



## **Aramaic Epigraphs on Clay Tablets of the Neo- Babylonian Period**

**Sajjad Sahi AbdAl-Saheb(\*)**

**Bahaa Amer Al-Jubouri(\*\*)**

**Received Date:3/1/2026**

**Revised Version:7/4/2026**

**Accepted Date:19/4/2026**

**Available Online:1/6/2026**

### **Abstract:**

In this article we study four Neo- Babylonian clay tablets from Babylon that contain Aramaic epigraphs. Deriving from the same archival context, these tablets bring to life social of Babylon community and its multilinguistic landscape.

We argue that the appearance of alphabetic inscriptions is not a coincidence and tells us more about the role of Aramaic in Babylonian society at the time.

**Keywords:** Aramaic, Epigraphy, Clay tablet, Neo- Babylonian.

---

(\*) MA. Candidate/Department of Syriac Language/College of Languages/University of Baghdad.

E-mail: [sajjad2311m@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq](mailto:sajjad2311m@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq)

(\*\*) Professor/Department of Syriac Language/College of Languages/University of Baghdad.

E-mail: [bahaamer@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq](mailto:bahaamer@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5426-4747>

## نقوش آرامية على الرُقم الطينية من العصر البابلي الحديث

بهاء عامر الجبوري (\*\*)

سجاد ساهي عبد الصاحب (\*)

تاريخ المراجعة: ٢٠٢٦/٤/٧

تاريخ التقديم: ٢٠٢٦/١/٣

تاريخ النشر الإلكتروني: ٢٠٢٦/٦/١

تاريخ القبول: ٢٠٢٦/٤/١٩

الملخص:

في هذا البحث، ندرس أربعة رُقم طينية من العصر البابلي الحديث عُثر عليها في بابل تحتوي على نقوش آرامية. وتسلط هذه النقوش، التي تنتهي إلى السياق الأرشيفي نفسه، الضوء على الحياة الاجتماعية للمجتمع البابلي وتنوعها اللغوي. إن ظهور النقوش الأبجدية ليس من قبيل الصدفة، بل يقدم معلومات قيّمة عن دور اللغة الآرامية في المجتمع البابلي في ذلك الوقت.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الآرامية، النقوش، الرُقم الطينية، البابلية الحديثة.

During the first millennium BCE, the Aramaic language and script gradually spread over the entire Ancient Near East and came into contact with Assyrian and Babylonian, the two main dialects of the Akkadian language in Mesopotamia written in cuneiform. Cuneiform texts provide much information on this contact between both languages and scripts.

One of the results of this contact are Aramaic epigraphs on cuneiform tablets from the Late Babylonian period are the actual subject of this study.

From the earliest days of Assyriology, the neo- Babylonian deeds bearing Aramaic annotations have attracted interest for the light they throw on both of the languages involved.

Since L. Delaporte compiled his *Epigraphes araméens* in 1912, containing (74) such texts, no more have been published, and to these can be added the (30) thirteen from Babylon published by M. Lidzbarski in the second volume of *Ephemeris für Semitische Epigraphik II* (1903-1907), 1908, and (35) thirty- five published by H. V. Hilprecht, *The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, Vol. X*, Philadelphia, 1904.<sup>(1)</sup>

In cuneiform tablets a large number of endorsements in Aramaic are found, which preserved in Babylonian Museum of the University of Philadelphia. These endorsements are either lightly or heavily incised, or are written with black fluid. Quite a number were incised at the time they were written with color.

---

(\*) طالب ماجستير / كلية اللغات- قسم اللغة السريانية/ جامعة بغداد

E-mail: [sajjad2311m@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq](mailto:sajjad2311m@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq)

(\*\*) أستاذ/ كلية اللغات- قسم اللغة السريانية/ جامعة بغداد

E-mail: [bahaamer@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq](mailto:bahaamer@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5426-4747>

One must deal with the fact that, within this single textual category, Aramaic is attested in totally different function on clay tablets as a full text ranged in parallel to, and basically identical with, a Babylonian one, as a part of a bilingual tablet.

The small complex of bilingual tablets may be examined. Here, documents triangular in shape, are represented, with the Babylonian text inscribed on one face, the Aramaic one on the other.

### The language of the texts:

The linguistic evaluation of the texts in the present article is a subject that draws its roots from the very initial phase of modern research on both the languages represented from the origins of both Assyriology and Old Aramaic studies, more than a century ago.

The Old Eastern Aramaic spoken dialects of Mesopotamia, Babylonia and area east of the Tigris are attested as early as the 9<sup>th</sup>- 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B. C. in numerous words and names appearing in Akkadian cuneiform texts.<sup>(2)</sup>

1. C. B. M. 5236: Aramaic docket incised on Lo. E. consisting of three lines, 4. 45x 5.03x 1.98cm.<sup>(3)</sup>

### Text in Aramaic letters:

YĹ [ŠT] XAŸŠT 4YA  
N4ŸX ŠIAŸ 4Š  
II III – ŠAŸ

### Transliteration:

štr 'nwš'blt

br mšzb tmrn

krm 10+ 3+ 2

### Translation:

The document of 'nwš'blt

Son of mšzb dates

15 gur

### Commentary:

4YA štr "document": It is an Akkadian loan from šaṭāru "Babylonian dockets".<sup>(4)</sup>

YĹ[ŠT]XAŸŠT 'nwš['b]lt: This name appears in text n<sup>o</sup> 51<sup>(5)</sup>. It is the transcription of <sup>ilu</sup>NIN- IB- uballit.<sup>(6)</sup>

ŠIAŸ mšzb: This name is often found in Babylonian as Mušêzib<sup>(7)</sup>. It appears in the Old Testament מִשְׁזִיבָל Neh (3:4)<sup>(8)</sup>.

N4ŸX tmrn "dates": It appears in plural form. We can

compare the Syriac ܘܕܘܪܐ, Hebrew גִּזְרָה, and Arabic تَمْرَة.  
nrk krn "gur": A dry measure used for grain, dates and the  
like. It is an Akkadian loan from kurru "a dry measure"<sup>(9)</sup>

2. C. B. M. 5372: Aramaic docket incised on O. 5.36x 6.58x  
2.7cm<sup>(10)</sup>

**Text in Aramaic letters:**

ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ  
ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ

Transliteration:

štr bl'ṭr

br gwzy

Translation:

The document of bl'ṭr

Son of gwzy

**Commentary:**

ܘܕܘܪܐ bl'ṭr: Theophoric male name of Akkadian origin.

Verbal sentence with the theonym Bēl "Bēl spared".  
This name is made up of a divine name Bēl plus the  
verb 'ṭr perfect pe'al 3<sup>rd</sup> masculine singular "to  
spare". The form Bēl- êṭir "Bēl spared" is found in  
the Babylon period names<sup>(11)</sup>

ܘܕܘܪܐ gwzy: One word name "one who belongs to gwz".

Male name is augmented by (y). The ending (y) could  
be regarded as a hypocoritic name of theophoric name  
formed with the word gwz "to hasten away".

3. C. B. M. 5503: Aramaic inscription incised on R. 8x 10.3x  
3.6cm.<sup>(12)</sup>

**Text in Aramaic letters:**

ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ  
ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ  
ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܪܐ

Transliteration:

štr 'rqt ngry' zy yhb

hydwy br ḥḥsyr lrybt br



Translation:

The document of r̥ym'1  
of dates 40 gur

**Commentary:**

𐤠𐤴𐤁𐤀 r̥ym'1: A male name. Genitive construction with the past participle r̥ym and the theonym '1 "God is merciful". It appears several times in the Old Testament as יְרֵמְיָאֵל 1Ch (2:9)<sup>(24)</sup>. It is listed as one of the seven Holy Angels in 1 Enoch (20:8).

**Conclusion:**

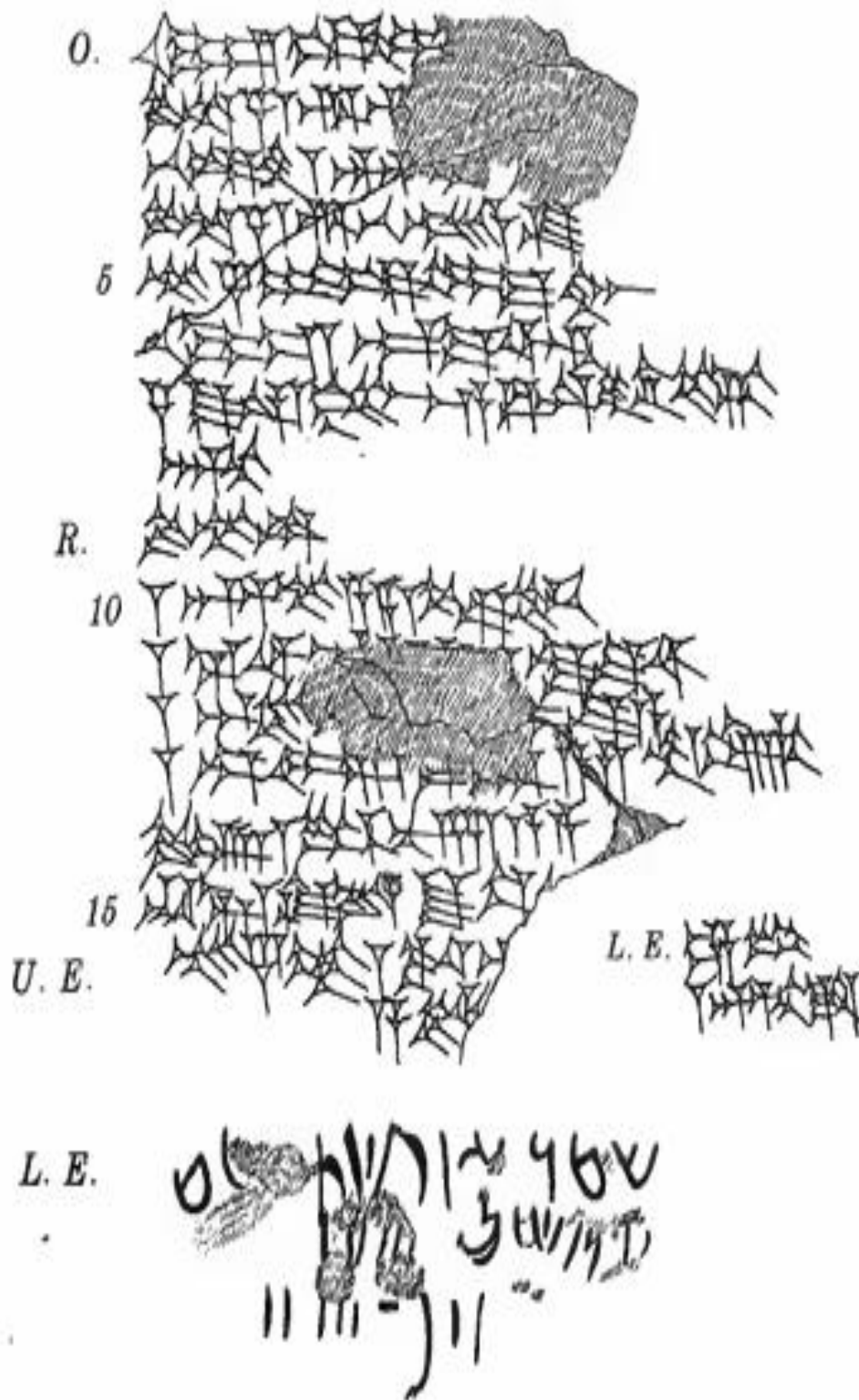
Although the four cuneiform tablets published in this article deal with varying issues, a careful contextualization of the transactions involved has shown that all stem from the same social setting.

The texts from the Babylonian Museum of the University of Philadelphia studied here originate from New Babylonia period.

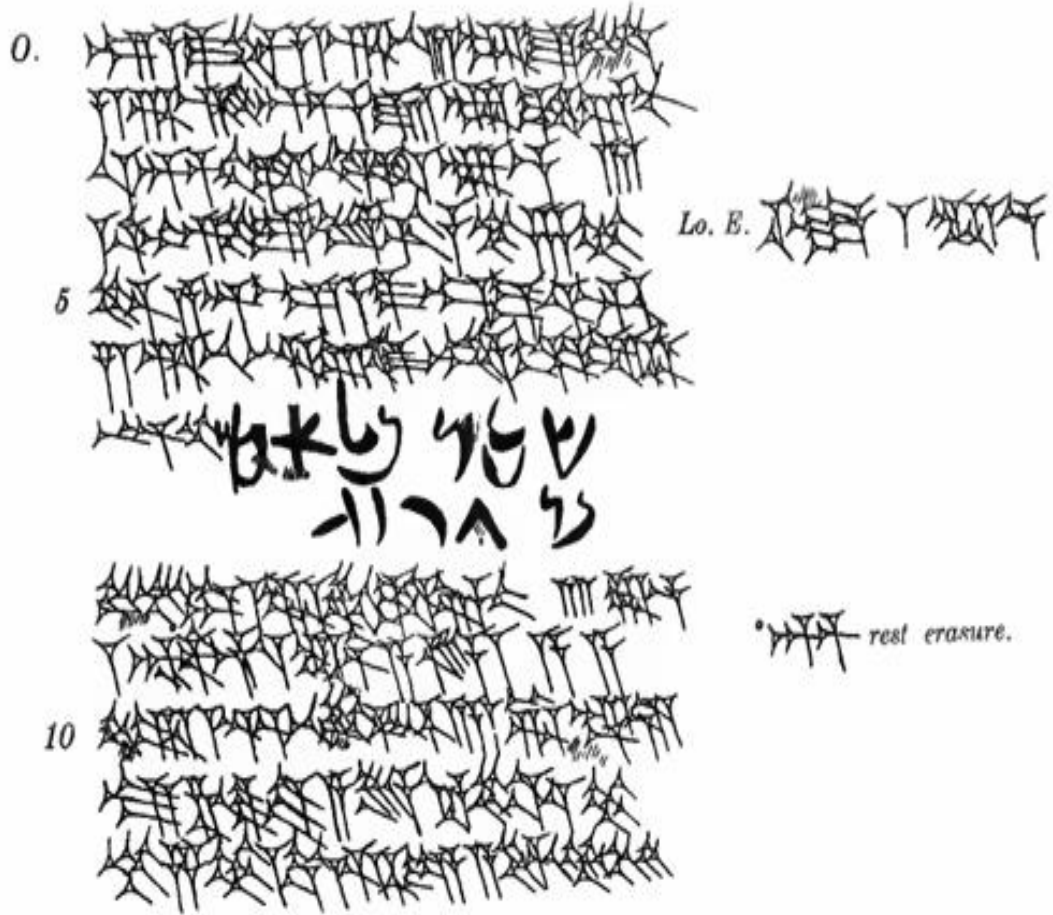
some interest attaches to these texts for its strong aramaean flavour.

The documents triangular in shape, are represented, with the Babylonian text inscribed on one face, the Aramaic one on the other.

The term štr (Akkadian šatāru "document") most commonly in these texts.








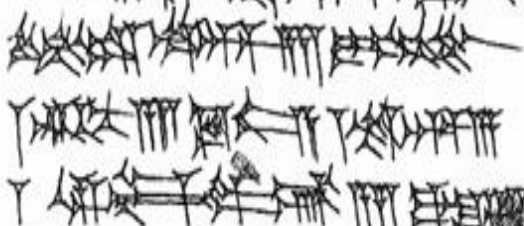


C. B. M. 5236



C. B. M. 5372



C. B. M. 5503

0.   omitted by scribe.  
 ..... Erasure.  
 L. E.   
 5   written upon erasure.  
 R.   rest erasure.  
 10 

0 

C. B. M. 5502

**References:**

---

- (1)The complete tablets, in this study, were published in copy by H. V. Hilprecht in: The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, Vol. X, Philadelphia, 1904.
- (2)Klaus Beyer, *The Aramaic Language*, (trans. By John F. Healey), Göttingen, 1986, pp. 30- 31.
- (3)H. V. Hilprecht, *Op. Cit.*, Text no 87, p. 80, Pl. 48.
- (4)Stephan A. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic and the Development of the Aramaic Dialects*, Chicago, 1974, p. 101.
- (5)L. Delaporte, *Épigraphes araméens étude des textes araméens gravés ou écrits sur des tablettes cunéiformes*, Paris, 1912, p. 57.
- (6)L. Delaporte, *Ibid.*, p. 57. For more details, see: Albert T. Clay, *The Origin and Real Name of NIN-IB*, *JAOS* 28 (1907), pp. 135-144.
- (7)Knut. L. Tallqvist, *Neubabylonisches Namenbuch zu den Geschäftsurkunden aus der Zeit des šamašsumukîn bis Xerxes*, Helsingfors, 1905, p. 114.
- (8)F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford, 1906, p. 604.
- (9)Stephan A. Kaufman, *Op. Cit.*, p. 65.
- (10)H. V. Hilprecht, *Op. Cit.*, Text no 104, p. 82, Pl. 57.
- (11)Knut. L. Tallqvist, *Op. Cit.*, p. 26.
- (12)H. V. Hilprecht, *Op. Cit.*, Text no 99, p. 81, Pl. 54.
- (13)For the correspondence with one to another in the different languages, see: W. Wright, *Lectures on the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages*, Amsterdam, 1966, pp. 61- 62.
- (14)Han J. W. Drijvers and John F. Healey, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osrhoene Texts, Translations & Commentary*, Brill, 1999, p. 245.
- (15)H. V. Hilprecht, *Op. Cit.*, p. 51.
- (16)J. K. Stark, *Personal Names in Palmyrene Inscriptions*, Oxford, 1971, p. 84.
- (17)E. Marcato, *Personal Names in the Aramaic Inscriptions of Hatra*, *Antichistica 17 Studi Orientali 7*. Venice, Edizioni Ca'Foscari, 2018, p. 51.
- (18)H. V. Hilprecht, *Op. Cit.*, p. 61.
- (19)H. V. Hilprecht, *Op. Cit.*, p. 61.
- (20)Knut. L. Tallqvist, *Assyrian Personal Names*, Helsingfors, 1914, p. 56.
- (21)F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, *Op. Cit.*, p. 684.
- (22)J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, Oxford, 1903, p. 220.
- (23)H. V. Hilprecht, *Op. Cit.*, Text no 68, p. 81, Pl. 39.
- (24)F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, *Op. Cit.*, p. 934.

**Bibliography of Arabic References:**

- Albert T. Clay, The Origin and Real Name of NIN-IB, JAOS 28 (1907), pp. 135-144.
- E. Marcato, Personal Names in the Aramaic Inscriptions of Hatra, Antichristica 17 Studi Orientali 7. Venice, Edizioni Ca'Foscari, 2018.
- H. V. Hilprecht, The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, Vol. X, Philadelphia, 1904.
- Han J. W. Drijvers and John F. Healey, The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osroene Texts, Translations & Commentary, Brill, 1999.
- J. Payne Smith, A Compendious Syriac Dictionary, Oxford, 1903.
- Knut. L. Tallqvist, Neubabylonisches Namenbuch zu den Geschäftsurkunden aus der Zeit des šamašsumukîn bis Xerxes, Helsingfors, 1905.
- Knut. L. Tallqvist, Assyrian Personal Names, Helsingfors, 1914.
- L. Delaporte, Épigraphe araméens étude des textes araméens gravés ou écrits sur des tablettes cunéiformes, Paris, 1912.
- M. Lidzbarski, Aramäische Texte auf Stein, Ton und Papyrus, Ephemeris für Semitische Epigraphik II (1903- 1907), 1908.
- S. A. Kaufman, The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic, Chicago, 1974.
- W. Wright, Lectures on the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages, Amsterdam, 1966.