

THE USE OF WRITING AMONG THE ANATOLIANS*

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This paper is focused on the question whether the Anatolians writing documents in Old Assyrian style at Kaneš had learned the art of writing from the Assyrians. Therefore we first have to investigate the nature of the Old Assyrian script and the way the Assyrians themselves learned it.

Writing among the Assyrians

The Old Assyrian inventory of cuneiform signs seems to be a quite limited one, but here caution is required. There are about 120 signs for syllabic writing for approximately 275 syllables. A few of these, signs as well as syllables, are rarely used. Some of these are even not used at all after a certain point in the course of the history of the level II settlement of Kārum Kaneš, with the only exceptions to be found in later copies of older texts. A fine example is version A of the Kültepe Eponym List (KEL A). This copy was written down very near the end of level II (c. 1836 BC) and only in the first part of this text one can find examples of these rarely used signs. This evidence shows quite clearly that we have here a copy and/or compilation of older lists. These particular signs are not found in the later parts of KEL A.¹

The total number of word signs used in the Old Assyrian script cannot be established with any certainty. We surely have to expect a number far bigger than we have now, as is evident from the existence of school texts, even if they are still not very numerous.² But we move on safe ground saying that the number of word signs used in the daily business of the merchants was very limited; KÙ.BABBAR for *kaspum* “silver” and AN.NA for *annukum* “tin” together represent nearly half of all the references for logographical writings in the Old Assyrian material.

We now know with some certainty that there have been two main ways of learning the art of writing for the Assyrians. One way is demonstrated by the above mentioned existence of school tablets. The greater number of non-commercial documents has to be taken into account here too.³ This is the traditional way of learning at a scribal school. We

* This article is based on the paper read during the symposium. A detailed study on Old Assyrian writing will be jointly prepared by Jan Gerrit Dercksen and the present author.

¹ See Veenhof, OALE, 11-13.

² See the overview in Michel, OAAS 1, 139f.

³ For the non-commercial documents, see Michel, OAAS 1, 133-141 with the additions in Michel, OAB 1, 445. More texts, especially incantations, are known but not yet published.

have only few references for this way of learning in the Old Assyrian sources, but occasionally the texts mention someone who has learned or is going to learn the *tupšarruttum*, as in CCT 4 6d. In this letter Su'eyya informs his father in Kaneš, the famous merchant Pūšu-kēn, about the fact that he and others not mentioned by name are learning the art of writing.⁴ We know that Su'eyya was for a while responsible for affairs of Pūšu-kēn's family firm in the town of Puruṣhattum⁵ and one may raise the question if Su'eyya has attended a scribal school in this most westerly outpost of the Assyrian trading network. This however cannot be proven and it is far more likely that he learned to write at home in Assur and went to Anatolia later. In CCT 4 6d Su'eyya uses the sign *bi*⁶ which is very rare in the Old Assyrian material. When this sign is used it is often by very skilled writers and many references can be found in the letters of the Assyrian rulers.⁷ But Su'eyya's version of the sign is very inaccurate and it fits into the picture we have from his other letters, which in most cases contain several writing mistakes. In the end, although Su'eyya claims to learn the art of writing, he surely is not a typical learned scribe and it is even doubtful whether he ever finished his apprenticeship.

To learn everything that was needed for someone involved in the trading business one surely did not have to pass a true scribal school. The merchants reduced the script to the most necessary, thus ensuring that a substantial part of their community was able to write a letter or any other document in such a way that everybody with at least the same level of knowledge of the script was able to read it.

But even within this artificial product "merchant script" we are able to identify different traditions. As already mentioned the number of signs used for syllabic writing in Old Assyrian tablets is limited. Nevertheless there are two alternative ways of writing for a number of syllables. Here is a rough and incomplete (but representative) overview of the most prominent of these signs:

Group A	Group B
<i>lā</i>	<i>la</i>
<i>tī</i>	<i>ti</i>
<i>āb</i>	<i>ab</i>

It is immediately clear that the signs on the left side, here "group A", are the much simpler alternatives compared to their counterparts of "group B". And consequently it is not surprising that group A signs with their phonetic values appear in 90 per cent or more of the references for the respective syllables. But this fact makes it much easier to identify users of the group B signs. It becomes evident that people using *la* tend to use *tī* and *ab*

⁴ *a-na Pu-šu-ke-en₆ qí-bí-ma um-ma Sü-e-a-ma* DUB.SAR.tám wa-dí lā-am-da-ni (CCT 4, 6d, 1-5).

⁵ As shown in a number of legal documents certified by the Kārum in Puruṣhattum: KUG 13 (EL 332); TC 2, 77 (EL 331); TC 3, 273 (EL 330a) and others.

⁶ In *qí-bí-ma*, l. 3.

⁷ On the palaeography of the *waklum* letters see Kryszat 2004.

also, and further examination of texts from these people shows that there is not only a difference in the use of signs and/or phonetic values, but also in some sign forms. A very good example for this feature is the sign *tim*, which in group A occurs in its "normal" form, but which appears in some texts containing group B signs in a different form, in which the two verticals are written as two additional winkelhaken following the big horizontal wedge *tim* always has. This form of the sign I will call *tim_B*.⁸ It has to be added that people using signs of group B do not do this exclusively, and a writer may well use *lā* in one line and *la* in the next.

A first look at the references of group B signs shows a decrease in the use of these signs. From a certain point roughly corresponding to the beginning of the reign of Narām-Su'en (c. 1872 BC), signs of group B are not used at all, with the only exceptions being copies of older texts containing these signs.

An initial study of the use of group B signs in the archive of Imdilum has shown that the art of writing was obviously passed on from one generation to the next within this family.⁹ It seems most likely that this was not only the case in this particular family, but was the normal procedure.

Writing among the Anatolians

The family of Imdilum is also in a different way important for us, because here we do not only have a family of which all known members could write, but we also know that a daughter of Imdilum, Zizizi, married an Anatolian after her first (Assyrian) husband had died.¹⁰ Zizizi has later on obviously started some business of her own, and it seems only natural that she taught her Anatolian husband the art of writing and most likely also the Assyrian language.

However, at this point it should be stressed that none of the texts that may be considered as being written by an Anatolian features signs of group B. They are exclusively written with group A signs. But how does one recognize that an Old Assyrian tablet was written by an Anatolian scribe? One might suppose that a very clumsily written text might point to an Anatolian. But we know for certain that there were many Assyrians who did not write very nicely too. Some tablets written by Anatolians feature a script, which is considerably larger than that of most Assyrians, but this is no proof either. And the fact that we have archives of Anatolian traders also does not tell us by itself that the tablets in these archives were written by natives. Many of the texts from Anatolian

⁸ Although *tim_B* was already included in Sydney Smith's Sign-List in CCT 1, plate A, it is missing in the later lists of Thureau-Dangin (TC 2, 4-6), Borger and Labat.

⁹ For a survey of the use of writing among the members of the Imdilum family, see Kryszat OAAS 2, 30-32. For preliminary remarks on these group B signs, see also Kryszat 2001, 266f. A detailed analysis will be given in the article announced above.

¹⁰ For Zizizi see now Kryszat 2007.

archives are debt notes of some kind. But among the witnesses we often have one person with an Assyrian name and this one is in all likelihood the scribe.

But there are other, more reliable, criteria. As an example we will look at TC 3 214A, a text from Kārum Kaneš level Ib and only recently reedited by Dercksen.¹¹ Here is the text of the tablet:

Obv. 1 *Ni-ki-li-et*
ú Ša-ša-li-kà
mu-tum ú a-šu-tum
i-ta-áp-ru-šu
5 *Ša-ša-li-kà*
a-na-ar-ḫa-lam
e (over ú)-lá-at a-šar
li-bi₄-šu i-lá-ak
šu-ma ma-ti-ma
10 *lu ú-ba-ti-num x x*
lo.e. *lu ma-ma-an*
Rev. *lu ú-ba-ti-nu*
lu DAM.GÀR-šu
ša a-na Ša-ša-li-kà
15 *i-tù-wa-ar*
5 ma-na KÙ.BABBAR
i-da-an
ú i-du-ku-šu
i-qá-ti Pi-it-ḫa-na
20 *ru-ba-im*
u.e. *A-ni-ta*
GAL sí-mì-il₅-ti
l.e. *ar-nu ša Ni-ki-li-et*

In this divorce agreement we find in l. 7-8 the statement *ašar libbišu illak* “He may go wherever he wants to” where we should have *ašar libbiša tallak*, what is without any doubt meant here, because the statement regards the woman. And consequently we have to translate “She(!) may go wherever she(!) wants to”. Mistakes like this one, especially in the use of the suffixes mixing up the genera, are typically for tablets written by Anatolians. The Assyrian differentiation in grammatical gender was alien to them, at least for the Hittites. A look at the names of the witnesses on the case does not show a single Assyrian name, and with only one exception (Šiliara, l. 7) all of them are Anatolian functionaries of some sort. Burkhardt Kienast has taken a more detailed look on the problem of orthography and language of the sale documents from non-Assyrian sources in *Das Altassyrische Kaufvertragsrecht* :

¹¹ For an up to date translation and for older literature on this text, see Dercksen 2004: 173f.

*Wie eine Durchsicht des Materials zeigt, stimmen von den hier behandelten kaufrechtlichen Urkunden (No. 1-31 und 32) nur wenige in orthographischer und grammatikalischer Hinsicht mit der Masse der altassyrischen Texte aus Kleinasien überein. (...) Unter den 20 Urkunden mit kappadokischen Kontrahenten (vgl. § 20-22) und den acht Urkunden mit gemischten Vertragspartnern (vgl. § 23) ist jeweils nur eine (No. 6 bzw. No. 19) ohne entsprechende Fehlleistungen; alle anderen Kontrakte weisen mehr oder minder schwere Verstöße gegen die Norm der altassyrischen Schrift und Sprache auf, was gewiss kein Zufall ist. Ein Teil der unten genannten Anomalitäten kommt, wenn auch selten, gelegentlich sonst in den altassyrischen Texten vor; auffällig aber bleibt ihre Häufigkeit in den Texten aus kappadokischem Milieu. Andere Fehlleistungen sind derart ungewöhnlich, dass wir aus ihnen zwingend auf die nichtassyrische Herkunft der Schreiber schliessen müssen ...*¹²

While I do not agree with all the features listed by Kienast in the pages following the statement quoted here, he is surely right with his assessment of the mistakes in the morphology (§ 40, p. 33), namely *Verwechslung von Singular und Plural*, *Verwechslung von Maskulinum und Femininum* and *Verwechslung genitivischer und akkusativischer Personalsuffixe*. It has to be stressed that many of the texts showing the above mentioned features belong to level Ib or at least to the later period of level II, which leads to the assumption of an increasing number of Anatolian scribes in the course of the history of the trading colonies, which is not very surprising but important to see.

A new phenomenon is now found in Kt 88/k 713. This text reads:

Obv. 1 KIŠIB *Na-ki-li-e-et* DUMU [*Ša-al-ku-a*]-*ta-āš*
KIŠIB *Šé-er-wa-ta-[ar] a-ḫu-[šu]* KIŠIB
[*Ša*]-*al-ku-a-ta-āš* KIŠIB *Lá-[ba]-ar-na-āš*
DUMU *Ma-[šf]-e-et* KIŠIB *Ḫa-tù-uš* DUMU *Na-ki-li-e-et*
5 [KIŠIB *Ḫa*]-*pu-a-šu* DUMU *A-ra-wa-āš*
KIŠIB *Ḫa-al-ki-a-šu* DUMU *Kà-[lu]-wa*
KIŠIB *Kà-ta-kà-ta a-šf-ti-šu*
KIŠIB *Kà-ru-nu-wa-āš* DUMU [*Kà-lu*]-*a*
KIŠIB *Tù-ut-ḫi-li-āš*
10 1 *ma-na* KÙ.BABBAR *šf-im* [*Tù-ut-ḫi-li*]-*a*
[*a*]-*na Ḫa-al-ki-a-šu*
ù Kà-ru-nu-wa-āš *Kà-[ta-kà]-ta*
Nu-nu iš-qú-ul iš-am-šu
Rev. ÌR *ma-ra-šu-nu ša Nu-nu*

¹² Kienast, FAOS B 1, 31.

- 15 *šu-ma ma-ma-an*
Tù-ut-ḫi-li-a
i-na qá-té-e Nu-nu e-tí-tí-ir
 2 *ma-na KÙ.BABBAR a-na Nu-nu*
i-ša-qal šu-ma
- 20 **Tù-ut-ḫi-li-a**
i-na É^{bē-el} Nu-nu
lá ta-áb-šu 1 ma-na KÙ.BABBAR
ú-ta-ar-šu-um DAM-šu DUMU-e-šu
um-mu-šu ù e-mu-šu
- 25 *a-na Tù-ut-ḫi-li-a*
ú-lá i-ta-ḫi-ú-šu-um lu šé-am
lu ḫu-za-bi lu wa-ar-e [...]
lu x-zi-num a-na É [Nu-nu]
Tù-ut-ḫi-li-áš
- 30 *i-za-bi-il₅*¹³

To our surprise most of the male names ending on *-a* feature the Hittite ending *-aš/as*:

- Šalkuata(š), l. 1. 3
- Labarna(š), l. 3
- Arawa(š), l. 5
- Karunua(š), l. 8. 12
- Tuthiliya(š), l. 9. 29, (but Tuthiliya in l. 10. 16. 20. 25)

The writing of these case endings is highly unusual and may be considered a reliable token for the author's Cappadocian heritage. The reason why the name Tuthiliya loses its ending in most of the other occurrences in this text is lost to me, since we seem to have it in all cases. The mistake *ṭābšu* for *ṭābšum* also points to a Cappadocian scribe.¹⁴ Unfortunately the tablet gives us no hint for a reliable dating and it could be a level II text as well as one from level Ib.

Another indication for a scribe's Cappadocian background can be seen from the spellings of Assyrian names. A very good example was recently published by Donbaz in the proceedings of the IV. Internationalen Kongresses für Hethitologie held in Würzburg in 1999.¹⁵ Donbaz presented a number of tablets of which some belong to late level II and some to level Ib. One of the late level-II texts writes the well-known Akkadian name Lā-qēp in the form *Le/i-qé/i-e/ip* which demonstrates that the scribe had no idea as to the

¹³ Published in Donbaz 1993: 145.

¹⁴ See Kienast l.c.

¹⁵ Donbaz 2001.

meaning of this name.¹⁶ It is however of interest to state that this tablet contains no other mistakes and apart from *Leqep* it seems to be written in perfect Assyrian. Another of these texts, this time from level Ib, spells the well-known name Nimrī-Adad as *Ni-im-ri-im-dIM*, impossible in Akkadian.¹⁷ Does the fact that we have these most likely Anatolian writings in the same archive tell us that there was an Anatolian archive continuing all the time from the late level II through the destruction of this level's settlement and far into level Ib? This question cannot be answered now, but the possibility is there. And the mere fact that we have to raise a question like this shows us how important the matter of the use of writing among the Anatolians is. But now that we know that there must have been quite a lot of Anatolians able to write the most pressing question is why they abandoned it after the end of the Assyrian presence in Anatolia.

Abbreviations and Bibliography

The abbreviations used here follow those in the *Old Assyrian Bibliography* of C. Michel, OAAS 1 and the additions in *AfO* 51, 2005-2006, p. 436-449 (= OAB 1).

Dercksen 2004:

Jan Gerrit Dercksen, "Some Elements of Old Anatolian Society in Kaniš", in: J. G. Dercksen (ed.), *Assyria and Beyond, Studies presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen*, PIHANS 100, Leiden 2004, 137-177.

Donbaz 1993:

Veysel Donbaz, "Some remarkable Contracts of 1-B Period Kültepe Tablets II", in: M. J. Mellink, E. Porada and T. Özgüç (eds.), *Aspects of Art and Iconography: Anatolia and its Neighbors. Studies in Honor of Nimet Özgüç*, Ankara 1993, 131-154.

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Veysel Donbaz, "Some Recently Discovered Kārum 1-b Tablets and Related Observations", in: G. Wilhelm (ed.), *Akten des IV. Internationalen Kongresses für Hethitologie, Würzburg, 4.-8. Oktober 1999*, StBoT 45, Wiesbaden 2001, 106-114.

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Burkhart Kienast, *Das Altassyrische Kaufvertragsrecht*, Freiburger Altorientalische Studien, Beihefte 1, Stuttgart 1984.

Kryszat OAAS 2:

Guido Kryszat, *Zur Chronologie der Kaufmannsarchive aus der Schicht 2 des Kārum Kaneš – Studien und Materialien*, Old Assyrian Archives, Studies, Volume 2, PIHANS 99, Leiden 2004.

¹⁶ *Le-qé-ep* DUMU Pūzur-Ištar (Kt 98/k 121, 4), Donbaz 2001: 112.

¹⁷ In Kt 98/k 123, 19: *Ni-im-ri-im-dIM* DUMU Na-ra-[am-ZU], Donbaz 2001: 108.

Kryszat 2001:

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Michel OAB 1:

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Veenhof OALE:

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