

The Cuneiform Short Alphabet: Part 6.

An Inscribed Jar Handle from Sarepta in Lebanon: KTU 6.70 (Sar 3102, Pritchard (1975), 97-104)

Detailed Discussion

Preliminary Remarks:

Sar 3102 was discovered during Pritchard's (1978), 108-9, 1972 excavation at Sarepta in Lebanon. I cite here the more accessible popular report. Those seeking more detail and rigor should consult Pritchard (1975), 97-104. With the exception of the first and last letters of the second line, the inscription is completely legible. Pritchard dated the broken jar handle to the beginning of the 13th century BCE. Excavators discovered it amid discarded shards in the remains of the Kiln G complex pottery at Sarepta (Pritchard's [1978], 121-123). Therefore, it is very unlikely that the vessel with this particular handle was ever delivered to its prospective owner. As will be seen below, the text is written from left to right in the cuneiform short alphabet and the language is an early form of Phoenician with affinities to the Old Byblian dialect particularly as exemplified in the inscription on the Ahiram coffin, KAI 1. It is as old as, and very likely much older than, any other text in the Phoenician language including the archaic Phoenician arrowheads (Gibson [1982], 1-11, #1), KAI 3, the "Byblos cones" (Gibson [1982], 12, #2 and #3), and the Ahiram coffin inscription itself. Our text may predate the Ahiram coffin inscription by as much as 150 years if the Ahiram inscription was dated correctly by Gibson (1982), 13, (first half of the 11th century) and as much as 400 years if one agrees with Sass, (2005), 49, (850-750 BCE). The age difference may be even greater if one agrees with Wallenfels' (1983), 111f, argument for an even later date for the earliest Phoenician inscriptions. The SAR 3102 inscription is also considerably older than the more recently discovered Tekke bowl inscription (Coldstream and Catling [1996], 410) and the Kefer Veradin bowl inscription (Alexandre [2002b]). For a discussion of the dating of these texts, see Sass, (2005), 34-39. All the examples of early Phoenician texts listed above, excepting our text, are in a linear alphabetic script rather than a cuneiform alphabet.

Transliteration and Translation:

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|--|---|
| 1)]agnn z p`l yd | An amphora, which Yiddinba'alu has made |
| 2)]n/rb`l z l j ₂ dC ₂ b`l[h? | for Chudashi, his lord. |

Notes on the Orthography:

One of the first things that struck me upon the looking at this inscription is that the wedges, both the vertical wedges and the horizontal wedges, are unusually narrow and elongated. The text is written from left to right. The letters, particularly in line 1, run together making differentiation and sometimes identification somewhat difficult. Having said that, all the letters, with the possible exception of the letter

between the g and the final n in the first word are well formed. j_2 in line 2 likely stands for a ḥ. The text contains the now familiar small circular impression, C_2 . Both usages are exactly what one would expect from a text written in the cuneiform short alphabet if it were from Ugarit (KTU 4.31 and KTU 4.710) or Minet el-Beida (KTU 1.77). The normally short horizontal wedges at the bottom of a classical b and d are far more like short vertical wedges one encounters in the short alphabet texts from Ugarit and Minet el-Beida. Aside from the direction of the writing this text is very much like the other cuneiform short alphabet texts.

Notes on the Translation:

Dietrich and Loretz' (1988), 232-232, have a summary of history of the interpretation of this text beginning with the *editio princeps* in Pritchard (1975), 97-104, and including the work of Texidon and Owen, (1975), 102-104, Greenstein (1976), 49-57, Bordreuil (1979) and Puech (1986), 203. I will not rehearse all of that history but will focus on the issues that remain important in understanding the text.

Line 1) The g was thought by several (see below) to be a linear *gimel*. The reading of the sign or stylus fault between the g and the n in the first word is difficult. I take it to be an n based on the picture published by Bordreuil (1979), 70 and Dietrich and Loretz' (1988), 234 autograph. Puech (1986), 204, reads a single n but apparently believed that it had an unusual morphology. Bordreuil (1979), 65, who had opportunity to examine and photograph the jar handle in the museum in Beirut, explains what I read as an n as the result of the scribe accidentally dragging his engraving tool from the bottom of the g to the correct position to start the n. However, a careful look at his photograph indicates that this is not a smooth line but is composed of separate strokes. See Bordreuil's figures



1 (the relevant portion of which is reproduce to the left) and 4. The first wedge begins near the bottom of the vertical wedge of the g and the remaining two wedges more or less curve upwards until the third wedge of this suspected n is near same level as the, in this case an unmistakable, n at the end of the word. In any case, what I read as gn is not a Phoenician linear *gimel* as thought by Owen (1975), 102-104, Pritchard (1978), 109 and Greenstein (1976), 54. See in contrast Bordreuil (1979), 65, who suggests that the doubling of the n may be *plene*. The word $\text{N}(\text{g})$ is attested in Punic (KAI 69:11) where it may mean something like "container." But here it certainly means something more akin to "large jar." Bordreuil (1979), 65, has a discussion of the word *agn* as it appears in Akkadian, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew and even Greek. In fact, I am certain it means the particular "large jar" to which this handle was once attached. The letter which I read as a z was first identified as such by Bordreuil (1979), 65. It had previously been thought to be a word divider. The sentence *agnn z p`l PN* finds a parallel in KAI 1:1(| (bt ()) | (p z N) , 'A sarcophagus, which Ittoba'al has made.') from Byblos (the famous Ahiiram coffin inscription). The formula actually runs further and I will address the whole formula when I consider line 2. z is a relative pronoun in Old Phoenician (see Friedrich and Röllig [1970], 149, §293). Of course, we may be dealing with a demonstrative pronoun here but judging from examples of the formula in other languages and the demonstrative

pronoun in KAI 1:2 (𐤊) it is most parsimonious to read the relative pronoun. That nearly the same formula occurs in other ancient texts supports the conclusion that we are dealing with a relative pronoun in our text (see also discussion of line 2, and particularly the inscribed jar handle in Aramaic from Luristan). The Ugaritic equivalent of *p`lis b`l* (see Gordon [1965], 375, #494 and 469, #2075). Note the discussion of the Ugaritic p>b shift in Sivan (2001), 27f., which he attributes to partial assimilation of the p. See Greenstein (1976), 51-2 on this issue.

Line 2) This second line has a somewhat different set of problems than the ones faced in line 1. Aside from the first letter and perhaps the last, every other letter is clear and uncontroversial. I will discuss the first letter when I take up the two proper names in this inscription. To understand the problem that I see as the central problem of this line we need to look at other similar formulaic expressions. Greenstein (1976), 51-2 offers several examples of the formula from other Phoenician texts (KAI 1:1, KAI 6:1 and others), from Ugaritic (KTU 6:13 and KTU 6:14) and Aramaic (Gibson [1975], 57-58 # 11). They follow the pattern, object, relative pronoun, PN₁, verb, the preposition l, PN₂. As we will see, sometimes the personal names are expanded. I will use the Luristan Aramaic inscription (Gibson [1975], 57-58 # 11) on a bronze juglet as an example for two reasons. First, it is, like our text, written on a vessel. Second, it clearly uses a relative rather than a demonstrative pronoun so it is helpful in addressing one issue from our discussion of line 1. The text is as follows:

r t s l) 𐤊) r p t db (y d) [dk]
 #g 𐤊 cmr t (l

Which Gibson (1975), 58) translates:

"The (juglet) which PR'TN (daughter of) 'LSTR, had made for 'TMRSRN, (son of) NGŠ."

Notice first that yd can only be a relative pronoun. The demonstrative would have been 𐤊. The same can be seen in the Ugaritic examples. Second, notice the pattern: Object (juglet), relative pronoun, PN₁ (in two parts), the preposition l and a second PN₂ (in two parts).

The problem is that our text has the relative pronoun plus the preposition where, based on the other examples of the formula, one would expect only the preposition. How is this to be explained? Greenstein (1976), 54 didn't see it as a problem because he took what is now believed to be the relative pronoun as a word divider. Bordreuil (1979), 65, notes the problem and attributes it to a practice of repeating the relative in Ugaritic as documented in KTU 1.14 VI:24-31. While I believe, the comparative formulae are crucial in understanding this text, I would like to suggest that a slightly different formulation is at work here. In a few Ugaritic texts, the relative pronoun is used alone as a circumlocution for a genitive relationship. Among these are KTU 4.270:8 and KTU 4.282:2, 3, 6. A similar use of the relative pronoun r #) plus the preposition l occurs in

Hebrew. See Gen 29:9 and 1 Samuel 21:8 as examples. Note also | # in Canticles 1:6 and two other places in Canticles. While certainly the Canticles examples and perhaps the others also are late, they do show the same syntax as is seen in our text. If I were forced to indicate this usage in the translation, I would translate it awkwardly as "which (is meant to belong) to."

I read and reconstruct $b^{\text{c}}|h^{\text{c}}$ and take it to mean "his lord" following Greenstein (1976), 54. I would note Ugaritic $ldgn . b^{\text{c}}h^{\text{c}}$, "his lord" in KTA 6.14:2, where there can be little doubt that $b^{\text{c}}h^{\text{c}}$ means "his lord." Note that h^{c} is the third person genitive pronominal suffix in KAI 1:1, 2. However, it is very possible that we are dealing with a final theophoric element in a compound personal name (see below).

On the proper names:

Our text contains two personal names: $ydnb^{\text{c}}|$ or $ydrb^{\text{c}}|$ and $h_2dš_2$ or $h_2dš_2b^{\text{c}}|$. In the case of the name that begins on line 1 and continues onto line 2, one must tackle a problem with the reading. What is the first letter in line 2? At one level, the possibilities are \check{a} , w , k , n , r and even t . Of these, Bordreuil (1979), 66, thinks only n , r and k are possible, and his preference is for n and the r . There does appear to have been room for three sets of horizontal wedges which would rule out \check{a} , k and t . And a w here is unlikely. As Dietrich and Loretz' (1988), 236, say, a preference should be given to n because the ends of the horizontal strokes of the preceding two wedges of an r (and for that matter a k) would likely be visible just above and below the final wedge. They also correctly note that an $^{\text{c}}$ first read by Owen (1975), 103, and supported by Greenstein (1976), 55-56, is not to be seen. What can be said of this name? First names with the theophoric element $b^{\text{c}}|$ are quite common in Phoenician and other ancient Semitic languages. I count about 15 personal names ending with $b^{\text{c}}|$ from Ugarit (Gordon, 1965), 515) and another 13 or so from various Phoenician and Punic texts (Gibson [1982], 165-166). ydn is known as a personal name from Ugarit (See UT #1079) and $ydrm$ is also attested as a personal name in Ugaritic texts (KTU 4.102:6 and KTU 4.407:2). In neither case does one find these names directly followed by a theophoric element. An exception might be KTU 5.1:5 where we find $ydrm []r$ but the broken letters surely do not stand for $b^{\text{c}}|$. I could not find any personal names beginning with ydn or ydr in Phoenician texts. It is also instructive to compare names like $^mYa-di-nim$ and $^mYa-du-ri-um$ from Mari (see Huffmon (1965), 182 and 183). Another personal name that has an interesting parallel to our name is $^middin-IM$ (EA 123:37) which Knudtzon (1964), 530, reads $^middin-addu$ but IM is just as well understood as $Ba'al$ in texts from this period and region. $^middin-addu$ was from Gubla, i.e. Byblos, in the heart of Phoenicia. I am not claiming that $^middin-addu$ was the person mentioned in our text. Our $ydnb^{\text{c}}|$ was a potter or perhaps more likely the person who commissioned the pot. $^middin-addu$ of EA 123:37 was some kind of an official at Byblos. However, they appear to have had very similar names. Campbell (1964), 134, assigns EA 123 to the beginning of the independent reign of Akhenaten. Note the Hebrew personal names $|) n d$ and $|) y n d$. If, on the one hand, our name contains an n than it may mean something like "Ba'al judges." If, on the other hand, our name contains an r than it means something like "Ba'al endures" or Ba'al dwells."

Because I am impressed by the parallel name from El Amarna, I have rather arbitrarily selected ydn for use in the above translation.

The name $\text{h}_2\text{d}\check{\text{s}}_2$ without the theophoric element is also known from Ugarit ($\text{h}\check{\text{d}}\check{\text{t}}$ see UT #842) and Phoenicia. Of particular interest in terms of vocalization is $^m\text{h}\text{u}-\text{da}-\text{\textcircled{e}}$ is RS 20.01:4. All the Phoenician examples I can find are in the form #dx nb (See KAI 36:3-4, KAI 41:2, KAI 49:16, KAI 55:1 and KAI 58). While I am impressed that no example of this name with any theophoric element is known, it is still possible that the actual name is $\text{h}_2\text{d}\check{\text{s}}_2\text{b}^{\text{c}}\text{l}$ and the proposed reconstruction of a final h is erroneous.