spelling of the perfect in the Aramaic name DN-natan shows: ^I^DN-*na-tan-nu*/-*ni*/-*na* (the final CV-sign merely indicates that the previous syllable is stressed). Abstraction on the basis of the Aramaic verbal form avoids a plethora of names that are in fact orthographic varieties. Moreover, although vowel length is not included in transcription when uncertain, a frequent and clear trend is taken into account: as the final long vowel of the perfect 3. sg. m. of verbs ending in ʾ/y/h is nearly always represented, the transcription of, for example, ^I^DN-*ba-na-ʾ* is DN-banā. These examples demonstrate that there will always be a margin of error and that a hybrid transcription is inevitable – something that does not seem unfitting in view of the sources.[25]

## Typology of Aramaic Names

### *The Theophoric Element*

Besides the general theophoric element, this section deals with specific Aramaean deities. When these occur with Akkadian complements, the names are viewed as hybrids; in order to qualify as an Aramaic name, the linguistic criterion is decisive.

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[24] Due to inconsistency, it is, for example, impossible to be certain about vowel length and distinguish between *qatīl*, *qātil*, or *qatil* formations (see n. 61).

[25] For a more detailed proposal, please see 'The transcription of West Semitic names' found in the guide to the Prosobab database via 'Conventions used' under the heading 'Spelling of names'. Or access directly via https://prosobab.leidenuniv.nl/guide.php%23conventions.

*ʾl and ʾlh*

The most frequently attested theophoric element is *ʾl* (*ʾil*) 'god'. In cuneiform script, this element is written DINGIR, the logogram and determinative for the Babylonian word *ilu* 'god', which also has the phonetic value *an*.[26] It is broadly acknowledged that the (plural) logogram DINGIR.MEŠ is employed for the same purpose in the Late Babylonian period.[27] In other words, a name like Barik-il 'God's blessed one' can be rendered [I]*ba-ri(k)-ki*-DINGIR as well as [I]*ba-ri(k)-ki*-DINGIR.MEŠ. Similarly, Raḥim-il 'God's loved one' is spelled both [I]*ra-ḫi-im*-DINGIR and [I]*ra-ḫi-im*-DINGIR.MEŠ. The same orthographic variation applies to the element *ʾl* in the name of the deity Bīt-il: for example, Bīt-il-ḫanna 'Bīt-il is gracious' ([I]É-DINGIR-*ḫa-an-na*) and Bīt-il-adar 'Bīt-il has helped' ([I]É-DINGIR.MEŠ-*a-dar-ri*).[28]

The element *ʾlh* (*ʾilah*) is less frequently attested. Examples are Abī-ilah and Ilah-abī 'God is my father' ([I]AD-*il-a* and [I]*il-a*-AD).[29] It tends to appear as final component, followed by possessive suffix 1.sg. *-ī*, for example, in the names Mannu-kî-ilaḫī 'Who is like my god?' ([I]*man-nu-ki-i-i-la-ḫi-ʾ*) and Abī-ilaḫī 'My father is my god' ([I]AD-*la-ḫi-ʾ*; [I]AD-*i-la-ḫi-ʾ*).[30]

## Aramaean Deities

A common theophoric element in Aramaic names is Addu or Adad, the storm god, written [d]*ad-du* and [d]IŠKUR respectively:[31] Addu-rapā 'Addu has healed' ([Id]*ad-du-ra-pa-ʾ*), Adad-natan 'Adad has given' ([Id]IŠKUR-*na-tan-nu*). Despite being a Mesopotamian god, the epicentre of Adad's veneration remained northern Syria. Here, he took the primary place among the Aramaean deities. The fact that Adad has a strong familial

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[26] In most instances, the sign is to be read DINGIR. This is clear when (a) the name of the same person is written in both ways (e.g., [I]*a-zi*-DINGIR and [I]*a-zi-lu*); (b) the non-theophoric element is a verb (e.g., [I]*ia-da-ʾ*-DINGIR); (c) the syllable before the sign ends in a vowel other than -a (e.g., [I]*su-mu*-DINGIR instead of non-existent [I]*su-mu-an*). Only a few names remain ambiguous: [I]*ra-ma*-DINGIR/*an*; [I]*sa-ra*-DINGIR/*an*; [I]*šá-lam*-DINGIR/*an*. The element *ʾl* can be rendered phonetically as *il*-; *-i-lu*; *-i-li*; *-il-lu*; *-Ci-lu*; *-i-il* (Zadok 1977, 28–9).

[27] In the Murašû corpus, more than 90% of the *ʾl*-names are written DINGIR.MEŠ (Clay 1908, 319–20; Coogan 1976, 43–4; Zadok 1977, 31–3; Streck 2017, 192).

[28] In the same vein, *ʾl* appearing in Aramaic epigraphs corresponds to both DINGIR and DINGIR.MEŠ; for example, *bytʾlḥsny* = [Id]É-DINGIR-*ḫi-is-ni-ʾ* (CUSAS 28 53), Bīt-il-ḫisnī 'Bīt-il is my strength', and *ḥzhʾl* = [I]*ḫa-za-ʾ*-DINGIR.MEŠ (PBS 2/1 145), Ḥazā-il 'God has seen'.

[29] Cole 1996 (OIP 114) 100:17 and 80:6, respectively (see comments on the latter for more examples, p. 171f).

[30] The Akkadian equivalent is Abī-ilāya, written [I]AD-*i-la-a-a* or [I]AD-DINGIR-*a-a*.

[31] Zadok 1977, 45–8; Coogan 1976, 43.

association with the deities Apladda and Būr is visible in father – son pairings Būr-Adad or Adad-Būr in the corpus from Yāhūdu, Našar, and surrounding settlements.[32] Adgi, a West Semitic form of Adad, is attested with an Aramaic predicate in the Murašû archive.[33]

Tammeš, whose Akkadian equivalent is Šamaš, is attested with a wide variety of Aramaic complements, especially in Nippur, one of which is Zaraḥ-Tammeš 'Tammeš has shone' (<sup>I</sup>*za-ra-aḥ-*<sup>d</sup>*tam-meš*). Although various phonetic cuneiform spellings are employed to render the initial West Semitic consonant /s/, <sup>d</sup>*tam-meš* is the most current orthography in Neo- and Late Babylonian sources.[34]

The name of the moon god Iltehr (based on *ʾil* and *\*sahr*) is akin to Akkadian Sîn. This is visible in tablets from the village of Neirab, a settlement of deportees originating from the like-named 'centre of the moon' cult in Syria.[35] In those tablets, we find the name of the same person Iltehr-idrī 'Iltehr is my help' spelled both <sup>Id</sup>*še-e-ri-id-ri-ʾ* and <sup>Id</sup>*30-er-id-ri-ʾ*. However, typically Iltehr is written <sup>d</sup>*il-te-(eḥ-)ri* in cuneiform texts.[36]

Another Aramaean deity from the heavenly realm is ꜤAttar (*ꜥttr*), with cognates in a range of Semitic languages. In Akkadian this is Ištar, which has the variant form Iltar:[37] Attar-ramât 'Attar is exalted' (<sup>Id</sup>*at-tar-ra-mat*), Iltar-gadā 'Iltar is a fortune' (<sup>I</sup>*il-ta-ri-ga-da-ʾ*). The Neo-Assyrian sources show that the consonantal cluster *-lt-* often shifted to *-ss-*, which was pronounced *-šš-*. Although these examples show that this shift did not carry through consistently in Babylonia, it may be visible in the name Iššar-tarībi 'Iššar replaced'.[38]

Amurru is a popular theophoric element in Aramaic names from the sixth and fifth centuries, although the deity had a low status in the Mesopotamian pantheon. From the late third until the middle of

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[32] They mostly co-occur with Akkadian complements (Zadok 1977, 26, 62; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 13).

[33] Zadok 1977, 48.

[34] Less frequently, it is spelled <sup>d</sup>*il-ta(m)-meš*. <sup>d</sup>UTU.MEŠ followed by an Aramaic component may also render Tammeš. Occasionally <sup>d</sup>UTU fulfils this function. See Zadok (1977, 39–42).

[35] See Tolini 2015 on the Neirab tablets.     [36] Zadok 1977, 42; Coogan 1976, 47.

[37] See also Chapter 7 on Iššar. The gender of this deity varied according to time and location. Predicates in Assyrian sources are generally masculine; Attar-ramat has a feminine component. The latter is more in line with the overall pattern that Ištar or *ꜥttr* broadly functioned as the appellative 'goddess' in the Ancient Near East. It may be due to this situation that Akkadian names with the feminine theophoric element *iltu* are rather scarce (Zadok 1977, 34–8).

[38] There is a case in which the same person is referred to as <sup>Id</sup>*iš-šar-ta-ri-bi* and <sup>Id</sup>*iš-tar-ta-ri-bi*, which poses the question of whether *-ss-* pronounced *-šš-* is based on *-lt-*, or whether it is a variant of *-št-*. According to Zadok (1977, 36), <sup>d</sup>*iš-tar* may be a purely graphic representation, which is in line with the way the above-mentioned name is alphabetically written on BM 101523 from Sippar: *ʾšrtrby*.

the second millennium it was used as a device by Sumerians and Babylonians to identify Amorites whose distinct linguistic and cultural presence was becoming more prominent. As the Amorites started to assimilate, the need of othering disappeared and groups of West Semitic origins adopted Amurru in name-giving practice as a way to self-identify.[39] Amurru being the most frequent West Semitic theophoric element in the onomasticon from Našar and neighbouring villages is a manifestation of this trend.[40] Also attested in these villages is the deity Bīt-il, who was venerated in an area close to Judah and whose name-bearers may have been deported simultaneously.[41]

Other West Semitic deities that appear with Aramaic complements are Našuh or Nusku (for instance, in the Neirab documentation),[42] Qōs,[43] Rammān,[44] and Šēʔ.[45] Šamê, 'Heaven', also appears with various Aramaic complements.[46] Attestations of the Aramaean deity ʕAttā are scarce and ambiguous. It may be linked to ʕAnat in a similar way as Nabê is connected with Nabû and Sē with Sîn.[47]

## Verbal Sentence Names

Most frequent is the sentence name that has a perfect verbal form, also referred to as the suffix conjugation, as its predicate. The subject, which is a theophoric element, often appears as initial component. Generally, the verbal forms are in the G-stem. Some examples are Nabû-zabad 'Nabû has given' ([Id]AG-za-bad-du), Sîn-banā 'Sîn has established' ([Id]30-ba-na-ʔ), Aqab-il 'God has protected' ([I]a-qab-bi-DINGIR.MEŠ), and Yadā-il 'God has known' ([I]ia-da-ʔ-il).[48]

Names in which a deity is addressed by means of a perfect 2. sg. m. (indicated by the suffix -tā) are specific for the Late Babylonian period. They are followed by the object suffix 1.sg. (-nī): Dalatānī 'You

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[39] Beaulieu 2005, 41–5.

[40] Interestingly, Amurru is not attested in Yāhūdu. Amurru mostly co-occurs with logographically written Akkadian complements, less often with Aramaic ones (Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 12–3; Zadok 1977, 76). From the fifth century onward, the deity appears with some Arabian complements (Zadok 1977, 26–7).

[41] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 13; Alstola 2020, 270.　　[42] Zadok 1977, 26.

[43] Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 148 (no. 30); Zadok 2014, 121.　　[44] Zadok 1977, 49–50.

[45] Zadok 1977, 43–4.　　[46] Zadok 1977, 39–40.

[47] Zadok 1977, 32–8. Less well-attested deities are: ʕAl (e.g., in [I]ḫa-lu-ú-mi-il-ki); Gad (e.g., in [I]ga-di-i and [I]AD-gi-e-du); GVs/š (e.g., in [I]gu-še-ia and [I]gu-sa-a-a); Kuna (e.g., in [I]ku-na-ra-pi-e); and Mār (e.g., in [I]ma-ri-la-rim). See Zadok (1977, 58–67).

[48] Zadok 1977, 79–89; Coogan 1976, 107–8; Cole 1996 (OIP 114) 3, 6, 10, 59.

have saved me' (ᴵ*da-la-ta-ni-ˀ*), Ḫannatānī 'You have favoured me' (ᴵ*ḫa-an-na-ta-ni-ˀ*).

Other predicates have the form of an imperfect, which is also referred to as the prefix conjugation:[49] Addu-yatin 'May Adad give' (ᴵᵈ*ad-du-ia-at-tin*), Idā-Nabû 'May Nabû know' (ᴵ*id-da-ḫu-*ᵈAG), Aḫu-lakun 'May the brother be firm' (ᴵŠEŠ-*la-kun*), Tammeš-linṭar 'May Tammeš guard' (ᴵᵈ*tam-meš-li-in-ṭár*).[50]

Finally, verbal sentence names can contain an imperative: Adad-šikinī 'Adad, watch over me!' (ᴵᵈIŠKUR-*ši-ki-in-ni-ˀ*), Nabû-dilinī 'Nabû, save me!' (ᴵᵈAG-*di-li-in-ni-ˀ*).

Sentence names that consist of three elements sporadically occur. They are influenced by Akkadian fashion and even may incorporate an Akkadian element. An example hereof is the first element of the following name, which contains an Aramaic predicate with a G-stem imperfect 2.sg. m.:[51] Ša-Nabû-taqum '(By help?) of Nabû you will rise' (ᴵ*šá-*ᵈAG-*ta-qu-um-mu*).

## Nominal Sentence Names

In nominal sentence names the subject generally takes the initial position. The object is often followed by the possessive suffix 1.sg. -*ī*; sometimes 2.sg. -*ka*:[52] Abu-lētī 'The father is my strength' (ᴵAD-*li-ti-ˀ*), Abī-ilaḫī 'My father is my god' (ᴵAD-*i-la-ḫi-ˀ*),[53] Tammeš-ilka 'Tammeš is your god' (ᴵᵈ*tam-meš-ìl-ka*), Nanāya-dūrī 'Nanāya is my bulwark' (ᴵᵈ*na-na-a-du-ri-ˀ*),[54] Iltehr-naqī 'Iltehr is pure' (ᴵᵈ*il-te-eḫ-ri-na-aq-qí-ˀ*), and Nusku-rapē 'Nusku is a healer' (ᴵᵈPA.KU-*ra-pi-e*).

Sentence names that form a question are of nominal nature as well. They either start out with the interrogative pronoun ˤ*ayya* 'where?' or with *man*

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[49] *laqtul* functioned as a precative (wish-form) before it started to be used as imperfect (Zadok 1977, 91–6).

[50] The vowel of the prefix shifts to /i/ when the theme vowel of the verb is /a/, as formulated in the Barth – Ginsberg Law and visible in Idā-DN. Probably of similar nature is the shift from *laqtal* to *liqtal* attested in DN-linṭar (Zadok 1977, 94–5). The *laqtul*-formation, which is most often employed for the imperfect, developed into the common form of the imperfect in later stages of the Aramaic language in the region (Zadok 1977, 178).

[51] Zadok 1977, 110–11.   [52] Zadok 1977, 96–104; Coogan 1976, 113–14.

[53] Other common Aramaic kinship terms are ˀ*aḫ* 'brother', ˤ*amm* 'paternal uncle', ḫ*āl* 'maternal uncle', *dād* 'uncle' or 'favourite' (Zadok 1977, 51–8).

[54] Note that names of this type – consisting of a deity's name and a substantive – are hardly attested before the first millennium BCE; during the first millennium, it is typical for Aramaic names (Zadok 1977, 101).

'who?'[55]: Aya-abū 'Where is his father?' (ᴵ*a-a-bu-ú*), Mannu-kî-ḫāl 'Who is like the maternal uncle?' (ᴵ*man-nu-ki-i-ḫa-la*).

## Compound Names

This type of name consists of two nominal components in a genitive construction. Nominal components can be regular nouns, kinship terms, deities, or passive participles:[56] Abdi-Iššar 'Servant of Iššar' (ᴵ*ab-du-*ᵈ*iš-šar*), Aḫi-abū 'His father's brother' (ᴵŠEŠ-*a-bu-ú*), and Barik-Bēl 'Bēl's blessed one' (ᴵ*ba-ri-ki-*ᵈEN).

## Hypocoristica

The hypocoristic suffix -*ā*, written -ʾ or -*h* in Aramaic and -*Ca-a*/ʾ in Akkadian, is added to most nominal sentence names and compound names. It may be like the Aramaic definite article that is of similar form and is suffixed to nouns as well. Hypocoristic -*ā* became so popular during the first millennium BCE that it replaced other hypocoristic suffixes common during the previous millennium. Moreover, it started to be attached to Arabian and Akkadian names as well.[57] Aramaic examples – with a translation of their nominal bases – are: Abdā 'Servant' (ᴵ*ab-da-*ʾ), ᶠBissā 'Cat' (ᶠ*bi-is-sa-a*), Ḫarimā 'Consecrated' (ᴵ*ḫa-ri-im-ma-*ʾ), Zabudā 'Given' (ᴵ*za-bu-da-a*), and Iltar-gadā (Iltar + fortune; ᴵ*il-tar-ga-da-*ʾ).

   Hypocoristic names with suffix -*ī* tend to be Aramaic. It may be based on the gentilic or suffix 1.sg. and is written -*y* in Aramaic, which is rendered -*Ci-i*/*ia*/*iá* or -*Ci*(-ʾ) in Akkadian:[58] Abnī 'Stone' (ᴵ*ab-ni-i*), Namarī 'Leopard' (ᴵ*na-ma-ri-*ʾ), Raḫimī 'Beloved' (ᴵ*ra-ḫi-mì-i*), and Barikī 'Blessed' (ᴵ*ba-ri-ki-ia*). Its phonological variant is -*ē*.

   One of the hypocoristic suffixes partly replaced by -*ā* is -*ān*, written -*Ca-an*(-*nu*/*ni*), -*Ca-*(*a-*)*nu*/*ni*:[59] Nabān 'Nabû' (ᴵ*na-ba-an-nu*), Binān 'Son' (ᴵ*bi-na-nu*).

   A great deal of variety is achieved by adding combinations of two of these suffixes to nominal formations.[60]

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[55] Zadok 1977, 104–5; Coogan 1976, 76.      [56] Zadok 1977, 105–10.

[57] Hypocoristic suffixes current before the first millennium BCE were -*ay(ya)*, -*at*, and -*ān* (Zadok 1977, 148–53).

[58] For example, the same individual from Nippur is referred to as ᴵ*zab-di-e* and ᴵ*zab-di-ia* (Zadok 1977, 153–6).

[59] Sometimes suffix -*ān* may be adjectival: ᴵ*ḫa-ra-an-na*, derived from *ḫwr* 'to be white', probably means 'the white one' (Zadok 1977, 157–62).

[60] Combinations are also made with other suffixes, like -*t*, -*at*, -*īt*, etc. (Zadok 1977, 163–70).

## One-Word Names

Nearly all names that consist of one word are affixed with a hypocoristic marker. Exceptions are attested in various formations, which often are hard to distinguish due to inconsistent Babylonian spelling.[61]

## Naming Practices

As regards naming practice, it is striking that Babylonian theophoric elements appearing in the Aramaic onomasticon are not the ones prominent in contemporaneous Babylonian names. For instance, hardly any Aramaic names in the Murašû documentation contain the theophoric element Enlil, while this Babylonian deity enjoyed immense popularity in the Nippur area at the time.[62] This also is the case for Enlil's son Ninurta (attested only once) and for Marduk, Nergal, and Sîn. Babylonian gods that are found in greater numbers in Aramaic names are Nabû, who takes second position after Tammeš in Nippur's Aramaic onomasticon, as well as Bēl and Nanāya. Interestingly, Nabû primarily appears in patronyms, which indicates a decline of his prevalence.[63]

In feminine names, a tendency of different order stands out. Although suffixes *-t*, *-at*, *-īt*, and *-ī/ē* are attested, there seems to have been a strong preference for feminine names ending in *-ā*:[64] [f]Barukā 'Blessed' ([f]*ba-ru-ka-ʾ*), [f]Gubbā 'Cistern' ([f]*gu-ub-ba-a*), [f]Ḥannā 'Gracious' ([f]*ḫa-an-na-a*), [f]Nasikat 'Chieftess' ([f]*na-si-ka-tu₄*), [f]Didīt 'Favourite' ([f]*di-di-ti*), and [f]Ḥinnī 'Gracious' ([f]*ḫi-in-ni-ia*).

## Tools for Identifying Aramaic Names in Cuneiform Sources

Various Aramaic verbs have surfaced in the examples. A more extensive – although not exhaustive – overview of verbs commonly attested in Aramaic names is presented in Table 8.1.

Nouns that regularly appear in nominal sentence names are presented in Table 8.2.[65]

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[61] For example, *qatīl*, *qātil*, and *qatil* are hard to distinguish; the same holds for *qatūl* and *qattūl*. For all possible formations, see Zadok (1977, 111–48).

[62] The handful of examples known mostly contain very common verbal elements, such as *barik* and *yahab* (Zadok 1977, 72).

[63] The same pattern is visible in the documentation from other Babylonian cities: Šamaš, who was very popular in Sippar, hardly appears in West Semitic names found in documents from this city (Zadok 1977, 69–76, 175–7).

[64] Zadok 1977, 170–2.

[65] *ʿidr, *simk, *ḫinn/ḥann, *šūr, and *gad are frequently attested in hypocoristica (Zadok 1977, 101).

Table 8.1  *Verbs attested in Aramaic sentence names from the Neo- and Late Babylonian periods*

| Regular verbs | Irregular verbs | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *brk* – to bless | *ʾmr* – to say | *ngh* – to shine |
| *gbr* – to be strong | *ʾty* – to come | *nṭr* – to guard |
| *zbd* – to give, grant | *bny* – to build, create | *nsʾ* – to raise |
| *zbn* – to redeem | *brʾ* – to create | *nṣb* – to place |
| *zrḥ* – to shine | *gʾy* – to be exalted | *ntn* – to give |
| *sgb* – to be exalted | *gbh* – to be exalted | *ʿny* – to answer |
| *smk* – *to* support, sustain | *ḥwr* – to see | *pdy* – to ransom, redeem |
| *srḥ* – to be known | *ḥzy* – to see | *ṣwḥ* – to shout |
| *ʿdr* – to help, support | *ḥnn* – to be gracious, favour | *qwm* – to rise |
| *ʿqb* – to protect | *ḥsy* – to seek refuge | *qny* – to get, create, build |
| *rḥm* – to love, have mercy | *ybb* – to weep | *rwm* – to be high |
| *rkš* – to bind, harness, tie up | *ydʿ* – to know | *rʿy* – to be pleased, content |
| *šlḥ* – to send | *yhb* – to give | *rpʾ* – to heal |
| *šlm* – to be well | *ypʿ* – to be brilliant | *šly* – to be tranquil |
| *šmʿ* – to hear | *yqr* – to be esteemed | *šʾl* – to ask |
| *tmk* – to support | *mny* – to count | *šry* – to release |

Table 8.2  *Nouns attested in Aramaic nominal sentence names from the Neo- and Late Babylonian periods*

| *\*ʾayal* | help | *ʾyl* |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *\*gad* | fortune | *gd* |
| *\*dūr* | wall/bulwark | *dwr* |
| *\*hayl* | strength, wealth | *ḥyl* |
| *\*ḥinn/ḥann* | favour, grace | *ḥnn* |
| *\*layt* | strength | *lʿy* |
| *\*simk* | support | *smk* |
| *\*ʿidr* | help | *ʿdr* |
| *\*šūr* | wall/bulwark | *šwr* |
| *\*tamk* | support | *tmk* |

Nouns that typically appear in compound names are given in Table 8.3.

The outline of elements of which Aramaic names may consist (presented in the section 'Typology of Aramaic Names') and these tables may give a taste of what such names could look like. If one suspects a name to be Aramaic, either the indices of Ran Zadok (1977, 339–81) may be checked, or

Table 8.3 *Nouns attested in Aramaic compound names from the Neo- and Late Babylonian periods*

| *ʾab | father | ʾb |
|---|---|---|
| *ʾaḥ | brother | ʾḥ |
| *ʾamat | female servant | ʾmt |
| *bVr | son | br |
| *bitt | daughter | brt |
| *gē/īr | patron, client | gr |
| *naʿr | servant, young man | nʿr |
| *ʿabd | servant | ʿbd |

Zadok 2014, which includes attestations from later publications as well (the latter in a searchable PDF). As names have not been transcribed, use the Akkadian spelling for a search.

## Further Reading

As has become clear, Zadok (1977) remains the most extensive analysis of West Semitic personal names in sources from the Neo- and Late Babylonian periods. In Zadok (2014) individuals with mainly Aramaic names from the Murašû corpus are set within their socio-economic and geographic frameworks. West Semitic names attested in documents from Yāhūdu, Našar, and Bīt-Abī-râm, published by Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch (2014), are found in the analysis of the onomasticon (pp. 31–93); West Semitic deities are dealt with in the introduction (pp. 12–15). The presence of Aramaean and Chaldean groups in Babylonia is dealt with by Paul-Alain Beaulieu (2013); previous literature on the subject is found in n. 40 (p. 45). On the Aramaic onomasticon and Aramaean ethnic identity in Assyria, see Fales (1991, 1993, and 2018).

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