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# The Semitic Languages

An International Handbook

Edited by

Stefan Weninger

In collaboration with

Geoffrey Khan

Michael P. Streck

Janet C. E. Watson

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## 13. Eblaite and Old Akkadian

1. Akkadian in the third millennium
2. Eblaite
3. Sargonic Akkadian
4. References

### Abstract

*This article describes the oldest attested stages of Akkadian from the 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. BC., including the language from Ebla. The focus lies on clarifying the position of the two best attested sub-corpora, Eblaite and Sargonic Akkadian, within the history of the Akkadian language. Eblaite is classified as an archaic Akkadian dialect and Sargonic Akkadian as an early form of Babylonian.*

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### 1. Akkadian in the third millennium

The earliest traces of Akkadian are personal names and loanwords in Sumerian texts. They certainly go back to the Early Dynastic III period (Fāra and Tall Abū Ṣalābīḥ),

i.e., to ca. 2650 BC., e.g.: Personal names *Áš-da-il* /'Ašta-il(?) 'With god'. *I-ti-<sup>d</sup>ÍD* /Yiddin-nah(a)rum/ 'The river god has given'. Loanwords in Sumerian: *ma-na* 'mina' < *manā<sup>u</sup>um*, *bur-šu-ma* 'old man' < *puršumum*, *dam-gàra* 'merchant' < *tamkārum*, *in* 'in' < *in*, *ù* 'and' < *u*. In spite of the doubts raised by Sommerfeld 2006 and 2010, 83, perhaps even earlier traces of Akkadian can be found in cuneiform texts from the Ġamdat Našr and Early Dynastic I and II periods (ca. 3200–2700 BC). The earliest certain Akkadian text is the Šamaš hymn IAS 326+342 (ca. 2650 BC, cf. Krebernik 1992). The texts from Mari and Tall Baydar in northern Mesopotamia date to ca. 2400 BC. Whereas the language of the Mari texts has some similarities with the language of Ebla, the language of the Tall Baydar texts has not, but shares characteristics with the language of the texts from Mari, Nippur, Adad and Isin (Fronzaroli 2005, 161f.). Sommerfeld 2010 provides a comprehensive overview over the Akkadian material before the rise of the dynasty of Akkad, excluding Ebla and Tall Baydar. For further details see also ch. 12.1.

Substantial Akkadian text corpora have been found in Ebla (ca. 2350 BC) and from the period of the Old Akkadian empire (ca. 2350–2150 BC). The following article concentrates on these text corpora. For Ur III-Akkadian (ca. 2100–2000 BC) see the short remarks in ch. 14.2.1.

Note that in this article the basic transliteration system of I. J. Gelb is used (cf. Krebernik 1982, 179). For the phoneme going back to Proto-Semitic \*/š/ and \*/s/ and written with S-signs I use the phonemic symbol /š/ (as in Amorite names; see ch. 19); Edzard 2006 has /š/ instead and Hasselbach 2005 /s/.

## 2. Eblaite

The ancient city of Ebla lies ca. 60 km south of Aleppo in Northern Syria. After the discovery of the Ebla tablets in the 1970s, the study of Eblaite began with the study of lexical texts (Krebernik 1982; 1983) and personal names (Krebernik 1988a; 1988b). The numerous tablets (ca. 2400 complete tablets and ca. 14 000 fragments with together ca. 300 000 words, cf. Streck 2011) from Ebla are written largely sumerographically which means that they only yield limited information on the Eblaite language. Nevertheless, after almost 40 years of Ebla studies enough material is also known from non-lexical texts to evaluate their language (Edzard 2006). However, even phonographically written text passages are not easy to analyze because the Ebla cuneiform orthography is ambiguous and does not always represent the underlying language precisely. The following sketch of the Eblaite language is essentially based on recent articles. Older studies (especially by P. Fronzaroli) can be found easily through the bibliographies of these articles.

### 2.1. Phonology

#### 2.1.1. Phonemic inventory: consonants

The phonemic inventory of Eblaite consists of the following consonantal phonemes (Krebernik 1985; 1996, 236): Bilabials: /b/, /p/, /m/, /w/. Interdentals: /d/ (distinct in

Eblaite as opposed to Sargonic Akkadian where \*/d/ > /z/), /t/. Dentals: /d/, /t/, /t/, /n/, /r/. Affricates: /z/, /s/, /ʃ/ (< \*/s/, \*/d/, \*/z/). Laterals: /l/, /s/ (< \*/š/, \*/š/; for a lateral pronunciation see 2.1.8., below). Prepalatal: /y/. /Palatals: /g/, /k/, /q/. Velars: /h/, /g/. Glottals: /ʔ/, /h/, /ʕ/, /h/. For the cuneiform orthography of these phonemes cf. Krebernik 1982, 1983, 1985 (contrasting it with the orthography of Sargonic Akkadian); Rubio 2006, 113–119 (contrasting it with the orthography of Early Dynastic Akkadian).

### 2.1.2. Vowels

Besides the Proto-Semitic vowels /a/, /i/ and /u/ (both short and long) Eblaite rarely has /e/ < \*/a/ (Krebernik 1983, 12 with n. 39; 1985, 59): *ib-tum* /ʕebdum/ < \*/ʕabdum/ ‘slave’. However, /a/ in the vicinity of /ʕ/ and /h/ is preserved in most cases.

### 2.1.3. Diphthongs

The diphthongs /aw/ and /ay/ are normally preserved (Krebernik 1996, 236f. n. 3; 238): *ba-nu* /baynum/ ‘tamarisk’, *a-(wa-)mu* /yawmū/ ‘days’. But monophthongization is also attested: *mi* /mī/ < \*/may/ ‘water’.

### 2.1.4. \*/ya/ > /yi/

\*/ya/ may become /yi/ (Krebernik 1996, 238): *i-mi-tum* /yimittum/ ‘right hand’.

### 2.1.5. /m/

/m/ is often assimilated to a following consonant (Krebernik 1996, 237): *si-tum* /šittum/ < \*/šimtum/ ‘sign’.

### 2.1.6. Barth’s law invalid

Barth’s law according to which the noun pattern *maPRaS* becomes *naPRaS* when there is a labial in the root is invalid (Krebernik 1996, 237; Huehnergard 2006, 5): *má-ma-du* /maʕmadum/ ‘support’.

### 2.1.7. /n/

/n/ assimilates to the feminine suffix /t/, but does not assimilate in other forms (Huehnergard 2006, 5 n. 18): *ai-mi-tum* /ya/yimittum/ < \*/ya/yimintum/ ‘right hand’, but *an-da* /ʔanta/ ‘you’. Cf. 2.4.12 for the assimilation of /n/ in verbs *I-n*.

## 2.1.8. /šT/ &gt; /lT/

/š/ preceding dental occlusives may become /l/ (Krebernik 1982, 217; 1996, 237): *dal-da-i-bù* /taltah(ḥ)ibum/ (root ŠHB ‘to withdraw’). A similar development can be observed 1000 years later in Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian (for rare Old Babylonian examples cf. Streck 2006, 238), pointing to a lateral pronunciation of /š/ inherited from the Proto-Semitic lateral \*/š/ (Streck 2006, 241; 243–245).

## 2.1.9. Reduction of /l/ and confusion of /r/ and /l/

/l/ may be reduced to /ʎ/, /y/ or perhaps zero, and /r/ may be written with syllabograms for /l/. Both developments are generally attributed to substrate influence (Krebernik 1996, 237; 243; Huehnergard 2006, 4f.; cf. also Edzard 2006, 79 for forms of *labānum* ‘to make bricks’ and *halākum* ‘to go’): *ba-a-ḥu-um* /paʔāḥum/ < \*/palāḥum/ ‘to fear’, *ba-ga-lum* /baqalum/ < \*/baqarum/ ‘cow’; note, however, that also in the Ur III period /r/ and perhaps also /l/ between vowels can be reduced (Hilgert 2002, 471 n. 102 and 194–196), and that even later in Mari /l/ and /r/ sometimes interchange and /l/ can perhaps be reduced (Streck 2000, 129).

## 2.2. Morphology of pronouns

## 2.2.1. Independent personal pronouns nominative

Independent personal pronouns nominative (Edzard 2006, 77f.): 1. sg. *an-na* /ʔana/ ‘I’, 2. sg. m., *an-da* /ʔanta/ ‘you’, 3. sg. m. *su-ú* /šū/, *su-wa* /šuwā/ ‘he’, 2. pl. m. *an-da-nu* /ʔantanu/ ‘you’. The 1. sg. does not have the longer form *anāku* known elsewhere in Akkadian. The 3. sg. m. has two forms, the form /šuwā/ according to Edzard 2006, 77 being the older one. The 2. pl. m. differs from Akkadian *attunu*. Huehnergard 2006, 4 explains the form as an analogical formation: *šū* : *šunu* :: *ʔanta* : *ʔantanu*.

## 2.2.2. Independent personal pronouns genitive

Independent personal pronouns genitive (Edzard 2006, 78): 2. sg. m. *gú-wa-du* /kuwātu/ ‘you’, 3. sg. m. *su-wa-a* /šuwāya/ ‘him’, 1. pl. *nī/ne-a-a* /nīʔaya/ ‘us’.

## 2.2.3. Independent personal pronouns dative

Independent personal pronouns dative (Edzard 2006, 78): 2. sg. m. *gú-a-si* /kuwāši/ ‘you’, 3. sg. m. *su-wa-si* /šuwāši/ ‘him’.



### 2.2.4. Independent personal pronoun accusative

Independent personal pronoun accusative (Edzard 2006, 78): 2. sg. m. *gú-wa-ti* /ku-wāti/ ‘him’.

### 2.2.5. Pronominal suffixes genitive

Pronominal suffixes genitive (Edzard 2006, 78): 1. sg. /-ī/ ‘my’, 2. sg. m. *ga* /-ka/ ‘your’, 2. sg. f. *ki* /-ki/ ‘your’, 3. sg. m. *su* /-šu/ or (i)š /-(i)š/ ‘his’, 3. sg. f. *sa* /-ša/ ‘her’, 1. dual *na-a* /-naya/ ‘our’, 3. dual *su-ma(-a)* /-šumaya/ ‘their’, 1. pl. *na* /-na/ ‘our’, 2. pl. m. *gú-nu* /-kunu/ ‘your’, 3. pl. m. *sa-nu* /-š(a)nu/ ‘their’, 3. pl. f. *si-na* /-šina/ ‘their’. The 1. dual is also attested in Ugaritic as *ny* (Tropper 2000, 227). For the 1. pl. also /-ni/ might be attested (Edzard 2006, 77). The 3. pl. m. is tentatively analyzed by Edzard 2006, 77 as /šnu/ and compared with Old Assyrian *-šnu* (Hecker 1968, 76). However, an unexpected /a/ is also found in *ʾantanu* (see 2.2.1., above).

### 2.2.6. Pronominal suffixes dative

Pronominal suffixes dative (Edzard 2006, 78): 2. sg. m. *kum* /-kum/ ‘you’, 3. sg. m. *šum* /-šum/ ‘him’, 1. pl. *ne-a-ti* /-niʾāti/ ‘us’. The last form is also attested in Old Assyrian (Hecker 1968, 76; Edzard 2006, 77), whereas Old Babylonian has *-niʾāšim*.

### 2.2.7. Pronominal suffixes accusative

Pronominal suffixes accusative (Edzard 2006, 78): 2. sg. m. *ga* /-ka/ ‘you’, 3. sg. f. *si* /-ši/ ‘her’.

### 2.2.8. Determinative pronoun

Determinative pronoun (Edzard 2006, 78): nominative dual *ša-a* /ṭaya/ ‘they of’, nominative pl. f. *ša-du* /ṭatu/ ‘they of’, accusative sg. m. *ša* /ṭa/ ‘him of’, obliquus pl. m. *šu-ti* /ṭūti/ ‘they of’, obliquus pl. f. *ša-ti* /ṭāti/ ‘they of’. Edzard 2006, 78 also quotes genitive sg. m. *su-wa-ti(?)* and obliquus pl. f. *sa-ti*, both suspicious because of the spelling with *s*.

## 2.3. Morphology of nouns

### 2.3.1. Mimation and masculine plural

The noun has mimation in the sg. and in the pl. with the suffixes /-ātum/ (f.) and /-ūtum/ (m. of the adjective). The masc. pl. ends in /-ū/ (Krebernik 1996, 238): *mu-šum* /mūšum/ ‘night’, *i-mi-tum* /yimittum/ ‘right hand’, *ʾa-mu-tum* /ḥammūtum/ ‘hot’, *a-(wa-)mu* /yawmū/ ‘days’.

### 2.3.2. Plural of masculine adjectives

Adjectives form the pl. masc. in /-ūtum/ (Krebernik 1996, 238): <sup>ʾ</sup>*à-mu-tum* /ḥammū-tum/ ‘hot’.

### 2.3.3. Locative and terminative

Besides the three common Semitic cases nominative, genitive, accusative, Eblaite has, like Akkadian, a locative ending in /-ūm/ and a terminative ending in /-iṣ/ (Krebernik 1996, 238; Edzard 2006, 82): *ga-tum-ma ga-ti-iṣ* /qātūmma qātiṣ/ ‘from hand to hand’.

### 2.3.4. Status absolutus ending in /a/

Like Amorite (ch. 19.3.2), nouns in Eblaite personal names also show a status absolutus ending in /a/ (Krebernik 1988a, 45 ff.; 1988b, 9; 1996, 244): *A-ba-a-il* /ʾAba-ʾil/ ‘The god is father’. In other names we find a status absolutus without ending: <sup>d</sup>*Da-gan-li-im* /Dagan-liʾim/ ‘Dagan is tribe’.

### 2.3.5. Abstract suffix /-ūtum/

Edzard 2006, 81 mentions abstract nouns with suffix /-ūtum/: *ba-lu-tum* /baʾlūtum/ ‘lordship’.

## 2.4. Morphology of verbs

### 2.4.1. Personal affixes in the G(t(n))- and N-stems

The personal affixes in the G(t(n))- and N-stems are (Edzard 2006, 79f.): 1. sg. *a-na-za-ab* /ʾa-naṣṣab/ ‘I stand’, 2. sg. m. *da-na-za-ab* /ta-naṣṣab/ ‘you stand’, 3. sg. m. *i-a-ba-an* /yi-labban/ ‘he makes bricks’, 3. sg. f. *ti-a-ba-an* /ti-labban/ ‘she makes bricks’ and *da-ne-a-al<sub>6</sub>* /ta-nīʾal/ ‘she lies’, 3. dual m. *ib-šè-a* /yi-bṭiy-ā/ ‘they existed’, 3. dual f. *ti-na-ga* /ti-nāq-ā/ ‘they moan’, 1. pl. *na-na-za-ab* /na-naṣṣab/ ‘we stand’ and *ne-sa-ba-ar* /ni-šappar/ ‘we send’, 3. pl. m. *dib-da-ru<sub>12</sub>* /ti-pṭar-ū/ ‘they untied’, and *ib-da-su-gu* /yi-ptāšūq-ū/ ‘they were constantly in difficulties’. Thus in the 3. sg. f. and 1. pl. we have /a/- and /i/-prefixes. In personal names, apparently the prefix /ya/ is also very rarely attested besides /yi/ or the 3. sg. m. (Krebernik 1988a, 52; 1996, 244). The choice of the vowel does not follow Barth’s law (Krebernik 1996, 244). The 3. pl. m. has /ti/- or /yi/-prefixes (cf. also 2.4.2, below), also known from Mari-Akkadian, Amarna-Canaanite and Ugaritic (Krebernik 1996, 245; Tropper 2000, 432f.; Edzard 2006, 80; note that Ugaritic also has both prefixes).

### 2.4.2. Personal affixes in the D(t)- and Š(t)-stems

In the D(t)- and Š(t)-stems we find the following prefixes (Edzard 2006, 79): 1. sg. *ù-sa-ti-am*<sub>6</sub> /ʔu-šaydi'am/ 'I let know', 2. sg. m., *du-a-ḥa* /tu-ʔaḥḥaw/ 'you make an alliance', 2. sg. f. *du-ba-da-i* /tu-pattaḥ-ī/ 'you open', 3. sg. m. *uš-da-ti-ma* /yu-šta'tim/ 'he put together', 3. dual m. *uš-ga-i-na* /yu-škayyin-ā/ 'they prostrated themselves', 1. pl. *nu-da-bi-am*<sub>6</sub> /nū-tabbilam/ 'we (constantly) brought', 2. pl. m. *du-ba-ra-ù* /tu-barra'-'ū/ 'you make hungry', 3. pl. m. *du-ti-ù* /tu-ddi'-'ū/ 'they finished', 3. pl. f. *uš-a-na-ga* /yu-šyan-naq-ā/ 'they suckle'. Noteworthy is the 2. pl. m. with /ū/-suffix, compared to /ā/ in Akkadian. The 3. pl. has /tu/- and /yu/-prefixes, cf. 2.4.1., above.

### 2.4.3. Tense system and imperative

Besides a preterite *yiPRuS*, Eblaite has a present tense *yiPaRRaS* (Krebernik 1988a, 59; 1996, 245; Edzard 2006, 79f.): preterite *iš-al*<sub>6</sub> /yiš'al/ 'he asked', present *ti-a-ba-an* /tilabban/ 'she makes bricks'. It is unclear whether forms with infix */ta/* are Akkadian-like perfects or rather preterites of */ta/*-stems (cf. Krebernik 1988a, 57f.; 1996, 244; Edzard 2006, 79f.). There are no traces of a dynamic suffix-conjugation *QaTaLa* (Krebernik 1988a, 45f.; 1996, 244; Huehnergard 2006, 4); for the stative see 2.4.4, below. The imperative is also attested (Edzard 1996, 79): sg. m. *zi-in* /zin/ 'weigh!', dual *me-li-ga* /milkā/ 'give advice!'.

### 2.4.4. Stative

Like Akkadian and Amorite (see ch. 19.3.3.1), Eblaite has a stative (Krebernik 1988a, 45; 1996, 244; Edzard 1996, 79): 3. sg. m. *Ì-lum-na-im* /'Illum-na'im/ 'The god is pleasant', 3. pl. m./f. *da-nu-nu/na* /dannunū/ā/ 'they are strengthened'. Infinitive and participle have the Akkadian forms *PaRāS* and *PāRiS* (Edzard 2006, 79): *'à-a-ki* /halākim/ 'to go', *a-bi-nu-um* /lābinum/ 'brickmaker'.

### 2.4.5. Ventive

Some verbal forms have an ending *-am*<sub>6</sub> (sign AN), almost certainly a form corresponding to the Akkadian ventive/pronominal suffix dative 1. sg.: *ù-sa-ti-am*<sub>6</sub> /ʔušaydi'am/ 'I announced', *nu-da-bi-am*<sub>6</sub> /nūtabbilam/ 'we brought'. Edzard 2006, 80ff. reads /an/ and connects the form to the West Semitic Energicus which in his mind developed to the Akkadian ventive under Sumerian influence. Since the dative pronouns and the nouns have mimation (see 2.2.6 and 2.3.1., above) a reading /am/ is much more probable. For the present moment it cannot be decided whether this suffix has the function of the Akkadian ventive/pronominal suffix dative 1. sg. or of the West Semitic energicus.

### 2.4.6. D-stem

The D stem has /u/-prefixes (see 2.4.2., above). The participle has the form *muPaRRiS* (Edzard 2006, 79): *mu-a-bi-iš-tum* /mulabbištum/ 'woman who clothes'. The infinitive

and stative have either /a/ or, more rarely, /u/ in the first syllable (Krebernik 1996, 239; 245; Edzard 2006, 79; 81); thus patterns known from later Assyrian and Babylonian coexist: *ga-du-ru*<sub>12</sub> /qaṭṭurum/ ‘to fumigate’, *da-nu-nu/na* /dannunū/ā/ ‘they are strengthened’, *ù-bu-tum* /ʔuBBuṭum/(?) ‘bound’. See also 2.4.7., below, for either /a/ or /u/ in the Š-stem.

#### 2.4.7. Š-stem

The causative stem has a /š/-prefix (Krebernik 1996, 239; Edzard 2006, 80): *uš-a-na-ga* /yušyannaqā/ ‘they suckle’. This present tense form with lengthening of the second radical looks like an Akkadian ŠD-stem; Huehnergard 2006, 5 thinks that this formation of the Š present is the earlier Semitic form preserved in Eblaite. As in the D-stem (see 2.4.6., above), the infinitive has either /a/ or /u/ in the first syllable: *sa/su-bù-tum* /šaʔbuṭum/(?) ‘bound’. A H-stem doesn’t exist in Eblaite.

#### 2.4.8. N-stem

N-stem (Edzard 2006, 80): *i-ba-ti-ʔà-am*<sub>6</sub> /yippatiḥam/ ‘it was opened’.

#### 2.4.9. Stems marked by an infix /t/

Besides the four main stems, Eblaite has stems marked by an infix /t/ with probably reciprocal, passive or pluralic meaning (Krebernik 1996, 238f.; Edzard 2006, 79ff.). See for the Gt(n) present *ib-da-su-gu* /yiptašsuqū/ ‘they are in difficulties’, preterite *dib-ti-sa-ag* /tiptišaq/ ‘she was scarce’. Dt(n) preterite (or an Akkadian type perfect?): *nu-da-bí-am*<sub>6</sub> /nūtabbīlam/ ‘we (constantly) brought’, Št present *du-uš-da-a-da-mu* /tuštaʔattamū/ ‘they put together’, preterite *uš-da-ti-ma* /yuštaʔtim/ ‘he put together’. The infixes /ta/ and /ti/ are attested without clear distribution (Edzard 2006, 80f.). Typical for Eblaite are infinitives of these stems with both a prefixed and an infixed /t/ (Krebernik 1996, 238–240; Edzard 2006, 80; Huehnergard 2006, 5): Gt(n) *da-da-gu-bù-um* /tattakpum/ ‘to gore each other’, *dar-da-bí-tum* ‘tartappidum/ ‘to roam’, *du-uš-da-gi-lum* /tuštaʔkilum/ ‘to square’ (lit. ‘to make eat one another’).

#### 2.4.10. Weak verbs in general

The morphological analysis of weak verbs is often hampered by the ambiguous orthography. Thus, e.g., it remains unclear whether a form <sup>ʔ</sup>*a<sub>5</sub>-si* should be interpreted as /ʔaššī/ ‘I took’ (Edzard 2006, 79) or as /ʔaššī/. *nu-da-bí-am*<sub>6</sub> can stand for /nūtabbīlam/ (Edzard 2006, 80) or for /nuwtabbīlam/ ‘we brought’.

## 2.4.11. Verbs with /ʔ/

/ʔ/ between vowels seems to be strong (Edzard 2006, 79ff.): *du-a-ḥa* /tuʔaḥḥaw/ ‘you make an alliance’, *du-uš-da-a-da-mu* /tuštaʔattamū/ ‘they put together’, *du-ba-ra-ù* /tubarraʔū/ ‘they make hungry’. For syllable closing /ʔ/ see ʔ<sub>5</sub>-si 2.4.10.

## 2.4.12. Verbs I-n

In verbs I-n /n/ assimilates to a following consonant (Edzard 2006, 79): ʔ<sub>5</sub>-si /ʔaššiʔ/ (or /ʔaššī) ‘I took’ (root NŠ<sup>2</sup>). Cf. 2.1.7 for the assimilation of /n/ in nouns.

## 2.4.13. Verbs I-w

Verbs I-w are attested with /u/- and /a/-prefixes (Krebernik 1996, 245): *Da-bíl-da-mu* /Tawbil-damu/, *Du-bíl-da-mu* /Tū/ubil-damu/, both names meaning ‘Damu has brought’. The imperative is formed without /w/ (Edzard 2006, 79): *zi-in* /zin/ ‘weigh!’ (root WZN). Cf. also the verbal noun *šu-ba-du/tum* /tub(a)tum/ ‘dwelling’ (root WTB) (Krebernik 1996, 240).

## 2.4.14. Verbs I-y

Verbs I-y are inflected strong (Edzard 2006, 80): *uš-a-na-ga* /yušyannaqā/ ‘they suckle’, *ù-sa-ti-am<sub>6</sub>* /ušaydiʔam/ ‘I announced’.

## 2.4.15. Verbs II-y/w

Some verbs II-y/w are inflected as mediae /ī/ and /ā/: *da-ne-a-al<sub>6</sub>* /tanīʔal/ ‘she lies’, *ti-na-ga* /tināqā/ ‘they moan’. On the other hand the following form shows a strong /y/: *uš-ga-i-na* /yuškayyinā/ ‘they prostrated themselves’ (cf. a similar formation in Akkadian: /uškaʔin/).

## 2.4.16. A verb III-y

The form *iš<sub>11</sub>-da-wa* (Edzard 2006, 79) for /yittawwā/ ‘they remain’ (root TWY) appears with a weak /y/.

## 2.4.17. Quadriliteral verbs

Quadriliteral verbs follow the N-stem pattern and thus correspond to the Akkadian inflection typ *naBaLKuTum* (Krebernik 1996, 239): infinitive N *na-bar-su-um* /naBaR-Suʔum/ (root unknown), participle Ntn *ma-wu mu-da-bar-si-ù-tum* /māwū muttaBBaR-Siʔūtum/.

## 2.5. Syntax

### 2.5.1. Word order

Besides the word order SOV, well known from Akkadian and attributed to Sumerian influence, Eblaite also has the word order VSO, a retention from Proto-Semitic (Huehnergard 2006, 4), and SVO. SOV: <sup>4</sup>UTU ... Û.SAR ... Ì.DU ‘Šamaš brought the Û.SAR’ ARET 5, 6 (Quaderni di Semitistica 18, 80) C14.3–C15.5. VSO: BA<sub>4</sub>.TI ENGAR<sup>gis</sup>APIN ‘The ploughman brought the plow’ ARET 5, 6 (Quaderni di Semitistica 18, 76) C8.1. SVO: *a-bi-nu-um i-a-ba-nu* SIG<sub>4</sub>.GAR /lābinum yilabban libittam/ ‘The brick-maker makes the brick’.

### 2.5.2. Attributive adjectives

Attributive adjectives follow the substantive they qualify (Krebernik 1996, 238): *a-(wa-)mu ’à-mu-tum* /yawmū ḥammūtum/ ‘hot days’.

## 2.6. Lexicon

### 2.6.1. Isoglosses with Akkadian

The lexicon of Eblaite shares many isoglosses with Akkadian (Krebernik 1996, 240f.): Particles: *su-ma* /šumma/ ‘if’, *in* /in/ ‘in’, <sup>9</sup>*a<sub>5</sub>(NI)-na* /’ana/ ‘to’. Numeral: *li-im* /li’im/ ‘thousand’. Nouns: *su-mu-um* /šumum/ ‘name’ with the /u/-vowel typical for Akkadian, *la-’à-tum* /raḥ(a)tum/ ‘hand’. Verbs: *ba-ša-um* /baṭā’um/ ‘to exist’, *ba-ša-šu-um* /paṭāṭum/ ‘to anoint’.

### 2.6.2. Non-Akkadian Semitic words

Non-Akkadian Semitic words are most probably due to Northwest Semitic influence: Particle: *ab* /’āp/ ‘also’ (Huehnergard 2006, 4). Numeral: *ri-pap* (or *ri-pa<sub>4</sub>*) /ribab/ or /ribba/ ‘ten thousand’ (Krebernik 1996, 246). Noun: *qi-na-lum* /kinnārum/ ‘harp’ (Krebernik 1996, 242). The name *Mi-ga-il* /Mī-ka-’il/ ‘Who is like god?’ contains the non-Akkadian, Northwest Semitic words /mī/ and /ka/ (Krebernik 1996, 247).

### 2.6.3. The preposition /šin/

Typical for Eblaite is the preposition *si-in* /šin/ ‘towards’ which might be related to Sabaeen *s<sub>1</sub>wn* ‘toward’.

## 2.7. The Position of Eblaite within the Semitic languages

In the following, recent statements on the position of Eblaite within the Semitic languages are quoted.

### 2.7.1. Krebernik 1996

Krebernik 1996, 249 draws the following conclusion: ‘The majority of the Semitic material present in the various types of sources reflects a single language. This language is so closely related to Akkadian that it may be classified as an early Akkadian dialect. Various characteristic features indicate that it is not simply Mesopotamian Akkadian imported as a written language together with the cuneiform writing system. Some presumably non-Semitic influences point, assuming that they have rightly been ascribed to the non-Semitic stratum attested in the Ebla texts themselves, to a local origin of this Akkadian dialect. Non-Akkadian Semitic elements in the onomasticon and in the vocabulary show the presence of speakers of other Semitic languages, presumably the ancestors of later Northwest Semitic.’

### 2.7.2. Tropper 2003

Tropper 2003, 653: Eblaite belongs ‘aufgrund seiner markanten morphologischen Übereinstimmungen mit dem Akkadischen in eine gemeinsame Sprachgruppe mit dem Akkadischen ... Es handelt sich dabei um keinen (weiteren) akkadischen Dialekt, sondern um eine eigenständige ostsemitische Sprache neben dem Akkadischen.’ Tropper argues that ‘die linguistischen Differenzen zwischen den etablierten Dialekten des Akkadischen ... entschieden geringer bzw. unwesentlicher sind als die zwischen dem Eblaitischen einerseits und dem Akkadischen andererseits’ (Tropper 2003, 653). He specifically mentions the infinitives with double /t/ (see 2.4.9., above) and the lexicon including the prepositions (ib. 652f.).

### 2.7.3. Fronzaroli 2005

Fronzaroli 2005, 156: ‘D’autres enfin jugèrent qu’il s’agissait d’une langue appartenant au sémitique archaïque, comme l’akkadien, mais suffisamment marquée pour pouvoir être considérée comme indépendante de ce dernier. D’après moi cette appréciation ... semble ... la plus correcte.’

### 2.7.4. Huehnergard 2006

Huehnergard 2006, 4f.: ‘There are probably very few scholars who would maintain that Eblaite is to be considered part of West Semitic ... There are a few probable innovations that characterize Eblaite but non Akkadian, and another set of probable shared

innovations that uniquely characterize all of Akkadian but not Eblaite ... Eblaite constitutes an innovative branch within East Semitic ... Eblaite and Akkadian should be considered separate, coordinate branches of East Semitic’.

### 2.7.5. Edzard 2006

Edzard 2006, 83: ‘So möchte ich denn den Streit über die Klassifizierung des Eblaitischen dadurch schlichten, daß ich sage ...: wir haben es mit einem altakkadischen Dialektkontinuum zu tun.’

### 2.7.6. Krebernik 2006

Krebernik 2006, 84 states: ‘The question of whether ‘Eblaite’ should be called an Akkadian dialect or a second East Semitic language is basically a matter of terminology, depending on the notion of ‘dialect’ one adopts. If one takes into consideration the numerous morphological and lexical characteristics shared by both Mesopotamian and Eblaite Akkadian, and, on the other hand, the numerous morphological and lexical differences between modern Arabic dialects, I would prefer to regard ‘Eblaite’ as an Akkadian dialect.’

### 2.7.7. Conclusion

In my mind, the classification of Eblaite as an Akkadian dialect is preferable to a classification as a distinct East Semitic language. I do not see that Eblaite is more distinct from Assyrian and Babylonian than these two dialects from each other. In fact, distinct morphological innovations are only very few: see 2.2.1. (*ʾantanu*), 2.4.1., 2.4.2. (*/t/-*prefixes in the 3. pl.), 2.4.9. (infinitives with double */t/*). See also the preposition */šin/* (2.6.3.). Many other distinct features are shared retentions not diagnostic for a classification: 2.1.1. (phonemic inventory), 2.1.3. (diphthongs preserved), 2.1.5. (Barth’s law not valid), 2.2.1. (*ʾanā*), 2.2.5. (dual of pronominal suffixes), 2.2.8. (inflected determinative pronoun), 2.3.4. (status absolutus in */a/*), 2.4.1. (prefixes with */ya-* and */na/*), 2.4.2. (*/-ū/-*suffix for the 2. pl.), 2.5.6., 2.4.7. (*/a/-*vowel in forms without prefix of the D- and Š-stems), 2.4.7. (present */yušyannaqā/*), 2.4.11. (strong */ʾ/*), 2.4.13. (*/-aw/-* preserved), 2.4.14. (strong inflection of verbs I-y), 2.5.2. (VSO word order). Some phonological and lexical features are probably due to Northwest Semitic or non-Semitic influences: 2.1.9. (reduction of */l/*), 2.6.2. (Northwest Semitic loans). Distinctly Assyrian features are only 2.2.6. (pronominal dative suffix */-niʾāti/*) (a shared retention?) and perhaps 2.2.5. (suffix */-šanu/*). On the other hand, a typical Babylonian innovation is: 2.4.6., 2.4.7. (*/u/-*vowel in prefixless forms of the D- and Š-stems, only rarely attested however). Another typical Babylonian feature is 2.2.3. (independent personal pronoun dative, an innovation under Sumerian influence since Sumerian has dative prefixes?). Note also that Eblaite does neither have the Assyrian type vowel harmony nor the Assyrian type subordinative. Eblaite shows many archaic features, few morphological innovations not shared by Babylonian and Assyrian, and few innovations and other



features typical for Babylonian. Therefore, as to our present knowledge, Eblaite is best classified as an Akkadian dialect which shares a common ancestor with Babylonian. The historical implication of this conclusion might be that Babylonian spread along the Euphrates, either from south to north or vice versa.

### 3. Sargonic Akkadian

Sargonic Akkadian is the written language of the Old Akkadian empire (ca. 2350–2150 BC). Text genres are royal inscriptions, incantations, letters, administrative and legal documents, together ca. 1575 texts containing ca. 35 000 words (Streck 2011). Most of the royal inscriptions are only attested from copies from the Old Babylonian period. The most detailed recent description of Sargonic Akkadian (excluding the copies of royal inscriptions from the Old Babylonian period) is Hasselbach 2005, on which the following remarks are mainly based. The classical description of Old Akkadian grammar is Gelb 1961, which also encompasses personal names and the material from the Ur III period. Sommerfeld 2003 tries to clarify the position of Sargonic Akkadian in the history of the Akkadian language (see 3.5.4., below).

#### 3.1. Phonology

##### 3.1.1. No Assyrian type vowel harmony

Old Akkadian does not have the Assyrian type vowel harmony (Hasselbach 2005, 121f.; cf. ch. 14.3.2.): *tī-ir-ḫa-tī* /tirḫati/ ‘bridal price’ (not \*/tirḫiti/), *ra-á-bum* /raḫabum/ ‘a kind of vessel’ (not \*/raḫubum/). The Assyrian vowel harmony is an Assyrian innovation.

##### 3.1.2. \*/ay/ > /ē/

The diphthong \*/ay/ becomes /ē/ as in Assyrian, not \*/ī/ as in Babylonian (Hasselbach 2005, 41 f.; 91 with n. 186): *bi-ti-ís* /bētis/ ‘to the house’. See 3.3.4 below for Hasselbach’s opinion that /ē/ is a shared retention and /ī/ developed from /ē/.

#### 3.2. Morphology of pronouns

##### 3.2.1. Independent personal pronouns

The independent personal pronouns has the 3. sg. m. accusative form *su<sub>4</sub>-a* /śu’a/ ‘him’, according to Hasselbach 2005, 149 ‘most likely an archaic form’; see also /śuwa/ in Eblaite, 2.2.1, above. Old Babylonian has *śu’āti* for the accusative, Old Assyrian for

the dative and accusative. For the 3. sg. dual exists the form *su<sub>4</sub>-ni-ti* /šunēti/ (Hasselbach 2005, 149), neither attested in Assyrian nor in Babylonian and clearly an archaism.

### 3.2.2. Pronominal suffixes dual

The pronominal suffixes also have archaic dual forms (Hasselbach 2005, 150–158): genitive 2. dual *ga-ti-ku-ni* /qātīkunē/ ‘your two hands’, accusative 3. dual *li-su-zé-áš-su-ni* /lišūše’asšunē/ ‘he shall release them’, *za-ab-t[i]-su-[ni-ti]* /šabtīšunēti/ ‘seize them!’, dative 3. dual *a-ki-iš-su<sub>4</sub>-ni-si-im* /’aqīššunēšim/ ‘I bestowed on them’. Whereas the form /-šunē/ without /t/ resembles the Assyrian forms for the genitive/accusative pl., -šunu and -šina, the forms /-šunēšim/ and /-šunēti/ resemble more Babylonian forms (masc. pl. dative -šunūšim, accusative -šunūti) (Hasselbach 2005, 234).

### 3.2.3. Pronominal suffix genitive/accusative 3. pl. masc.

The pronominal suffix genitive/accusative 3. pl. masc. has the form /-šunu/: *sar-rí-su-nu* ‘their kings’ (Hasselbach 2005, 153), *id-kè-e-su-nu-ma* /yidkēšunuma/ ‘he called them’ (ib. 157). This corresponds to Assyrian genitive/accusative -šunu, whereas Babylonian has genitive -šunu and accusative -šunūti.

### 3.2.4. Determinative pronoun

The determinative pronoun still inflects for case, gender and number (Hasselbach 2005, 161–164), e.g., sg. masc. nominative /šu/, genitive /ši/, accusative /ša/. This is an archaism; in Assyrian and Babylonian only the uninflected form ša survives.

## 3.3. Morphology of nouns

### 3.3.1. Dual

The dual is still fully productive (Hasselbach 2005, 179; Gelb 1961, 139): *si-ta i-ša-ab-ta-an* /šittā iššabtān/ ‘two rings’, *ša-al-mi-in an-ni-in* /šalmīn annīn/ ‘these two statues’, *a-ḫa-tá-ki sa-lim-tá* /aḫātāki šalimtā/ ‘your two sisters are well’. In Babylonian and Assyrian the dual is restricted to certain words, e.g., words designating body parts.

### 3.3.2. Terminative

The terminative ending in /-iš/ is more productive than in Old Babylonian or Old Assyrian and is used in the same sense as the preposition *ana* (Hasselbach 2005, 181): *e-ra-si-iš* /’erāšiš/ ‘to cultivate’, *bi-ti-iš* /bētīš/ ‘to the house’.

### 3.3.3. Genitive singular in the construct state

The genitive sg. in the construct state still ends in /-i/ whereas in Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian this ending was lost (Gelb 1961, 145; Hasselbach 2005, 183): *in É-ti* PN /bēti/ ‘in the house of PN’.

### 3.3.4. Oblique plural masculine /-ē/

The oblique pl. masc. ends in /-ē/ as in Assyrian and not in /-ī/ as in Babylonian (Hasselbach 2005, 179 ff.; 184): *uš-se<sub>11</sub>* /uśšē/ ‘foundations’, *iš-gi-ni* /iškinē/ ‘additional payments’. Cf. Hasselbach 2005, 91 n. 186 for the opinion that /-ē/ in Sargonic Akkadian and in Assyrian is a shared retention and that Babylonian /-ī/ developed from /-ē/.

## 3.4. Morphology of verbs

### 3.4.1. Prefix 3. singular masculine /y-/

The prefix of the 3. sg. m. has initial /y-/ regularly distinguished in the script from word initial /ʔ/ (Gelb 1961, 157ff.; 162; Hasselbach 2005, 191; 195; 212: *i-ti-in* /yiddin/ ‘he gave’ (spelling with *i* for /yi/ against *i* for /ʔi/), *u-bi-lam* /yuūbilam/ ‘he brought’ against *ú-ma* /ʔuūmā/ ‘I swear’. In Old Assyrian and Old Babylonian this /y/ was lost.

### 3.4.2. Prefix 3. singular feminine /ta-/

The prefix of the 3. sg. fem. is /ta-/ (Hasselbach 2005, 191;195): *da-ti-in* /taddin/ ‘she gave’. The same prefix is attested in Assyrian, a shared retention, whereas Babylonian has /ʔi/ < \*/yi/ for both masc. and fem.

### 3.4.3. Precative

The precative has the same prefixes as in Babylonian, i.e., in the G-stem *li-* for the 3. person, *lu-* for the 1. sg., in the D- and Š-stems *li-* for the 3. person and *lu-* for the 1. sg. (Hasselbach 2005, 200–202): *li-li-ik* /lillik/ ‘he shall go’, *lu-uš-ku-ul-kum* /luš-qulkum/ ‘I shall weigh out for you’, *li-da-ni-in* /lidannin/ ‘he shall strengthen’, [*lu-sa*]-*bi-l[a]-kum* /lušābilakkum/ ‘I shall send you’. Cf. the Assyrian prefixes G-stem *la-* for the 1. sg. and *lu-* for both 3. person and 1. sg. in the D- and Š-stems. According to the analysis of Testen 1993, 6–8, Streck 1995 Anm. 480 and Streck 1998, 319ff. no. 5.21, the Assyrian forms are archaic and the Babylonian forms innovations; for a different analysis cf. Huehnergard 1983, 588.

#### 3.4.4. Subordinative

In a few cases in texts from southern Babylonia and from Kiš, Sargonic Akkadian uses the subordinative marker *-ni* after verbal forms ending in a vowel (Hasselbach 2005, 206): *da-ba-ša-ḫi-ni* /*tapaššaḫīni*/ ‘you shall verily find peace (affirmative use in an oath)’. Texts from the Diyāla region do not mark the subordinative in this environment. The subordinative marker */-u-ni/* mainly occurs in royal inscriptions in a specific formula: *u-sa-za-ku-ni* /*yušassakuni*/ ‘(who) removes’. The most frequent subordinative marker is */-u/* after consonants: *im-ḫu-ru* /*yimḫuru*/ ‘(who) received’. Whereas the absence of */-ni/* after vocalic ending connects Sargonic Akkadian of the Diyāla region with Babylonian, */-ni/* after vowels in southern Babylonia and in Kiš as well as combined */-u-ni/* also occur in Assyrian (Hasselbach 2005, 207–209). Hasselbach 2005, 209 and 2007, 38 with n. 46, thinks that */-ni/* after a vocalic ending was lost in Sargonic Akkadian of the Diyāla region and in Babylonian so that unmarked verbal forms in subordinative clauses would be a shared innovation. To my mind, the situation is just the other way round: the Assyrian subordinative in */-ni/* is an Assyrian innovation and the subordinative in */-u/* a shared retention.

#### 3.4.5. Infinitive and verbal adjective D

The infinitive and the verbal adjective of the D-stem have the form *PuRRuSum* as in Babylonian, not *PaRRuSum* as in Assyrian (Hasselbach 2005, 210; 212): *gu-du-si-iš* /*quddušiš*/ ‘to consecrate’, *zu-ku-na* /*zuqunā*/ ‘bearded’.

#### 3.4.6. Preterite D of verbs II-w/y

The preterite D of verbs II-w/y has a weak form (Hasselbach 2005, 228): *u-gi-in* /*yukēn*/. Cf. Babylonian *ukīn* against the strong Assyrian form *uka<sup>3</sup>in*.

#### 3.4.7. Verbs III-w/y

Verbs III-w/y show in the present/preterite tense of the G-stem an Ablaut */-ē/* : */-ī/* (Sommerfeld 1999, 20f.; Hasselbach 2005, 228ff.): *a-ga-bi* /*ʾaqabbē*/ ‘I say’, *dag-bī* /*taqbī*/ ‘you said’. This Ablaut is neither attested in Assyrian nor in Babylonian where we have *aqabbī/taqbī*. According to Hasselbach 2005, 228 this Ablaut is due to the vowel contraction */ay/* > */ē/* in the present tense. If this is correct, we have to reconstruct an original */a/* : */i/*-Ablaut for these verbs: *\*/iqabbay/* > */iqabbē/* : *\*/iqbiy/* > */iqbī/*, also known with some verbs in later Akkadian: see with verbs primae w: *ubbal* : *ubil*; the verb *alākum*: *illak* : *illik*; in Assyrian the verb *nadānum*: *iddan* : *iddin*. Both in Assyrian and in Babylonian this Ablaut was lost with verbs III-w/y, probably by replacement of the vowel class *a/i* with *i/i*: *iqabbī* < *\*iqabbiy* : *iqbī* < *\*iqbiy*. This explanation seems to be preferable to the assumption of a development *\*iqabbay* > *iqabbī* since, as far as we know, also Assyrian has *iqabbī* and not *\*iqabbē* as would be expected if */-ī/* was the result of the monophthongization of *\*-/ay/*.

### 3.5. Summary

The foregoing investigation can be summarized as follows:

#### 3.5.1. Sargonic Akkadian features not shared by later dialects

*/šu'a/*, */šunēti/* (3.2.1.). Dual of pronominal suffixes (3.2.2.). Inflected determinative pronoun (3.2.4.). Productive dual of nouns (3.3.1.). Productive terminative ending (3.3.2.). Construct state of the genitive (3.3.3.). Verbal prefixes 3. person */yi-/* (3.4.1.). Prefix */ta-/* (3.4.2.). Ablaut with verbs III-*w/y* (3.4.7.).

#### 3.5.2. Sargonic Akkadian features shared by Assyrian

\**/ay/* > */ē/* (3.1.2.). */-šunē/* without */t/* (3.2.2.). */-šunu/* for genitive/accusative (3.2.3.). Masculine oblique plural */-ē/* (3.3.4.). Subordinative */-ni/* and */-u-ni/* (southern Babylonia and Kiš) (3.4.4.).

#### 3.5.3. Sargonic Akkadian features shared by Babylonian

No Assyrian type vowel harmony (3.1.1.). */-šunēšim/*, */-šunēti/* for dative and accusative (3.2.2.). Precative paradigm (3.4.3.). Absence of subordinative */-ni/* (Diyāla) (3.4.4.). *PuRRuSum* (3.4.5.). Weak preterite D of verbs II-*w/y* (3.4.6.).

#### 3.5.4. Conclusion

Sommerfeld 2003, 582–586 concludes from the features peculiar for Sargonic Akkadian that this language had no direct affiliation with either Babylonian or Assyrian. According to him, Sargonic Akkadian was the native language of the Sargonic kings which became the official chancellery language of the Sargonic empire and was given up after the fall of the dynasty of Akkad. However, based on a list of Sargonic features not shared by later dialects, shared by Assyrian, or shared by Babylonian, similar to but in details different from our list above (3.5.1–3.), Hasselbach 2005, 233–235 and Hasselbach 2007 reaches a different and to my mind more reliable conclusion. According to her, the features not shared by later dialects ‘are shared retentions of an earlier stage of Akkadian and consequently they do not represent distinguishing isoglosses for establishing Sargonic Akkadian as an independent dialect.’ Cf. the features collected in 3.5.1., above. Also most of the features shared with Assyrian ‘are shared retentions and do not subgroup Sargonic Akkadian together with Assyrian’ (Hasselbach 2005, 234); cf. the features collected in 3.5.2., with the exception of the subordinative in */-ni/* in texts from southern Babylonia and in Kiš which is probably an Assyrian innovation. The features shared with Babylonian, ‘are distinct Babylonian innovations which are not shared by the common ancestor of Babylonian and Assyrian or Assyrian’ (Hasselbach 2005, 234). See the features collected in 3.5.3., above, with the exception of the

absence of the Assyrian vowel harmony and the absence of subordinative /-ni/ which to my mind are shared retentions.

Therefore, the overall conclusion drawn by Hasselbach 2005, 234f. seems to be basically correct: ‘This means that Sargonic Akkadian, more specifically, the dialect of the Diyāla region, most likely shares a common ancestor with later Babylonian and might even be considered an early stage of Babylonian ... the innovations shared by the Sargonic dialect of the Diyāla region and Babylonian are significant enough to consider the two members of the same subbranch of Akkadian, as opposed to Assyrian which constitutes a branch of its own’ (Hasselbach 2005, 234f.).

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## 14. Babylonian and Assyrian

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### Abstract

*A historically arranged sketch of Babylonian and Assyrian, two dialects of Akkadian, which were the dominant languages of Mesopotamia in the second and first millennia BC.*

### 1. Introduction

Babylonian and Assyrian are the two main dialects of Akkadian (A.) attested from the beginning of the 2nd millennium onwards. Their connection to the attested dialects of 3rd millennium A. (ch. 13) is still disputed. Whereas the history of Assyrian cannot be traced back to the 3rd millennium, at least Ur III A. is a predecessor of classical Old Babylonian (cf. 2.1.), and this even seems to be true for Sargonic A. (Hasselbach 2005; differently Hilgert 2002 and Sommerfeld 2003).