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AINU. See Siberian Languages; Altaic Languages; and Languages of the World.

AKKADIAN. This Semitic language was spoken from the early 3rd to the middle of the 1st millennium BCE, in the area corresponding to modern Iraq and Syria and some neighboring regions. The term subsumes two major dialects, *Babylonian* and *Assyrian*. These underwent three broad stages of development, labeled Old (ca. 2000–1500 BCE), Middle (1500–1000), and Neo- (1000–500); their forerunner is known as Old Akkadian (2500–2000 BCE).

Some scholars consider Eblaite as a form of Old Akkadian, with which it is contemporary.

1. History. Old Babylonian is generally viewed as the classical stage of the language, because of a convergence of cultural and diachronic factors: it is the earliest stage of the language for which we have a large, differentiated, and culturally significant body of written documents. That Old Babylonian had a certain normative value is suggested by the fact that later cultural manifestations of the language were consciously modeled on it—especially Standard Babylonian, a literary “dialect” used in the mid-1st millennium BCE, when Akkadian as a spoken language had begun to disappear.

During the second half of the 2nd millennium, Akkadian came to be used as a lingua franca over all of southwestern Asia. Through its use as a shared medium of expression by speakers of different languages, it developed into a scribal lingo rather divorced from the natural linguistic development which it underwent separately in the core area of Babylonia and Assyria.

External influences are important in the study of Akkadian. Because of its cultural primacy, Sumerian seems clearly to have played a significant role in shaping linguistic development. Apart from its strong influence on the lexicon, characteristics that are frequently adduced are the fact that the configuration of Akkadian phonology is typologically highly advanced vis-à-vis later Semitic languages; and the Subject Object Verb character of its syntax. Other significant lexical influences came from Hurrian and Aramaic.

2. Sources. For sources on Akkadian, see Soden 1952, Gelb 1961, Hecker 1968, Groneberg 1987, and Huehnergard 1988. For historical connections, see Castellino 1962, Gelb 1969; for the writing system, Soden and Röllig 1967; and for dictionaries, Gelb et al. 1956, Soden 1965–1981. Linguistically oriented grammars are Reiner 1966, Buccellati 1996, and Huehnergard 1997.

The nature of the available sources places some significant limits on our understanding of Akkadian as a linguistic reality. First, there is the obvious fact that Akkadian is an extinct language. Exactly when it died is not apparent from the record: it is conceivable that, by the end of the Assyrian empire (7th c. BCE), Aramaic had already replaced Akkadian as the common spoken language in Mesopotamia.

Second, the textual evidence on which our knowledge of the language is based—while massive in size, and relatively varied in the nature and range of its repertoire—does not provide a transparent record of the spoken

language. Except for letters, the bulk of the evidence comes to us through a pervasive scribal filter. Especially noticeable in formulaic, technical texts (whether pertaining to administration, law, cult, or scholarly practice), standardization is also to be reckoned with in the literary tradition, from myths and epics to hymns and wisdom texts. Finally, the extant evidence pertains primarily to urban elites; Amorite can be understood as the rural counterpart of urban Akkadian/Eblaite (though this is not the usual interpretation of Amorite).

3. Writing system. Graphemic analysis is of particular importance for a proper linguistic understanding of Akkadian—not only because our documentation is exclusively written, but also because of the complexities of the writing system. The philological tradition of Assyriology was intuitively responsive to the needs of graphemic analysis long before the concept was articulated theoretically; witness the modern repertoires of both syllabic and logographic values, which are based on rigorous applications of a coherently perceived system of graphemic rules. The signs of the *cuneiform* script number in the hundreds, and corresponding values in the thousands (allowing for multiple values for each sign, or “polyphony”); however, it appears that the operative sign inventory within any given text genre ranges between two hundred and three hundred, and that multiple values are restricted in usage by rules of correlation. The incidence and significance of graphemics is such that independent linguistic work on the textual data must be based on knowledge of their graphemic embodiment. The fact that the writing system includes full vocalic notation (in contrast to the writing systems used for other Semitic languages) is deceptively simple in this respect.

We can claim only an approximate knowledge of phonetic realizations, gathered mostly from the comparative evidence of living Semitic languages; however, Akkadian phonemics is well understood. Uncertainties that still remain pertain primarily to distributional arrangements rather than to specific inventory items. Among the latter is the possibility of an extra sibilant in Old Akkadian; among the former, the questions of (i) whether vowels were allowed in word-initial position (alternatively, glottal stop would be required), and of (ii) the nature and position of stress.

Diachronically, Akkadian phonology is much more innovative than that of much later Semitic languages, as shown by the loss (already in Old Akkadian) of most laryngeals and pharyngeals, only partly offset by a vo-

calic change of *a* to *e*. An interesting phenomenon is Old Assyrian vowel harmony, whereby short unstressed vowels in pre-final position are assimilated in quality to the vowel that follows.

4. Morphology. Two major systems are operative, as in other Semitic languages. One, “internal” inflection, is built on the obligatory and exclusive interrelationship of two morphemes, called “root” and “pattern”; the other, “external” inflection, is based on the cumulative clustering of affixes before or after the nucleus—which in turn may or may not be derived through internal inflection. (In standard Akkadian grammars, internal inflection is understood as a process of word formation.) In contrast with other Semitic languages, where internal inflection is freely superimposed on loanwords, Akkadian avoids such new formations; this means that, since all verbal forms are based on internal inflection, the language has no clear examples of borrowed verbs. This is all the more striking in light of the heavy dependence of Akkadian on Sumerian in its nominal lexicon.

The nominal system makes full use of case endings. Three major cases are operative in the singular, roughly correlated with specific syntactic functions: the nominative (in *-um*) identifies the subject; the accusative (in *-am*), the object; and the genitive (in *-im*), the second component of a nominalized construct (e.g. *bīt awīlim* ‘house of the man’). In the plural, a single oblique case (in *-ī*) subsumes the functions of both accusative and genitive, and *-ū* marks the case of the nominative. Partly retained in the script, case endings seem to have been lost by the early 1st millennium BCE.

An important characteristic of the verbal system is the absence of an aspect category. Instead, there are two other fundamental dimensions of verbal inflection. First, there are true tenses which locate the process in a temporal relationship to the speaker; besides the “present” (*iparras*, for present/future) and the preterit (*iprus*), traditional grammar recognizes a “perfect” (*iptaras*)—which has, however, been recently reinterpreted not as a tense but as a stem expressing the semantic category of “distance” (Buccellati 1996), or as a form admitting multiple relative values (Streck 1995). Second, inflection denotes either action or condition; the former is expressed by finite forms (the tenses and the imperative), and the latter by a form peculiar to Akkadian, the “permansive.” This is traditionally viewed as a separate component of the verbal paradigm; however, it is structurally more appropriate to view it as an inflectional variation of the

noun, including adjectives which can be derived from verbal roots (Buccellati 1996).

Important morphophonemic rules have been identified in Akkadian, with alternations conditioned by both internal and external inflection. A characteristic rule states that a sequence which contains (i) three syllables, of which the last two are short, and (ii) a certain type of morpheme boundary, is realized as two syllables; e.g., morphemic {damiq-um} is realized phonemically as /damqum/.

An interesting diachronic change is represented by the trend to abandon inflectional in favor of periphrastic forms. Thus for instance the separative form of the verb (with infix *t*, e.g. *ittalak* 'he went away from, he left') or the allative (with suffixed *-am*, etc., e.g. *illikam* 'he went to, he came') may be understood (in the early periods) as synthetically referential to adjuncts of motion, even when such an adjunct is absent from the discourse; in later dialects, the referential value of the affixed forms is at best vestigial, and an analytical adjunct is required.

5. Syntax and semantics. These fields have been generally neglected, even though there has been a burgeoning interest in lexical matters. For semantics, this has meant that words have been studied for their denotational value in regard to specific realia; for syntax, phrases and sentences have been studied with attention to morphemic keywords.

Several syntactic traits are distinctive of Akkadian among Semitic languages. The following may be mentioned:

- (a) The use of "virtual subordination" (where sentences are conjoined by the enclitic *-ma*) all but replaces normal subordination, in spite of the existence of a rich but underutilized inventory of conjunctions.
- (b) Restrictive relative clauses occur without the use of a relative pronoun; instead, the noun occurs in a shortened form (the "construct state")—e.g. *awil illiku* 'the man who came', vs. a non-restrictive clause with the relative pronoun, *awilum ša illiku* 'the man, who came . . .'.
- (c) Three nominal forms which are morphologically part of the inflectional structure of the verbal system (infinitive, verbal adjective, and participle) may govern the accusative, e.g. *bītam ina amārim* 'in seeing the house'.

[See also Aramaic; Cuneiform; Decipherment; Hurrian and Urartian; Semitic Languages; and Sumerian.]

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ALACALUFAN LANGUAGES. An isolated group native to southernmost Chile and the adjacent part of Argentina.

LANGUAGE LIST

Kakauhua: also called Kaukaue, Cacahue. Formerly spoken in Chile.

Qawasqar: also called Kaweskar, Kawesqar, Alacalufe, Ala-

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