

Buchbesprechungen

N. J. C. Kouwenberg: *A Grammar of Old Assyrian*. (Handbook of Oriental Studies/Handbuch der Orientalistik, section 1: The Near and Middle East, vol. 118). Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017. LII, 895 S. 24,0 × 16,5 cm. ISBN: 978-90-04-34096-1. Preis: € 187,00.

N. J. C. Kouwenberg, with contributions by **K. R. Veenhof:** *Introduction to Old Assyrian*. Münster 2019. 211 S. 24,5 × 17,5 cm. ISBN: 978-3-96327-064-2. Preis: € 32,00.

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Kouwenberg's grammar of Old Assyrian (GOA) is the first since K. Hecker, "Grammatik der Kültepetexte" (GKT) of 1968. Whereas GKT was based on ca. 3000 published letters and documents (GKT p. v), GOA analyses data from less than 4700 published texts, in addition to some unpublished material (GOA pp. 2 with n. 7 and p. 6f.). The bulk of Old Assyrian unpublished texts (which amount to more than 17000) still could not be used.

The index of GKT (pp. 263–298) lists, after the reviewer's count, some 4800 references, the index of GOA (pp. 860–879) only ca. 1900 references. But the index of GOA is selective, and it seems that many especially short references were excluded from the index. This also concerns interesting new material, e. g., the reference for the new form *arbē* "four" (GOA p. 275). This makes it difficult to compare GKT and GOA in this respect, but according to a conservative estimate GOA probably offers a little more data than GKT. Of course, GOA makes full use of new publications that occurred after GKT, first and foremost the AKT series (vol. 1–9A used), or the OA texts from Prague (quoted as Prag I).

Whereas GKT always presents the references in a sign-by-sign transliteration, GOA uses a space-saving mix of transliteration and bound transcription, the latter used for the wider context of the word or form in question.

Almost all OA texts continue to come from one site, Kaneš/Kültepe. Therefore, it is impossible to describe dialects within the textual material. Nothing has changed since the days of GKT that everyday texts (letters and documents) are the most important text genre, and literary texts are very rare. The most noticeable new literary text since GKT is the epic text "Sargon legend" (GOA p. 9).

On the whole, the structure and terminology of GOA follow traditional Akkadian and Semitic grammars. This means that a philologist, usually not trained in linguistics, can easily use it. Perhaps the most noticeable difference between GKT and GOA is the treatment of particles: whereas GKT succinctly presents them on eleven pages (§§ 102–106), GOA devotes full 117 pp. to multifunctional

particles (pp. 361–389), remaining adverbs and interjections (pp. 390–412), prepositions (pp. 413–465), and enclitic particles (pp. 466–478).¹ The reason for such an extensive treatment is that GOA discusses many details of the particles' semantics. Whether a grammar rather than a dictionary is the right place to do so is a matter of discussion.

In order to assess in detail the progress of GOA with respect to GKT, the reviewer systematically checked the chapters on the morphology of the numerals. Here are the results:

Cardinal numbers (GKT § 68 and GOA pp. 271–277): new are *ištēnumma* "one" (stat. rect. masc.), *šalšat*, *šalāštumma* "three" (stat. abs. and stat. rect. fem.), *arbē* "four" (stat. abs. masc.), *ḥamiš* "five" (stat. abs. masc.), *ešar* and *ešrat* "ten" (stat. abs. masc. and fem.), and *mi/ēt* "hundred" (stat. abs.).

Ordinal numbers (GKT § 69 and GOA pp. 281–283): new are *šalištum* "third" (fem.), *rab'um*, *rabūtum* "fourth" (masc. and fem.), and *ḥamištum* "fifth" (fem.).

Fractions (GKT § 70 and GOA pp. 283ff.): new are *rab'ā/ētum* "quarter", *ḥamuštum/ḥamšātum* "one-fifth".

Multiplicative numbers (GKT § 71a–b, GOA p. 286f.): new are *šamanēšu* "eight times", *tiš'ešu* "nine times", *ḥamiššerēšu* (15-šé-re-šu), *mītā* "hundred times".

Distributive numbers (GKT § 71c, GOA pp. 290–291): new are *šanā* "two each", *šulūšā* "three each". Derived form (GKT § 71c–d and GOA p. 291f.): new is *šulūšā'um* "at a rate of three to one".

Thus the new textual material allows for remarkable progress in comparison to GKT, and GOA makes full use of it.

¹ The enclitic particles include on pp. 475–477 a particle *-Ba* which functions conspicuously similar to the well-known enclitic *-ma*. Therefore, the author in Supplement to the Akkadian Dictionaries Vol. 1 (= LAOS 7/1, 2018) 55 s. v. ***pa* suggested a phonetic or graphic variant of *-ma*.

Browsing through GOA, the preference of /e/ over /i/ catches the eye. Thus instead of genitive sg. /-im/ GOA has /-em/, instead of ventive /-nim/ rather /-nem/, and instead of dative pronoun 3rd sg. fem. /-šim/ rather /-šem/. The corresponding sound law is given on p. 96 f.: in grammatical morphemes,² /im/ becomes /em/. This law mainly³ accounts for the fact that in genitives from roots *tertiaae* aleph or vocalis *e* is found, e. g., *wa-ša-e-ma* (POAT 24: 7), whereas before suffixes – without mimation – in most cases *i* is attested, e. g., *da-āš-i-šu* (AKT 6A, 157: 31), *me-er-i-šu* (VS 26, 47: 26), *me-er-i-kā* (VS 26, 47: 28) and *ma-na-i-a* (TPAK 1, 200: 25).⁴ Evidence from OA for /-nim/ and /-šim/ is missing, but the validity of the rule is inferred (GOA p. 97 n. 74) from later MA where dropping of mimation results in written *-ne* and *-še*.

This law is, however, not without exceptions. On the one hand, one also finds, although more rarely, *i* before mimation; cf. the evidence in GKT § 17 g and GOA p. 97,⁵ to which *pí-i-im* (AKT 5, 16: 21)⁶ “mouth” and *tí-i-i[m]* “incantation” (PIHANS 100, 398: 22) can be added. On the other hand, *e* is sporadically attested before suffixes, cf. the references in GOA p. 173 and see also *ša-du-e-šu* (AKT 5, 52: 27) alongside *ša-du-i-šu* (*ib.*) “of his mountain”. Moreover, GOA does not give a phonetic explanation why /m/ should cause a change /i/ > /e/, a development difficult to understand. /e/ instead of /i/ also sometimes occurs with the pronominal suffix 1. singular, but only after /’/ and /w/ (GOA p. 311). /i/ > /e/ caused by /’/ is also found in *e-ḫi-id-ma* (KTS 28: 28, cf. GKT § 17d) instead of *i’idma*.

For stems ending in /-ā(’)/ like *wašā’em* quoted above, a parallel from OB is perhaps available: *wašā’-im* > *wāšêṁ* rather than *wāšîm*.⁷ Therefore, one might think of an alternative explanation of the phenomenon: unstressed /i/ may become /e/ under the influence of a (secondary) aleph:⁸ thus *daš’em*, but *daš’išu* etc. If this explanation is correct, it follows that there is no reason to assume /-im/ > /-em/ in other cases.

There are also some other points of disagreement in the interpretation of the textual material that will not be discussed here because this would need much more space than available. However, although GKT can still be used with some profit and should not be abandoned from the shelves, Kouwenberg’s new and up-to-date grammar is an excellent tool for all who read Old Assyrian texts, and also for all scholars interested in Akkadian grammar beyond Old Assyrian.

The “Introduction to Old Assyrian” by the same author contains an abridged grammar, a sign list compiled by K. R. Veenhof (complementing the sign list in TCL 14 by F. Thureau-Dangin), short chapters on “Measures, dates, tariffs” and „Seal and sealings” (the latter by Veenhof) and a selection of three texts (one debt note, one legal protocol and one letter). The part which is likely to be used most in teaching is chapter 11 (pp. 137–180), a glossary of specifically Old Assyrian words, sometimes accompanied by new bibliographical references that go beyond our standard dictionaries.

² In other cases, the law is not valid. Cf. GOA p. 96 f. no. 72, to which, e. g., *tù-i-mu-um* (TPAK 179: 22) can be added.

³ Some further arguments collected in GOA p. 97.

⁴ Further evidence collected in GKT § 17g and GOA p. 97.

⁵ Also the nisbe + *-im* is always spelled *-i-im* as in *Ma-ma-i-im* (AKT 3, 61: 24), *Wa-ah-šu-ša-na-i-im* (ATHE 66: 9) or *Ti-me-el-ki-a-i-im* (TMH 1, 24e: 2). However, according to GOA p. 82, *i* may render /y/, so these examples may be irrelevant to the discussion.

⁶ Quoted GOA p. 183. On the following page, the genitive is reconstructed as *pí’em* or *pī’em*, but the plene *i* rather points to *pī’im* or *pīm*.

⁷ Cf. GAG § 16g and M. P. Streck, *Altbabylonisches Lehrbuch* (Wiesbaden 2018) § 41 f.

⁸ A parallel for this in Hebrew is mentioned by C. Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen I* (Berlin 1908) 198.