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# Ammonite and Edomite Personal Names
# in the Light of Assyro-Babylonian Sources

## Abstract

Correct identification and understanding of personal names may be facilitated by a comparison of anthroponyms written in an alphabetic script without vowels with their equivalent in cuneiform script, where the consonants can sometimes be interpreted in two or three different ways. Difficulties and misinterpretations arise when all the factors are not taken into consideration. As examples, the article proposes a few Ammonite and Edomite names of the 8th–6th centuries B.C., attested in West-Semitic epigraphic texts, mainly seal legends, and on clay tablets or stone inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods.

**Keywords**: Personal names Śanīpu, *Ḫaṭṭaš/Ḫaṭṭuš/Ḫaṭṭiš*, *Ba-yad-’Il*, *Padō-’Il*, *Ḥamī-wāsā*, *’Ilī-rām*, *Qaus-gabr*, *’Aḫ-’immeh*, *’Aḫ-’abū*, *Lêt-’aḫuwa*, *Balbal/Bulbul*.

*The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* having been achieved in 2011[1], there is an opportunity to examine some West-Semitic personal names in the light of Assyro-Babylonian cuneiform sources and to pay attention to problems arising from this mixed research field for students not dealing with it usually. The identification of West-Semitic names with names attested in Mesopotamian cuneiform script is not a mechanical operation. It requires an adequate knowledge of the values of cuneiform signs in the period and the region concerned, and an acquaintance with the principles regulating the transcription of West-Semitic syllables in cuneiform script. An approximate approach

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[1]   K. Radner, H.D. Baker (eds.), *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, Helsinki 1998–2011.

to these problems related to Semitic phonology can lead to erroneous conclusions. The writer chose Ammonite and Edomite names rather than Aramaic, Hebrew or Phoenician ones, because they are not so often dealt with.

The well-known Ammonite statuette in the Amman Archaeological Museum (inv. J. 1656) bears a name read *šnb* by Fawzi Zayadine[2], who correctly equated the personage in question with the Ammonite king, whose name appears as ᵐ*Sa-ni-bu* or ᵐ*Sa-ni-pu* in the Annals of Tiglath-Pileser III, to whom he paid tribute in 734 B.C.[3] The name was already read "Sanipu" in the English transcription of the *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*[4]. Commenting this identification in his *Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions* Walter E. Aufrecht wrote: "This posits a common [b] / [p] vocalic interchange"[5]. These words demonstrate an unawareness of the peculiarities of cuneiform script and a lack of acquaintance with linguistic phraseology in general. In fact, an eventual [b] / [p] interchange is not "vocalic", but consonantic or simply phonetic. Besides, the cuneiform sign used in the Annals of Tiglath-Pileser III to designate the Ammonite king can be read indifferently *bu* or *pu*, thus *Sa-ni-bu* or *Sa-ni-pu*. Moreover, the cuneiform name is erroneously transcribed *Šanipu*, without the expected distinction between the cuneiform signs *ša* and *sa*. A problem apparently arises here in view of the use of two distinct sibilants in the sources: *sin* in Neo-Assyrian, *šin* in Ammonite. In reality, however, this problem is easily solved when one knows that phonetic changes in the pronunciation of the Neo-Assyrian dialect led the Neo-Assyrian scribes to use cuneiform signs with "s" to transcribe West-Semitic words and names pronounced with [š][6].

Zayadine's reading *šnb* has been corrected in *šnp* by É. Puech in the inscription of the Amman statuette[7], while Ulrich Hübner rightly noticed that a letter was still following *šnp* and he proposed reading *šnp*'[8]. Instead, the present writer saw there an unmistakable *y*, that he regards as the Ammonite genitive ending. In fact, as shown by *br*, "son of",

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[2]  F. Zayadine, *Note sur l'inscription de la statue d'Amman J. 1656*, "Syria" 5l (1974), pp. 129–136 and pls. III–IV. An excellent colour photograph of the statuette was published in *La Voie Royale*. *9000 ans d'art au Royaume de Jordanie*, Paris 1986, No. 129.

[3]  H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, King of Assyria. Critical Edition with Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, Jerusalem 1994, p. 170, Summ. 7, rev., line 10'; H.D. Baker, R. Zadok, *Sanīpu*, in: *The Propospography* (n. 1), p. 1090b.

[4]  A.L. Oppenheim, in: J.B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed., Princeton 1969, p. 282a: "Sanipu of Bit-Ammon".

[5]  W.E. Aufrecht, *A Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions*, Lewiston-Queenston-Lampeter 1989, p. 109.

[6]  See, for instance, E. Lipiński, *La correspondance des sibilantes dans les textes araméens et les textes cunéiformes néo-assyriens*, in: P. Fronzaroli (ed.), *Atti del Secondo congresso internazionale di linguistica camito-semitica* (Quaderni di semitistica 5), Firenze 1978. pp. 201–210. The same practice is reflected in relation to Hebrew, Phoenician, Ammonite, Moabite, and Edomite.

[7]  É. Puech, *L'inscription de la statue d'Amman et la paléographie ammonite*, "Revue Biblique" 92 (1985), pp. 5–24 (see p. 8). Although this reading was not accepted by F. Zayadine in: *La Voie Royale* (n. 2), p. 106, it appears as epigraphically correct.

[8]  U. Hübner, *Die Ammoniter. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Religion eines Transjordanischen Volkes im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, Wiesbaden 1992, pp. 129, 188–189.

the inscription is written in Aramaic, which usually indicates the final vowels[9]. Also the writing is of the Aramaic type. In the Annals of Tiglath-Pileser III one should thus read *Sa-ni-pu*. In consequence, the consonantal equation *šnp = Sa-ni-pu* is perfect. Besides, the reading *šnp(y)* is confirmed by North-Arabian names. In fact, a name *Śanīpu* or, if one prefers, *Šanīfu*, is well attested in Nabataean and Ṣafaitic onomastics, with two attestations of *šnypw* in Nabataean[10] and at least twenty-one published attestations of *s²nf* in Ṣafaitic[11]. The same name might also occur in earlier cuneiform texts as *Sa-ni-bu/pu-um* or *Za-ni-bu/pu-um*[12], but the alternative spelling with SA/ZA requires an explanation, which is not obvious. It is also unclear whether *Sanabbu* or *Sanappu* in a Neo-Assyrian text from Ashur is etymologically related to *Śanīpu*.

The meaning of *Śanīpu* is unknown according to *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*[13]. In fact, no root *śnp* suitable for a personal name seems to be attested in Northwest Semitic and in Arabic. However, such a verb appears in Ethio-Semitic. In South-Ethiopic *sänäf* generally means "lazy", but *sänäfä* is used in Tigrinya in the sense "to be inactive" and *sänfa* means in Tigre "to be weak". A connotation "peaceful" or "frail" is thus quite possible in another language. The name appears as a good Semitic *qatīl*-type form, used in adjectives, and the root seems to appear also in Sabaic[14] and in Ugaritic[15], but its meaning is not clear.

A name *ḥṭš* appears on two Ammonite seals from the 7th century B.C.[16] The same name is attested most likely in contemporaneous Neo-Assyrian texts as *Ḫa-an-ṭa-si*[17] or *Ḫa-an-ṭu-šú*[18], and in Neo-Babylonian texts as *Ḫa-an-ṭa-šú* or *Ḫa-an-ṭu-(ú/uš-)šú*[19]. The

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[9]  E. Lipiński, *On the Skirts of Canaan in the Iron Age. Historical and Topographical Researches* (Orientalia Lovaniensia. Analecta 135), Leuven 2006, pp. 306–308.

[10]  A. Negev, *Personal Names in the Nabatean Realm* (Qedem 32), Jerusalem 1991, p. 65, No. 1166.

[11]  G. Lankester Harding, *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions*, Toronto 1971, p. 359; F.V. Winnett, G. Lankester Harding, *Inscriptions from Fifty Safaitic Cairns*, Toronto 1978, p. 587.

[12]  I.J. Gelb, *Computer-Aided Analysis of Amorite* (Assyriological Studies 21), Chicago 1980, p. 128.

[13]  H.D. Baker, N. Zadok, *Sanīpu*, in: *The Prosopography* (n. 1), p. 1090.

[14]  A.F.L. Beeston, M.A. Ghul, W.W. Müller, J. Ryckmans, *Dictionnaire sabéen / Sabaic Dictionary*, Louvain-la-Neuve-Beyrouth 1982, p. 133: *s²nf*.

[15]  *KTU* 1.39, 10; 1.50, 6.

[16]  W.E. Aufrecht, *A Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions* (n. 5), Nos. 69 and 74; N. Avigad, B. Sass, *Corpus of West-Semitic Stamp Seals*, Jerusalem 1997, Nos. 883 and 929; see also No. 493 (Hebrew). An excellent photograph of the second seal is published in *La Voie Royale* (n. 2), No. 175.

[17]  K.L. Tallqvist, *Assyrian Personal Names*, Helsingfors 1914 (reprint, Hildesheim 1966), p. 86a; P. Gentili, *Ḫanṭasu or Ḫandasu*, in: *The Prosopography* (n. 1), p. 456b.

[18]  Th. Kwasman, S. Parpola, *Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh, Part I: Tiglath-Pileser III through Esarhaddon* (State Archives of Assyria VI), Helsinki 1991, No. 52, r. 10; A.M. Bagg, *Ḫanṭušu*, in: *The Prosopography* (n. 1), pp. 456–457.

[19]  K.L. Tallqvist, *Neubabylonisches Namenbuch*, Helsingfors 1905, p. 66b; R.P. Dougherty, *Records from Erech, Time of Nabonidus (555–538 B.C.)* (Yale Oriental Series 6), New Haven 1920, No. 182, 3; G. Contenau, *Contrats néo-babyloniens* II (Textes cunéiformes du Louvre 13), Paris 1929, No. 193, 33.50. The man mentioned in this last text was son of *Ka-mu-šu-i-lu*/DINGIR.MEŠ, a patronymic that confirms the use of this proper name in Iron Age Transjordan. For these last texts, both dated in 505 B.C., see also K. Abraham, *Business and Politics under*

difference in the sibilant is due again to the fact that there was a shift in the pronunciation of Neo-Assyrian, while the *n* indicates the dissimilation of a geminated *ṭ*.

The vocalization reveals the existence of two variant forms of the name, viz. *Ḫaṭṭāš* and *Ḫaṭṭūš*, unless the cuneiform signs in "u" express an *ō* resulting from the well-known vocalic change *ā > ō*. However, the biblical form *Ḫaṭṭūš* of the same name favours a *qattūl*-pattern. The name is frequently attested in Ṣafaitic as *ḫts*[20] and once as *ḥts*[21]. The latter form obviously represents the same name, but it is written in this particular case with an Aramaized spelling that does not distinguish *ḫ* and *ḥ*. The name occurs once in Nabataean under the form *ḫtyšw*[22] with the final *-w*, typical of Nabataean proper names. This later spelling implies a pronunciation *Ḫaṭṭīš* or rather *Ḫaṭṭēš*, as suggested by the Greek transcription Χαττεσος[23] which confirms the gemination of *ṭ*. In the Hebrew Bible, the name is vocalized *Ḫaṭṭūš* [24], and its Greek transliteration is Χαττους or Αττους. Both confirm the existence of a variant of the *qattūl*-type, to which we should relate the cuneiform spelling *Ḫa-an-ṭu-(ú/uš-)šú*. The root in question is certainty *ḫṭš*.

Despite its numerous attestations in West-Semitic onomastics, the meaning of the name *Ḫaṭṭāš / Ḫaṭṭūš / Ḫaṭṭī/ēš* is unknown according to *The Prosopography* (p. 456) and to other publications. However, like in the case of *śanīpu*, a reference should be made to Tigre *ḥaṭṭäša*, "to sneeze", and to Harari *ḥaṭṭiš bäya*, "to say *ḥaṭṭiš*", i.e. "to sneeze". This expression shows the onomatopoeic origin of the root and explains its vocalic variations. Although the Ge'ez root is '*atäsä*, like Arabic '*aṭasa*, "to sneeze", an old relation to Tigre *ḥaṭṭäša* is possible. In this case, the personal name would mean "Sneezer", like Arabic '*āṭis*, a frequent anthroponym in Ṣafaitic ('*ṭs¹*), attested also in Ṯamūdic[25] and in Nabataean ('*ṭšw*)[26].

If the proposed explanation of the names *Śanīpu* and *Ḫaṭṭīš* (with variants) is correct, this hides unknown historical events that should have taken place around 1000 B.C.,[27] bringing some Tigre people from Eritrea to Transjordan. In that period, the eastern Tigrean plateau was partly included in the cultural Afro-Arabian complex[28].

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*the Persian Empire*, Bethesda 2004, Nos. 121 and 141. Cf. R. Zadok, *Phoenicians, Philistines, and Moabites in Mesopotamia*, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 230 (1978), pp. 57–65 (see p. 62).

[20] G. Lankester Harding, *An Index and Concordance* (n. 11), p. 223.

[21] Ibid., p. 193.

[22] A. Negev, *Personal Names* (n. 10), p. 28, No. 427.

[23] H. Wuthnow, *Die semitischen Menschennamen in griechischen Inschriften und Papyri des Vorderen Orients*, Leipzig 1930, p. 140.

[24] Ezra 8:2; Nehemiah 3:10; 10:5; 12:2; I Chronicles 3:22.

[25] G. Lankester Harding, *An Index and Concordance* (n. 11), p. 424; F.V. Winnett, G. Lankester Harding, *Inscriptions* (n. 11), p. 595.

[26] A. Negev, *Personal Names* (n. 10), p. 50, No. 877.

[27] In fact, the names are not attested in the Amorite-Canaanite anthroponomy of the second millennium B.C.

[28] R. Fattovich, *The Afro-Arabian Circuit: Contacts between the Horn of Africa and Southern Arabia in the 3rd–2nd Millennia B.C.*, in L. Krzyżaniak, K. Kroeper, M. Kobusiewicz (eds.), *Interregional Contacts in the Later Prehistory of Northeastern Africa*, Poznań 1996, pp. 395–402 (see p. 398).

The sense of the anthroponyms in question is explained by the name *Ḫaṭṭušu-al-di-i*[29], where *aldî* stands for the suffixed Northwest-Semitic word *ḥld*, "lasting life", in Arabic *ḫld*. The name thus means "Sneezing for my lasting life" and shows that the proper name "Sneezer" expresses the venerable and widespread belief surviving in the custom of saying "God bless you!" or "Good health!", when a person sneezes. It is a "good luck!" wish, applied to the newborn child. The same wish is expressed by the names *Ḫaldû*, *Ḫldw*, *Ḫldy*, Αλδη, Χαλδη, *Ḫld'*, *Ḫld*, *Ḫālid* in Old Arabian and in Arabic: "Lasting life!".

On several Ammonite seals appears the name *byd'l* or *bd'l*[30], „In the hand" or "By the hand of God". This West-Semitic name occurs frequently in Neo-Assyrian and in Neo-Babylonian texts where it is spelt *Ba-a-a-di*-DINGIR[31] or *Ba-a-di*-DINGIR[32], but also *Ba-di*-DINGIR[33] and *Ba-a-du*-DINGIR[34]. The logogram DINGIR stands for the word "God" and can be transcribed *èl* or *ìl*. The variant *Ba-a-a-di*-DINGIR shows that the first part of the name is *Ba-yad-*, which exactly corresponds to *Byd'l*. It can be shortened to *Bād-*, which corresponds in turn to *Bd'l*.

Besides, the name of an Ammonite king is often transcribed *Bu-du*-DINGIR[35]. However, this royal figure has nothing to do with *Bd'l*, despite older opinions in the contrary. One should read his name *Pu-du*-DINGIR and identify the king in question with *pd'l*[36], "God has redeemed". The same Ammonite name is also transcribed *Pa-du-ú*-DINGIR in a Neo-Assyrian text mentioning two small golden rings presented to the Ammonite king on the occasion of his visit at the Assyrian court in Nineveh[37]. The other members of the Ammonite delegation received each a silver ring[38]. Both spellings *Pu-du-* and *Pa-du-ú-* indicate that the vowel *ā* in the second syllable of the verbal form changed into *ō* or *ū*, thus. *Padō-'Il* or *Padū-'Il*. The spelling *Pu-du*-DINGIR does not

[29]   D. Schwemer, *Ḫaṭṭušu-aldî*, in: *The Prosopography* (n. 1), p. 466b.

[30]   W.E. Aufrecht, *A Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions* (n. 5), Nos. 13, 26, 47, 99, 100, 103, 135. Excellent photographs of Nos. l3 and 135 were published in *La Voie Royale* (n. 2), Nos. 173 and 185. See also N. Avigad, B. Sass, *Corpus of West-Semitic Stamp Seals* (n. 16), Nos. 908 and 921.

[31]   K.L. Tallqvist, *Assyrian Personal Names* (n. 17), p. 49a; C. Ambos, M. Nissinen, *Baiadi-il*, in: *The Prosopography* (n. 1), p. 253.

[32]   J.N. Strassmaier, *Einige kleinere babylonische Keilschrifttexte aus dem Britischen Museum*, in: *Actes du Huitième congrès international des orientalistes. Deuxième partie*, Leiden 1893, Section I B, pp. 281–283 and pls. 1–35 (see No. 26, 17).

[33]   A.T. Clay, *Legal and Commercial Transactions* (The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania. Series A: Cuneiform Texts 8/1), Philadelphia 1908, No. 113, 4.

[34]   R.P. Dougherty, *Records from Erech* (n. 19), No. 30, 2. Instead, there is no variant *Ba-ia-a-di*-DINGIR, as reported by R. Zadok, *On West Semites in Babylonia during the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods. An Onomastic Study*, 2nd ed., Jerusalem 1978, p. 110. The name should be read ᵐ*Ia-a-di*-DINGIR; cf. Th. Kwasman, S. Parpola, *Legal Transactions* (n. 18), No. 175, 1; H.D. Baker, *Iadī'-il*, in: *The Prosopography* (n. 1), pp. 486–487.

[35]   K.L. Tallqvist, *Assyrian Personal Names* (n. 17), p. 64a; M. Nissinen, *Būdi-il 1*, in: *The Prosopography* (n. 1), p. 350a.

[36]   W.E. Aufrecht, *A Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions* (n. 5), Nos. 13 and 33. The first seal is reproduced in *La Voie Royale* (n. 2), No. 173. See also N. Avigad, B. Sass, *Corpus of West-Semitic Stamp Seals* (n. 16), Nos. 857 and 965.

[37]   F.M. Fales, J.N. Postgate, *Imperial Administrative Records, Part I: Palace and Temple Administration* (State Archives of Assyria VII), Helsinki 1992, No. 58, I, 4'–6'.

[38]   Ibid., lines 7'–10'.

represent a real Ammonite pronunciation of the name: it reflects the usual Assyrian vowel harmony. In fact, there is a typically Assyrian trend to harmonize the quality of the vowels, in this particular case under the influence of the long and probably stressed vowel *ō / ū*.

On a seal found at Tell el-Mazār appears the interesting feminine name *ḥmyws'*[39], the first element of which is the West-Semitic and Arabic noun *ḥam*, "father-in-law", while the predicate *ws'* can be related to Arabic *wāsā*, "to help, to be generous"[40]. The name should thus mean "My father-in-law was generous", possibly a mother's allusion to the marriage and to the following good life conditions. This interpretation of the name excludes any relation between the element *ḥmy* and the Neo-Assyrian feminine name *Ḥammāia* with geminated *m*, since *ḥam*, "father-in-law", derives from the root *ḥamā* (*ḥmw/y*), "to protect"[41]. The seal was found in a tomb dating apparently from the 5th century B.C., but this lower date is not recommended for the seal either by palaeography or by the use of the internal *yōd*, because the final semivowel of *ḥmw/y* belongs to the root.

The second element of the name cannot be related to the Old Arabian personal name *Ywṯ'*, which appears in official Neo-Assyrian documents as *Ia-ú-ta-'*[42]. In fact, the usual Assyrian and Babylonian transcription of the Arabian interdental *ṯ* is *t*, and we know at present that its West-Semitic transcription may be *s*, which is the normal rendering of etymological *ṯ* in the Aramaic inscription of Tell Fekherye[43]. This scribal practice is also attested by the Hebrew transcription *b'lys* of the name of the Ammonite king *b'lyš'* (/Ba'alyaṯa'/)[44], with an omission of the final *'ayin*[45]. However, on the seal from Tell el-Mazār, the *'ayin* cannot be replaced by an *'alif*.

The name *'lrm*, "My god is exalted", appears on a seal of unknown provenance, dating from about 700 B.C. and belonging to *'bd' n'r 'lrm*[46], a servant of high position, as shown by his title *n'r*[47]. The *'lrm* in question was probably a manager of the Edomite

[39]   W.E. Aufrecht, *A Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions* (n. 5), No. 117; N. Avigad, B. Sass, *Corpus of West-Semitic Stamp Seals* (n. 16), No. 872.

[40]   This was suggested by the seal's editors, K. Yassine and P. Bordreuil, in K. Yassine (ed.), *Tell el Mazar I. Cemetery A*, Amman 1984, pp. 132–134. The verb *wāsā* is a dialectal variant of *'āsā*; cf. Ch. Rabin, *Ancient West-Arabian*, London 1951, p. 33.

[41]   E.A. Knauf, *Supplementa Ismaelitica*, "Biblische Notizen" 25 (1984), pp. 19–26 (see pp. 24–26).

[42]   K.L. Tallqvist, *Assyrian Personal Names* (n. 17), p. 93a; H.D. Baker, *Iauta'*, in: *The Prosopography* (n. 1), pp. 497–498. See also I. Eph'al, *The Ancient Arabs*, Jerusalem 1982, pp. 55 and 113–114.

[43]   A. Abou-Assaf , P. Bordreuil, A.R. Millard, *La statue de Tell Fekherye et son inscription bilingue assyro-araméenne*, Paris 1982. pp. 43–44.

[44]   W.E. Aufrecht, *A Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions* (n. 5), No. 129; N. Avigad, B. Sass, *Corpus of West-Semitic Stamp Seals* (n. 16), No. 860. One should also mention G.A. Rendsburg, *The Ammonite Phoneme* /ṯ/, "Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research" 269 (1988), pp. 73–79.

[45]   B. Becking, *Baalis, the King of the Ammonites: An Epigraphical Note on Jeremiah 40:41*, "Journal of Semitic Studies" 38 (1993), pp. 15–21.

[46]   W.E. Aufrecht, *A Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions* (n. 5), No. 55; N. Avigad, B. Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (n. 16), No. 864.

[47]   N. Avigad, *New Light on the Na'ar Seals*, in F.M. Cross, W.E. Lemke, P.D. Miller (eds.), *Magnalia Dei. The Mighty Acts of God. Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright*, Garden City 1976, pp. 294–300.

royal court since the title *n'r* appears in connection with royal names, as in II Sam.
9:9 and in seal impressions of *'lyqm n'r ywkn*, an abridged spelling of king Jehoiachin's
name (597 B.C.)[48]. In fact, the *mêm* of the seal inscription seems to be Edomite, instead
of being Ammonite, as proposed by W.E. Aufrecht and some other authors. The assumed
king in question is likely to be mentioned in the Annals of Sennacherib, where his
name should be read <sup>m</sup>DINGIR-*a-a-ram-mu*[49], i.e. *'Ilāya-rām*, "My god is exalted",
with the Aramaic/Arabic theophorous element *'ilā(h)*. It can by no means be interpreted
"Ea is exalted", as done in *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*[50], with
a Mesopotamian divine name.

During the excavations of Crystal Bennett at Umm el-Biyara, the impression of
a seal of a king of Edom was discovered and correctly read *qwsg*[*br*] above a sphinx
advancing to the right, and *mlk '*[*dm*] under the sphinx[51]. The left part of the seal was not
completely impressed on the document, that was lost, but the king's name could easily be
restored thanks to Neo-Assyrian mentions of an Edomite king *Qa-uš-gab-ri* in inscriptions
of Esarhaddon and of Ashurbanipal[52]. The theophorous element is transliterated *Qa-uš*,
which perfectly corresponds to the Edomite form *Qaws*. The predicate is vocalized *gabr*,
because the final vowel of the name should be viewed at that time either as a purely
graphic feature or as a short vowel. This word corresponds to Hebrew *geḇer*, that usually
means "man", but one should check here the meaning of *geḇer* in the Book of Job, which
was probably composed in a language different from Classical Hebrew, most likely in
a Transjordanian idiom. Now, in Job 38, 3 and 40, 7 *geḇer* clearly means "hero". Thus,
the name *Qaus-gabr* probably signifies "Qaus is a hero".

In an Edomite ostracon found in 1983 at Ḥorvat 'Uzza, some 8 km. southwest of
the modern city of Arad, appears a personal name *'ḥ'mh*[53]. The same name is spelt
ŠEŠ-*im-me-e*/' in Neo-Babylonian texts[54] and it occurs in several Neo-Assyrian texts
from the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. under the forms PAP-*im-me-e*, PAP-*im-me* or PAP-*me-e*[55].
Both logograms PAP and ŠEŠ stand for *aḫu*, "brother", and they are interchangeable.

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[48]  R. Hestrin, M. Dayagi-Mendels (eds.), *Ḥotmōt mēmē Bayt ri'šōn*, Jerusalem 1978, pp. 22–23, Nos. 8–9.

[49]  D.D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (OIP 2), Chicago 1924, p. 30, line 57 (cf. ibid., p. 169);
E. Frahm, *Einleitung in die Sancherib-Inschriften* (AfO. Beih. 26), Wien 1997, p. 53, line 37.

[50]  K. Radner, *Aia-rāmu 2*, in: *The Prosopography* (n. 1), p. 92.

[51]  C.-M. Bennett, *Fouilles d'Umm el-Biyara*, "Revue Biblique" 73 (1966), pp. 372–403 and pls. XIV–XXV
(see pp. 399–401 and pl. XXII*b*). See also N. Avigad, B. Sass, *Corpus of West-Semitic Stamp Seals* (n. 16), Nos.
1048 and 1049.

[52]  K.L. Tallqvist, *Assyrian Personal Names* (n. 17), p. 183b; J. Llop, *Qauš-gabri*, in: *The Prosopography* (n. 1),
p. 111a.

[53]  I. Beit-Arieh, B. Cresson, *An Edomite Ostracon from Horvat 'Uza*, "Tel Aviv" 12 (1985), pp. 96–101 and pl.
12, 2. See also N. Avigad, B. Sass, *Corpus of West-Semitic Stamp Seals* (n. 16), Nos. 54 and 618, both apparently
Hebrew.

[54]  K.L. Tallqvist, *Neubabylonisches Namenbuch* (n. 19), p. 4a.

[55]  K.L. Tallqvist, *Assyrian Personal Names* (n. 17), p. 16b; K. Radner, A. Berlejung, *Aḫ-immâ, Aḫ-immê*, in:
*The Prosopography* (n. 1), pp. 65b–66b.

From the comparison of these names it is evident that they do not mean "The brother is with him", but "The brother of his mother", *'Aḫ-'immeh*. The noun "mother" is vocalized *'imm* in the above mentioned Assyro-Babylonian texts, but *'umm* is attested in ŠEŠ-*um-me-e*[56]. It is a secondary form resulting from the labialization of the vowel *i* under the influence of the nasal labial *m*. Therefore, we cannot decide whether the Edomite noun "mother" was *'imm* or *'umm*. Perhaps both dialectal forms coexisted. The *h* of the suffix cannot be expressed as such in cuneiform script, but it results from the spellings *-me-e* and *-me-'* that the end of the name was *-eh*, exactly as in Aramaic and probably in Edomite. The interpretation of the name is confirmed by the Babylonian name *A-ḫi-um-mi-šu*, "The brother of his mother", i.e. "His uncle"[57].

The shorter form PAP-*me-e* of the name in question is attested also in West-Semitic epigraphy by an Aramaic seal bearing the name *'ḥmh*[58]. The *'alif* is dropped here and the name was pronounced *'Aḥimmeh* or *'Aḥummeh* without the internal glottal stop.

What does such a name mean? It means that the newborn child takes the place of his deceased maternal uncle in the family. He is "the brother of his mother". This does not imply a belief in the reincarnation, which is not attested among the Semites, but it reveals a strong feeling of the continuation of the family, of the permanence of the "Name".

One should relate this kind of proper names to a similar onomastic group in which the second element of the name is "father", *'bw*, probably pronounced *'abuw*(*a*), a dialectal form derived from *'abūha* or *'abūh*(i), "her father", "his father", as suggested by the analogy with the Hebrew dialectal tradition in which *'abīhu* becomes *'abīw*.

This interpretation is confirmed by Assyro-Babylonian names like ᶠ*A-ḫat-abi-šu* / ᶠ*Aḫat-abi-šá*[59] "The sister of her father", i.e. "Her aunt".

Now, a West-Semitic name ŠEŠ-*a-bu -ú*[60], ŠEŠ-*bu -ú*[61] or PAP-*a-bu-u*[62], PAP-*bu-u*[63] occurs frequently in Assyro-Babylonian texts. Its shorter form is by no means a scribal error: it is a phonetic spelling reflecting the pronunciation *'Aḫabuw* with the loss of the initial *'alif* of *'abū*. It is attested also in Aramaic script as *'ḥbw*, in the 7th century B.C.[64]

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[56] K.L. Tallqvist, *Assyrian Personal Names* (n. 17), p. 18a.

[57] J.J. Stamm, *Die akkadische Namengebung*, Leipzig 1939, p. 302.

[58] P. Bordreuil, A. Lemaire, *Nouveaux sceaux hébreux, araméens et ammonites*, "Semitica" 26 (1976), pp. 45–63 (see p. 48); N. Avigad, B. Sass, *Corpus of West-Semitic Stamp Seals* (n. 16), No. 1104.

[59] K.L. Tallqvist, *Assyrian Personal Names* (n. 17), p. 14a; S. Aro-Valius, M. Nissinen, *Aḫāt-abīša*, and F.M. Fales, *Aḫāt-abû*, in: *The Prosopography* (n. 1), p. 9.

[60] A.T. Clay, *Business Documents of Murashû Sons dated in the Reign of Darius II (424–404 B.C.)* (The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania. Series A: Cuneiform Texts t0), Philadelphia 1904, No. 93, 4.

[61] A.T. Clay, *Business Documents of Murashu Sons dated in the Reign of Darius II* (University of Pennsylvania. The Museum: Publications of the Babylonian Section 2/1), Philadelphia 1912, No. 136, 4.

[62] Th. Kwasman, S. Parpola, *Legal Transactions* (n. 18), No. 134, r. 7'; K. Fabritius, *Aḫ-abû*, in: *The Propopography* (n. 1), pp. 57–58. See also id., *Aḫ-abi* and *Aḫu-abū'a*, in: ibid., pp. 57 and 69.

[63] *Ma'lānā/Ma'allanate* tablets O. 3659, line 23; O.3685, lines 37 and 38.

[64] D. Bonatz, H. Kühne, A. Mahmoud, *Rivers and Steppes, Catalogue to the Museum of Deir ez-Zor*, Deir ez-Zor 1998, p. 125, No. 119, line 1; E. Lipiński, *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics* III. *Ma'lānā* (OLA 200), Leuven 2010, p. 115: O.3659, line 6.

Another name of this group occurs in Minaic inscriptions from Hellenistic period, that mention two women from Gaza called *ṣlmbw*[65]. The identical name appears at Dura-Europos in a Greek inscription from 36/37 A.D., where the woman is called Σαλαμβουα[66]. This name has nothing in common with the Carthaginian *Salammbô*, best known from G. Flaubert's novel, but it means "Image of her father". Another name of this group occurring at Dura-Europos is Ἰ[μ]αβουα[67], which is attested at Palmyra as [']*mbw*[68]. It means "The mother of her father", i.e. "Her grandmother".

There is another feminine name at Dura-Europos that seems to be related to this group, namely Ληθαχουας[69], which could be interpreted as *\*lêt-'aḫuwa*, "The strength of her brother", possibly an allusion to the weakness of an elder brother who will need the help of his sister. This name has a partial parallel in cuneiform texts, namely PAP-*li-'-ti/te* or ŠEŠ-*li-ti-'/ia*[70], "The brother is my strength". *L'yt* is a noun derived from the old Semitic root *l'y*, "to be strong".

All the Greek transcriptions of these names seem to imply a pronunciation *'abuwa / 'aḫuwa*, and the cuneiform spelling with final *-u / -ú* may be interpreted in the same way. In fact, the additional vowel sign *-u / -ú* could be read *-wa* at the end of a name. This appears, for instance, from the occasional spelling *Ni-nu-u* of the city-name Nineveh, instead of the usual *Ni-nu-a* and of the older *Ni-nu-wa*. The Aramaic spelling *'ḫbw* in the 7th century B.C. or *'ḫtbw* in 482 B.C.[71] does not contradict this interpretation, because the short vowels were generally not indicated at that time, not even at the end of a word. A possible parallel is found at the end of the 12th century B.C., when the final vowels were still correctly written in cuneiform script. We find there a name DUMU-ŠEŠ-*at-tu-ú-a*[72], apparently "The son of my sisters", *Bar/Mār-'aḫattū'a*, to be compared with later *Bar-aḫātī*, "My sister's son"[73]. Some speculation is required here to explain this name, implying perhaps that the mother died and that the father's sisters should take care of the child.

To finish with an easier case, one may refer to the ostracon from Ḥorvat 'Uzza mentioning *'ḥ'mh*. One can also read there the name *blbl*, which is already attested in

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[65] Ch. Robin, *À propos de Ṣdmb'l: deux femmes de Gaza nommées Ṣlmbw chez les Minéens d'Arabie du Sud*, "Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Etudes", IVᵉ section 1975–1976, pp. 184–190. There is, of course, no relation between the feminine name *ṣlmbw* and the name of the Punic god *ṣdmb'l*, "Image of Baal".

[66] F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos (1922–1923)*, Paris 1926, p. 418, No. 68, and pl. CXIV, 5.

[67] Ibid., p. 412, No. 57, and pl. CXIII, 5.

[68] J.K. Stark, *Personal Names in Palmyrene Inscriptions*, Oxford 1971, p. 5a.

[69] F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos* (n. 66), p. 421, No. 72, and pl. CXV, 1.

[70] K.L. Tallqvist, *Assyrian Personal Names* (n. 17), p. 17a; A. Berlejung, *Aḫi-lēti* and *Aḫu-lē'ûti*, in: *The Prosopography* (n. 1), pp. 65–66 and 83; cf. R. Zadok, *On West Semites* (n. 34), p. 54 and 356a.

[71] J.C.L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* II. *Aramaic Inscriptions*, Oxford 1975, No. 23A.

[72] W.J. Hinke, *A New Boundary Stone of Nebuchadnezzar I from Nippur* (The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania. Series D: Researches and Treatises 4), Philadelphia 1907, p. 142–155, col. II, 27; III, 8; K.L. Tallqvist, *Assyrian Personal Names* (n. 17), p. l4b: *ālu ša* DUMU-ŠEŠ-*at-tu-ú-a*.

[73] F.M. Fales, *Bar-aḫātī*, in: *The Prosopography* (n. 1), p. 269.

the Old Babylonian period as *Ba-al-ba-lum*[74], with the mimation characteristic of that period. It is perhaps the "nightingale", in Arabic *bulbul*, but in plural *balābil*. The different vowel cannot be considered here as a difficulty when we observe that the coq's chant is called *cocorico* in French, *chichirichi* in Italian, and *kukuryku* in Polish.

The purpose of this paper was to present some new solutions and to show the relevance of a comparative study of Semitic names attested in alphabetic and in cuneiform scripts for their interpretation and understanding. Onomastics is, in fact, an important aspect of epigraphic studies, particularly in the field of West-Semitic and North-Arabian.

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[74]  I.J. Gelb, *Computer-Aided Analysis* (n. 12). p. 116.