



ARCHIVUM ANATOLICUM (ArAn)	13/1	2019	43-55
----------------------------	------	------	-------

AN ARAMAIC DOCKET ON CLAY FROM KAHRAMANMARAŞ

*Frederick Mario FALES**
ORCID: 0000-0003-4642-7803

Makale Bilgisi

Başvuru: 11 Nisan 2019
Kabul: 12 Haziran 2019

Article Info

Received: April 11, 2019
Accepted: June 12, 2019

Abstract

Within the small corpus of texts of Neo-Assyrian date from Kahramanmaraş, there is a clay tablet in Aramaic alphabetic script, bearing the envanter number 36-25-07.¹ I have examined the text in detail through a set of color photographs, which were kindly provided to me. Unfortunately, as will be said in detail below, the piece presents some abrasions on its written surface, and the script tends moreover to “snake” somewhat around the corners and folds of the clay; these two factors (which partially deceive even good photographic reproductions) have thus influenced negatively both the time required

* Senior Professor at the University of Udine, Italy. E-mail: mario.fales@gmail.com; website : <https://mariofales.academia.edu/>.

¹ I am very grateful to Dr. Faruk Akyüz, and to Dr. Salih Çeçen for kindly entrusting me the reading and interpretation of this Aramaic tablet. As quite often in the past, I have availed myself of the friendly collaboration and advice of Dr. Ezio Attardo (Padua), to whom I am very grateful, in matters of Aramaic palaeography – although the final interpretations are entirely my responsibility.

to establish an acceptable reading of the signs, and the overall interpretation of the inscription. An autoptic, i.e. direct, examination of the tablet might yield some further results; but for the time being, the present – still rather tentative – version may be offered.

Key Words: Neo-Assyrian Period, Aramaic, Aramaic Docket, Marqasi

Öz

Kahramanmaraş'tan Aramca Bir Kil Etiket

Kahramanmaraş'ta bulunmuş küçük bir Yeni Asurca metin grubu içinde, 36-25-07 envanter numaralı Arami alfabe yazılı bir kil tablet vardır. Tarafıma gönderilen tabletin renki fotoğrafları sayesinde metni detaylı bir şekilde inceledim. Maalesef aşağıda ayrıntılı şekilde belirtileceği üzere, tabletin yazılı kısmının bir bölümünde silinti mevcuttur. Ayrıca yazı bir şekilde tabletin köşe ve kenarlarında yayvan bir şekilde yazılmıştır. Bu iki unsur (ki kaliteli fotoğraflara rağmen kısmen yanıltıcıdır) hem işaretlerin mâkul bir şekilde okunabilmesi için gereken zamana ihtiyaç doğurmuştur hem de yazıtın etraflıca yorumlanmasını olumsuz yönde etkilemiştir. Tabletın gözleme dayalı olarak, yani doğrudan elle tutularak incelenmesi, daha fazla ve sağlıklı sonuçlar elde edilmesini sağlayabilir; fakat –hala belirsiz olsa da- bu şekliyle tanıtılabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeni Asur Dönemi, Aramca, Aramca etiket, Marqasi

The text is in the shape of a basically equilateral triangle, similar to many monolingual Aramaic exemplars on clay from the last century of the Neo-Assyrian empire, especially from the northwestern reaches of Mesopotamia, around the Euphrates river basin.² As in various other known cases, the tablet does not show a flattened central surface, but rather a somewhat “heart-like” shape, with rounded edges / angles and a bulbous body (Fig. 1).³ It may be thus

2 See essentially Frederick Mario Fales *Aramaic Epigraphs on Clay Tablets of the Neo-Assyrian Period*, (Roma: Università degli studi "La Sapienza", 1986); André Lemaire *Nouvelles Tablettes Araméens* (Genève: Librairie Droz S.A., 2001); Fales et al. 2005; Edward Lipiński *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics, Volume III. Ma'alana*, (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2010); Wolfgang Röllig, *Die Aramäischen Texte aus Tall Šēh Hamad/Dūr Katlimmu/Magdalu*, (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz-Verlag, 2014.)

3 A definition of this type is given by Röllig 2014: 6 for the relevant exemplars from Tall Šēh Hamad, which nowadays form part of the most extensive and best-preserved group of

formally classified as triangular “docket”, in which a legal transaction – generally, a loan of some commodity – was recorded in abridged and essential form.⁴ The writing proceeds from right to left in lines parallel to the upper edge – i.e. getting progressively shorter, line after line, due to the triangular shape. The same layout marks both sides of the text: in other words, the passage from Obverse to Reverse was obtained by “turning” the tablet on its vertical axis, as one does a page in a book, and not by “scrolling” it on its horizontal axis, as in the contemporaneous cuneiform documents.

On the top edge, traces of a cavity, through which a string (secured by a knot) should have been drawn, are clearly visible at one of the edges, but a second (less well-preserved) cavity might have marked the opposite edge as well. The remainder of the top edge is taken up by two stamp seals (Fig. 2).⁵ In sum, this part of the text is totally coherent with other exemplars of the same type, as the margin through which the docket was attached by a string to another object: whether to the handle of a jar/basket in which the described wares could have been held, or to a further Aramaic text, possibly written in ink on parchment and formed into a cylindrical roll – depending on the theoretical reconstruction which one chooses to follow.⁶ In both cases, however, the function of the triangular docket would be essentially that of providing a sort of sealing and/or a legal guarantee regarding a business transaction between private parties.

monolingual Aramaic texts on clay from the 7th century BC. Further mixed alphabetic and cuneiform archives of different sizes from the same findspots (see Fales et al. 2005: 604-615) come from Assur, (three different archives), Guzana (ancient Tell Halaf), and – on the Euphrates riverbank – from Tell Aḥmar (ancient Til Barsib/p), and Tell Shiukh Fawqani (ancient *Burmarina*). Finally, an unprovenanced site on the (northwestern?) reaches of the Upper Habur is *Ma'lānā/Ma'lanate*, whose Assyro-Aramaic archives are held in the Brussels Museum (see Lipiński, *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics, Volume III. Ma'alana*, 2010; Frederick Mario Fales “Review of Lipiński” *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 70, (2013): 204-210. The contents of the *Ma'lanate* tablets in Aramaic have been most recently described anew in D. Homès-Fredericq – Paul Garelli *Ma'allānāte, archives d'un centre provincial de l'empire assyrien*, (Bruxelles: Centre Assyriologique Georges Dossin, 2018.) a multi-authored publication mainly centered on the cuneiform texts (and the relevant seal-impressions) from the same site.

4 On this category of texts, cf. Fales, *Aramaic Epigraphs on Clay Tablets of the Neo-Assyrian Period*, 18-24; Röellig, *Die Aramäischen Texte aus Tall Šēḫ Hamad/Dūr Katlimmu/Magdalū*, 5-6, 17.

5 I leave the question of the representations in these seals to more expert knowledge than mine – although it may be noticed that the two scenes show some decided figurative similarities (an animal facing left?).

6 Cf. John Nicholas Postgate, *Fifty Neo-Assyrian Legal Documents*, (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1976), 5; Karen Radner, *Die neuassyrischen Privatrechtssurkunden als Quelle für Mensch und Umwelt*, (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 27.

In comparison to various other poorly preserved exemplars from the same period, the layering of the clay of the Kahramanmaraş docket seems to have been rather solidly accomplished, and it has luckily not been affected by humidity over time, so that minute surface cracks have been avoided. However, traces of a right-left abrasion are present on the right-hand upper side of the Obverse, affecting the surface “slip” on which the letters were incised, so that the first three lines on this margin are only partially legible. Additionally, the excavators' choice of writing the find number in black ink exactly on this abrasion is of no help (Fig. 3). A further break is present at the end of the Obverse (bottom tip of the triangle), with the presumable loss of one line of text. On the other hand, the Reverse is completely preserved, although the reading of the last line remains doubtful (Fig. 4).

The palaeography of the document reflects to some extent the gamut of slight variants to be observed also elsewhere, ranging between the traditional standards of 9th-7th-century monumental Aramaic ductus and some modifications toward the cursive to be observed here and there in the 8th-7th-century “argillary” corpus. The main sign-shapes may be thus described (see also the selective palaeographic table):

- the *'aleph* shows both bars of the horizontal cutting across the vertical, and meeting at a "V" to the left of it (e.g. on Rev. 3);
- the similar-looking *bet*, *reš*, *dalet* are mainly open, but not always (cf. e.g. Rev. 4 for a totally closed *bet*) and certainly not wide open: their variations recall those present at Tall Šēḥ Ḥamad;⁷ to the opposite, the sole plausible *'ayin* (Rev. 4) would seem closed.
- *Waw* alternates between an “upside-down h” type (Rev. 2) and a more “y-type” shape (Rev. 4).
- *Zayin* and *yod* are quite clear as such: the latter is marked by a decided left-hand tick, cutting the sign in half, whereas the former has a smooth, inverted-s-type shape.
- *Lamed*. No problems with this graph, presenting only a small series of variants in the degree of the curve.
- *Mem*. The zigzag form of this letter is decidedly dominant in the present text, with a long oblique vertical stroke.

⁷ Röllig, *Die Aramäischen Texte aus Tall Šēḥ Hamad/Dūr Katlimmu/Magdalu*, 2014, 18-19.

- *Nun* shows a pronounced angle between the curved head and the vertical stroke.
- *Samekh* might be attested on Obv. l. 1; in that case, with a quasi-straight variant of the well-known zigzag shape.
- *Qoph*, both in Rev. 2 and 5, shows a 3-stroke shape, with two semicircular strokes enclosing the vertical to form a "trident" –i.e. a relatively developed form.
- *Taw* consistently shows the shorter stroke beginning at a juncture with the downstroke.

TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

Obverse

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. 𐤁𐤆𐤁𐤀 𐤀𐤍𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀 | “..... ..” |
| 2. 𐤁𐤆𐤁𐤆𐤁𐤀 𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀 | <i>By</i>] its [<i>nth</i>], (will increase) its interest. |
| 3. 𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀 𐤀𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤀 𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀 | It (=the debt) is upon them. |
| 4. 𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀 𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀 𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀 | Month of Marcheshwan, eponymy of 𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀 |
| 5. (one line lost?) | Ša-lam-šarri-iqbi.
(<i>Witnesses:</i>) |

Reverse

- | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. 𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀 | “Ubru-Nergal (and) 'El- |
| 2. 𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀 | -Amurru-qa<d>mî, |
| 3. 𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀 | (and) <i>Tulî</i> , |
| 4. 𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀 | (and) Šakā-'el (and) |
| 5. 𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤀𐤃𐤀 | Ubur-Dadi, |
| | (and) <i>Tarhunz</i> -ba'alî, |
| | (and?) Qî, D-(?) |

Upper Edge

Two stamp seals – no legible text.

COMMENTARY

Obverse

L.1. The opening line is abraded at its beginning: however, the main problems are due to the actually legible signs. The ensuing solutions are many and diverse (personal name(s), economic/legal formulae) : in the absence of a real “breakthrough”, I have thus decided to leave this line devoid of interpretation and translation.

L.2. This line indisputably regards the interest rate – but its formulation presents some uncertainties. The first signs are lost in the abrasion: they should have held a formula such as *b xxxx -h*, “by its...”, e.g. *bplgh*, “by its half”. In point of fact, a *he* is visible, although it would seem to be followed by a *yod*. The latter, in its turn, if taken together with the following *-rbyh*, would build an awkwardly lengthened imperfect verbal form of the verb *RBY, “it will increase” (in lieu of **yrbh* or **yrby*, cf. DNWSI, 1053; also Röllig 2014: 270a-b). On the other hand, disregarding the initial *yod*, a final noun **rby-h*, “its interest” would be attested (cf. DNWSI, 1054, s.v. *rby*₃; Röllig 2014: 270a, s.v. *rb*₁).

L. 3. The final *yrh* is relatively clear, and is a frequent item in the beginning of datings on these texts: cf. e.g. Röllig 2014:268b. The previous **lwhwn* is very difficult to make out, but would find a parallel e.g. in the docket Röllig 2014, no. 82.

L. 4. The initial signs of the month name are fatally jumbled together in the right-hand curve of the tablet, but at least the complex – *šwn* looks plausible. In the following year-date, the term *l'm*, “eponym /eponymy of...” shows a good *lamed*, a mangled *'aleph* (possibly influenced by a letter from the line above), and a decent *mem* (see esp. Fig. 5). The final letter before a vertical ruling marking the end of the line, should be a *šade*: this should mark the beginning of the name of the year-eponym, with an *enjambement*, or the break of a specific linguistic unit between two lines, which is a rare feature, but which appears at times on dockets, due to their short lines.

L.5. Quite difficult to read: only the three final graphemes *-qby* are visible to a certain extent. The overall result should be the name *š/lmsrqby*, corresponding to the Assyrian PN *Šalam-šarri-iqbi*, “The image of the king has commanded”, a *turtanu* from Kummukh attested as eponym for the post-648 period (reign of Assurbanipal), and dating cuneiform texts from Nineveh, Kalhu, Assur, and – in the

West – from Dur-Katlimmu and Ma'allanate: see the attestations in PNA, 1165a-b. In Aramaic script, this eponym is attested in Röllig 2014, no. 37. Post-648 eponyms, in their well-known uncertain sequence (as well as from prior decades), are attested in the cuneiform texts from Kahramanmaraş (see Jiménez – Adalı – Radner 2015; Jiménez – Fıstıkçı – Adalı 2015; Günbattı, C. *et al.* in press).

L.6. One line is lost here: it might have held the frequent notation *šhdn*, “witnesses”, since all that follows is represented by personal names.

Reverse

L.1. *'brnrgl* is the Aramaic rendering of Ubru-Nergal, “client of Nergal”, a relatively frequent NA name (PNA, 1368-1369), which is also attested in the cuneiform deeds from Kahramanmaraş as the name of a buyer in nos. 1, 4 (Jiménez – Adalı – Radner 2015: 171) and 6 (Jiménez – Fıstıkçı – Adalı 2015: 182), all of post-648 date (see Akyüz 2019: 5; with others referring to the same individual: see Günbattı *et al.* in press, nos. 4-14). The second name in this line begins with the element *'l-*, then giving rise to a further *enjambement*.

L. 2. The remainder of the name beginning with *'l* is fairly clear: *'mrqmy*, followed by a word-divider – but it gives rise to numerous difficulties in interpretation. The first element in the line should be *'mr*, and thus presumably to be connected to the previous element as *Il-Amurru-, “the god Amurru”, with a hitherto unattested rendering: for the god Amurru in NA personal names with West Semitic predicates (usually as ^dMAR.TU), cf. the attestations given in PNA, 108-109; a doubtful *'mrb 'l/n* (perhaps etymologically Akkadian?) appears at Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad (Röllig 2014, no. 46: 4'). The predicative element is equally puzzling: either a feminine form of the qal imperative singular from **qwm*, “to rise, etc.” (cf. DNWSI, 998), or the scribal omission of a *daleth* after the *qoph* – which would yield *q<d>my*, “(is) before me” – should be taken into account, although *-qdm* as a predicative (i.e. non-theophoric) component is hitherto not recorded in 2nd position in the Aramaic onomasticon. After the word-divider, *taw* and *waw* are clear: a third letter is uncertain. For a witness named Tul(l)i in the Kahramanmaraş cuneiform texts, cf. Jiménez – Adalı – Radner 2015: 171.

L.3. The first name, *śk'l*, is a good Aramaic onomastic formation: “the god has looked out”, from the root *ŚKY (Zadok 1977: 87); it finds an excellent parallel in NA *Sakâ-il* (PNA, 1065b). The second name,

'brdy, is uncertain in its last letter: a name *Ubru-Dadī might be surmised, and is attested in NA texts (PNA, 1362a).

L.4. The first letters of this name – before the relatively clear complex *-wnz* are quite uncertain; especially the presumed *-h-* is doubtful, although a closed shape such as this one (but less closed than the *'ayin* five signs further on) is sometimes attested (see e.g. Röllig 2014, no. 7). All said and done, however, the name **trḥwnz-b'ly*, “Tarḥunz- is my lord” makes sense *per se* as a mixed Anatolian-West Semitic onomastic formation, and the variant of the Anatolian divine name *Tarḥunt as Tarḥunz is known from the cuneiform texts from Kahramanmaraş itself. Cf Jiménez – Adalı – Radner 2015: 159; and especially Günbattı *et al.* in press: *mTar-ḥu-un-za-pi* 4:36, *mTar-hu-za-pi* 22:32, *mTar-hu-zap-pi-i* 39: Ay.4 (*Tarḥunza-pi) :*mTar-hu-zu-a-ri* 27:36 (*Tarhunza-uarri).

L.5. I have not been able to make any particular sense out of the three legible signs in this line.

To sum up, the clay tablet 36-25-07 from Kahramanmaraş is a triangular docket, written in Aramaic alphabetic script on 6+5 lines. It records the details a loan at a fixed interest rate (presumably of silver), and is dated to the post-canonical eponymy of Šalam-šarri-iqbi (reign of Ashurbanipal). Some of the names of the relevant witnesses find correspondences with the cuneiform texts attributed to the same, or related, archives, allegedly originating from ancient Marqasi.⁸

8 See Enrique Jiménez – Selim Ferruh Adalı – Karen Radner “Four 7th-Century BCE Neo-Assyrian Slave Sale Records from Marqasi (Kahramanmaraş) in the Erimtan Museum (Ankara) and Elsewhere”, *Altorientalische Forschungen* 42 (2015): 153, for a description and contextualization of the tablet finds considered to relate to ancient Marqasi.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akyüz, Faruk. “Yeni Asur Döneminden Yeni Bir Limmu Adı ve Tarihi Üzerine Değerlendirme”, *Archivum Anatolicum* (2019): 13/1, 1-9.
- DNWSI = J. Hoftijzer - K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions*, I-II, Leiden- New York – Köln 1995 (by page number).
- Fales, Frederick Mario. *Aramaic Epigraphs on Clay Tablets of the Neo-Assyrian Period*, Roma: Università degli studi "La Sapienza", 1986.
- Fales, Frederick Mario. “Review of Lipiński”, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 70 (2013): 204-210.
- Fales, Frederick Mario – Radner, Karen – C. Pappi – E. Attardo, The Assyrian and Aramaic Texts from Tell Shiukh Fawqani, in L. Bachelot – F.M. Fales (Eds.), *Tell Shiukh Fawqani 1994-1998*, Padua, II, (2005) 595-694.
- Günbattı, Cahit – Çeçen, Salih – Gökçek, L. Gürkan – Akyüz, Faruk. *Kahramanmaraş'ta Bulunmuş Yeni Asurca Tabletler*, Ankara: TTK Yayınları, (in press).
- Homès-Fredericq, D. – Garelli, Paul. *Ma 'allānāte, archives d'un centre provincial de l'empire assyrien*, Bruxelles: Centre Assyriologique Georges Dossin, (2018).
- Jiménez, Enrique – Adalı, Selim Ferruh – Radner, Karen. “Four 7th-Century BCE Neo-Assyrian Slave Sale Records from Marqasi (Kahramanmaraş) in the Erimtan Museum (Ankara) and Elsewhere”, *Altorientalische Forschungen* 42 (2015): 153-172
- Jiménez, Enrique – Fıstıkçı, Abdülkadir – Adalı, Selim Ferruh. “Two 7th-Century BCE Neo-Assyrian Slave Sale Records from Marqasi (Kahramanmaraş) in a Collection at Gaziantep”, *Altorientalische Forschungen* 42 (2015): 173-183.
- Lemaire, André. *Nouvelles tablettes araméennes*, Genève: Librairie Droz S.A, 2001.
- Lieberman, S.J., “The Aramaic Argillary Script in the Seventh Century”, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 192 (1968): 25-31.
- Lipiński, Edward. *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics, Volume III: Ma'ana*, Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2010.
- PNA = K. Radner, H.D. Baker (Eds.), *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, I-III, Helsinki 1998–2011 (by page number).
- Postgate, John Nicholas. *Fifty Neo-Assyrian Legal Documents*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1976.
- Radner, Karen. *Die neuassyrischen Privatrechtsurkunden als Quelle für Mensch und Umwelt*, Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997.
- Röllig, Wolfgang. *Die aramäischen Texte aus Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad /Dūr, Katlimmu / Magdalu*, Wiesbaden: Harrsowitz-Verlag, 2014.
- Zadok, Ran. *On West Semites in Babylonia during the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods: an Onomastic Study*, (revised version) Jerusalem: H. J. & Z. Wanaarta, 1978.



Fig. 1. Tablet 36-25-07, Obverse.



Fig.2. Tablet 36-25-07, Upper Edge.



Fig. 3. Tablet 36-25-07, detail of Obverse.



Fig. 4. Tablet 36-25-07, Reverse.



Fig. 5. Tablet 36-25-07, Detail of Obverse.

An Aramaic Docket on Clay from Kahranmaraş – Selective palaeographic table



'aleph



bet



gimel



dalet



he



waw



zayin



het



yod



kaph



lamed



mem



nun



samekh



'ayin



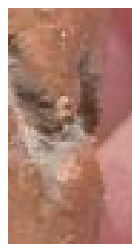
sade



qoph



reš



š/šin



taw

