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Parallel use of Akkadian and Aramaic in Neo-Assyrian archives

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Abstract

This study analyzes the functions of Aramaic in bilingual Assyro-Aramaic archives from the Neo-Assyrian period (934-612 BCE). The number of Aramaic texts surges up in the seventh-century BCE Assyria, and it is particularly prevalent in archives. Aramaic alphabetic documents always appear alongside Akkadian cuneiform documents. This phenomenon is an indicator of bilingualism and the changing language situation in the ancient Near East, where Aramaic eventually replaced Akkadian as the spoken majority language during the first millennium. The seventh-century bilingual archives represent one stage of this process.

This corpus has not been previously engaged with from a micro-scale sociolinguistic perspective. In this study I answer the following research question: What was the function of Aramaic in Neo-Assyrian archival practices, and with what kind of work processes was it connected? To answer this question, I utilize the sociolinguistic concept of social domains and identify them in archival sources.

The methodology utilized is archival analysis with both traditional and digital means. By archive analysis, I refer to the process of determining the archive's internal logic and the archival process. The archive's internal logic corresponds to the relationships between the archived texts and the structure they form. The archival process involves the whole life cycle of records: the transaction, drafting the record, storage, retrieval, possible reuse, and disposal. I analyze these aspects with traditional historical and philological methodology to determine the purpose of the documents and utilize Social Network Analysis to explore archive structures and relationships between texts. This methodology is joined with a sociolinguistic framework identifying social domains. This is achieved by answering the question "Who writes what language to whom and when" to identify the roles, topics, and circumstances affecting language choice in documents and archives. To answer this question, it is essential to understand the archival process: the writers, users, audience, topics, and form of documents.

The key result of the study is that there is a clear division between language use in bilingual archives from Assyrian core areas (Assur, Kalhu, and Nineveh) and the bilingual archives from the northwestern provinces of the empire (Marqasu, Ma'allānāte, Dūr-Katlimmu, Guzana, Til-Barsip, and Burmarina). Aramaic is attested in these archives in one or more of these three forms: as monolingual alphabetic documents, as fully bilingual documents where the same text is rendered in both alphabetic script in Aramaic and in cuneiform script in Akkadian, and as alphabetic archival aids on cuneiform documents. The use of Aramaic in the core areas is more restricted to limited document types, while the provincial archives are more abundant with Aramaic evidence and include more variety in terms of document types and legal clauses. The most significant similarities between the bilingual archives are the tendency to record grain loans in Aramaic and a standardized legal loan formula. This formula was appended and modified according to local customs and the needs of individual transactions. In the bilingual archives from the Assyrian core, Aramaic archival aids on cuneiform tablets are rarer than in the northwestern provincial archives, which implies that cuneiform literacy was higher among the archive holders in the Assyrian capitals as they did not require these archival aids.

The shape of clay tablets documenting transactions was determined by the type of transaction, which is highlighted by triangular clay tablets referred to as "dockets" which were most likely originally attached to a scroll written on perishable material. These dockets are primarily written in Aramaic, but some dockets particularly from temple and palatial archives utilized the same format for cuneiform texts. These cuneiform dockets were most likely originally attached to Aramaic scrolls, which implies that Assyrian institutions utilized Aramaic in their administration. Triangular dockets were used for documenting shorter term transactions such as loans of barley, which were to be paid back within a year. When loan documents include pledges of people or real estate, their value increases, which corresponds typically to higher formality in the legal formula and a rectangular tablet shape, regardless of whether the document was written in Aramaic or Akkadian. Keywords: Assyria, Neo-Assyrian period, bilingualism, Aramaic, Akkadian, archives

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List of abbreviations

- AALW = Fales, Frederick Mario (1995). Assyro-aramaica: The Assyrian Lion-Weights. *Immigration and Emigration within the Ancient Near East. Festschrift E. Lipiński*. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 65. Leuven: Peeters, 33–55.
- Abr-Nahrain* 34 A = Bordreuil, Pierre & F. Briquel Chatonnet (1996). Aramaic Documents from Til-Barsip. *Abr-Nahrain*. 34, 100–107.
- Abr-Nahrain* 34 B = Dalley, Stephanie (1996). Neo-Assyrian Tablets from Til-Barsip. *Abr-Nahrain*. 34, 66–99.
- ACP = Homès-Fredericq, Denyse & Paul Garelli (2018). *Ma'allānāte, archives d'un centre provincial de l'empire assyrien*. Brussels: Centre assyriologique Georges Dossin.
- AECT = Fales, Frederick Mario (1986). *Aramaic Epigraphs on Clay Tablets of the Neo-Assyrian Period*. Rome: Università degli studi “La Sapienza.”
- AfO Beih 6, TH = Friedrich, Johannes, G. Rudolf Meyer, Arthur Ungnad & Ernst F. Weidner (1967). *Die Inschriften vom Tell Halaf: Keilschrifttexte und aramäische Urkunden aus einer assyrischen Provinzhauptstadt*. Osnabrück: Biblio-Verlag.
- Aramaic Ostrakon from Nimrud* = Segal, Judah B. (1957). An Aramaic Ostrakon from Nimrud. *Iraq*. 19(2), 139–145.
- ATAE = *Archival Texts of the Assyrian Empire*, Oracc subproject, <http://oracc.org/atae/>.
- BATSH 6 = Radner, Karen (2002). *Die Neuassyrischen Texte aus Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.
- BATSH 17 = Röllig, Wolfgang (2014). *Die Aramäischen Texte aus Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad/Dūr-Katlimmu/Magdalu*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
- CAD = Gelb, Ignace J., Erica Reiner, Benno Landsberger & A. Leo Oppenheim, eds. (1956–2010). *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago, Illinois: The Oriental Institute.
- CAL = Kaufman, Stephen, et al. *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project*. (<https://cal.huc.edu>)

- CTN 1 = Kinnier, James V. (1972). *The Nimrud Wine Lists*. London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq.
- CTN 2 = Postgate, J. Nicholas (1973). *The Governor's Palace Archive*. British School of Archaeology in Iraq.
- CTN 3 = Dalley, Stephanie & J. Nicholas Postgate (1984). *The Tablets from Fort Shalmaneser*. British School of Archaeology in Iraq.
- CTN 6 = Herbordt, S., Raija Mattila, B. Parker, J.N. Postgate & D.J. Wiseman (2019). *Documents from the Nabu Temple and from private houses on the citadel*. London: British Institute for the Study of Iraq.
- Faist 2020 = Faist, Betina (2020). *Assyrische Rechtsprechung im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* Münster: Zaphon Verlag.
- FNALD = Postgate, J. Nicholas (1976). *Fifty Neo-Assyrian Legal Documents*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- KAN = Faist, Betina (2010). *Neuassyrische Rechtsurkunden IV*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Marqasu* = Günbattı, Cahit, Çeçen Salih, L. Gürkan Gökçek & Faruk Akyüz (2020). *Kahramanmaraş'ta Bulunmuş Yeni Asurca Tabletler*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu.
- NTA = Lemaire, André (2001). *Nouvelles Tablettes Araméennes*. Genève: Librairie Droz.
- Oracc = *Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus*, <http://oracc.org>.
- PNA = Radner, Karen & Heather D. Baker, eds. (1998–2011). *Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- Radner 2010* = Radner, Karen (2010). Neue neuassyrische Texte aus Dūr-Katlimmu. Hartmut Kühne (ed.), *Dūr-Katlimmu 2008 and Beyond*. *Studia Chaburensia* 1. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 175–186.
- SAA 1 = Parpola, Simo (1987). *The Correspondence of Sargon II part I: Letters from Assyria and the West*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- SAA 4 = Starr, Ivan (1990). *Queries to the Sungod: Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.

- SAA 5 = Lanfranchi, Giovanni B. & Simo Parpola (1990). *The Correspondence of Sargon II, part II: Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- SAA 6 = Kwasman, Theodore & Simo Parpola (1991). *Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh, Part I*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- SAA 7 = Fales, Frederick Mario & J. Nicholas Postgate (1992). *Imperial and Administrative Records, part I*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- SAA 10 = Parpola, Simo (1993). *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian scholars*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- SAA 14 = Mattila, Raija (2002). *Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh, Part 2*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- SAA 15 = Fuchs, Andreas & Simo Parpola (2001). *The Correspondence of Sargon II, part III: Letters from Babylonia and the Eastern Provinces*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- SAA 16 = Luukko, Mikko & Greta Van Buylaere (2002). *The Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- SAA 17 = Dietrich, Manfred (2003). *The Babylonian Correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- SAA 21 = Parpola, Simo (2018). *The Correspondence of Assurbanipal, Part 1: Letters from Assyria, Babylonia, and Vassal States*. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- SAA 22 = Frame, Grant & Simo Parpola (2023). *The Correspondence of Assurbanipal, Part II: Letters from Southern Babylonia*. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- StAT 3 = Faist, Betina (2007). *Alltagstexte aus neuassyrischen Archiven und Bibliotheken der Stadt Assur*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
- Tell Shiukh Fawqani* = Fales, Frederick Mario, Karen Radner, Cinzia Pappi & Ezio Attardo (2005). *The Assyrian and Aramaic Texts from Tell Shiukh Fawqani. Tell Shiukh Fawqani 1994–1998. History of the Ancient Near East / Monographs VI. 2 vols.*; Padova: S.A.R.G.O.N. Editrice e Libreria, 2:595–686.

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1 Introduction

The spreading influence of the Aramaic language during the Neo-Assyrian empire (ca. 934–612) has been a long-discussed topic.¹ Yet, the social domains of Aramaic and Akkadian within the empire are rarely explored beyond the classification to “vernacular” (Aramaic) and “standard” (Akkadian) languages.² This study is about the use and function of Aramaic in Neo-Assyrian archives. The aim is to define the context where Aramaic was deemed appropriate to use, and to provide an overview of how it was used within archival contexts. The main research question of this study is: What was the function of Aramaic in Neo-Assyrian archival practices, and with what kinds of work processes was it connected?

In this study, I argue that the functions of Aramaic in bilingual (Assyro-Aramaic) archives from the seventh century show that it was used particularly in documenting short-term transactions and in informal contexts. Aramaic, alphabetic script, and perishable materials served specific purposes in archival processes. I use archival analysis on Neo-Assyrian bilingual archives to identify the social domains where Aramaic was used in archives. The study illustrates how Aramaic, as the vernacular language, was used in economic transactions within the broader socio-economic context. This topic ties into the greater discussion on the language-shift from Akkadian to Aramaic during the first millennium. While the use of Akkadian continued after the Neo-Assyrian period, the foundations for the eventual elevated status of Aramaic and production of legal documents were laid during the late Neo-Assyrian period.

The key result of the study is that there are significant differences between the use of Aramaic in archives from the Assyrian core and from the northwestern provinces of the empire. These differences lie in the transactions recorded, the intended audience of the documents, and the expected cuneiform literacy of said audience. Moreover, while there are aspects of standardization in the Aramaic legal language, variation and innovations in legal formulas reveals local legal traditions. One of the standardized aspects of the Aramaic legal corpus is that the format and shape of clay tablets is ruled by the type of transaction recorded on it, just as in the cuneiform corpus. This phenomenon is interrelated with language choice as Aramaic and alphabetic script were primarily used for writing on perishable materials. Traces of these perishable materials in the corpus (triangular clay tablets used to seal scrolls) are predominantly visible in grain loan documents. This phenomenon is visible in both institutional and private archives and in all the bilingual archives.

¹ All historical dates are BCE unless otherwise mentioned.

² See, e.g., Beaulieu 2006; Radner 2021; Tadmor 1991; Fales 2021; Fales 2007. Discussed further below in section 1.1.

Most of the Aramaic corpus from the Neo-Assyrian period comes from the seventh century. This period was marked by the significant expansion of the Neo-Assyrian empire, achieved by the military campaigns of the Assyrian kings of the Sargonid dynasty.³ While the adoption of Aramaic in Assyrian administration predates the Sargonids, as alphabetic scribes appear in iconography already in the eighth century, the increase of direct and indirect evidence of Aramaic was likely linked to this expansion.⁴ The expansion of the empire was supported by deportations, which undoubtedly required and led to multilingualism in its administration.⁵

The Neo-Assyrian empire was the first to utilize Aramaic as a language of administration, employing scribes utilizing the Aramaic language and alphabetic script at court and in other state institutions.⁶ The archival texts reflect this phenomenon from the point of view of private economy. Using Akkadian and Aramaic in both institutional and private contexts is a salient example of bilingualism in the ancient world. The corpus of Neo-Assyrian Aramaic has doubled to ca. 500 texts in the recent decades with the publication of archives from Dūr-Katlimmu, Burmarina, Til-Barsip, and Ma'allānāte.⁷ These archives represent the use of Aramaic in Neo-Assyrian provinces, whereas most of the previously known material stemmed from the heartland of Assyria (excluding Guzana). This new material provides an opportunity to see to what degree the status of Aramaic as a legal and administrative language led to the standardization of Aramaic legal documents.

This study addresses the eventual spread of Aramaic as the *lingua franca* through a sociolinguistic perspective combined with archival analysis. By tracing the domains where Aramaic was relevant, the study provides a nuanced analysis of the status of Aramaic in the empire and addresses how it was used based on the remaining evidence. The aim of this dissertation is not to provide new editions of the archives, but rather to discuss the role of Aramaic in archival documents and as part of the *archival process*.⁸ By archival process I am referring to the purposes and use of archives: how documents are created, stored, and disposed of and why. It is one part of a *work process* that defines the purpose of archival documents: each record was intended to fulfill a task related to a transaction. These transactions are usually part of larger whole, such as a silver trade business, grain department or administration of a royal estate.

³ Sargon II, reign 721–705, and his successors until the fall of Nineveh in 612.

⁴ On the Akkadian influences on the Aramaic orthography see Gzella 2017.

⁵ On Assyrian deportations see the classic study of Oded 1979. The topic has been approached more recently by several scholars, e.g., Liverani 2017, 187–194; Valk 2020; Sano 2020; Ponchia 2021.

⁶ I discuss the role of alphabetic scribes is further in section 1.3.

⁷ Fales 1986.

⁸ This terminology is discussed with further literature and its theoretical point of view in 3.2.

While the main purpose of this study is not to provide new editions, in some cases alternative readings to selected texts are suggested when necessary for understanding their purpose in the archive. The discussion of the texts aims to trace the use of Aramaic by defining the *social domains* where it was used, and to systematically analyze the function of Aramaic in archives excavated and published in the recent decades. By social domains I refer to sociolinguistic contexts where language choice in bilingual communities is affected based on topic, participants, and location, as defined by Fishman.⁹ I apply his question “who speaks what language to whom and when” in a slightly altered form “who *writes* what language to whom and when” to the bilingual Assyro-Aramaic archives from the Neo-Assyrian period to identify the actors, their relations, topic, and locale affecting language choice to describe the domain and work process behind the documents.¹⁰

The Aramaic evidence from the Neo-Assyrian period has been a largely marginal topic and dealt with in isolation from the greater cuneiform context. In most cases, Aramaic documents have been published in separate publications from the cuneiform documents they were archived with. This has sometimes resulted in limited understanding of their purpose and contents and left the Aramaic portion of the corpus generally unknown to most Assyriologists despite representing a vital part of everyday utilization of written language. As most of the Aramaic evidence from the Neo-Assyrian period consists of archival documents, their value both to scholarship and to the ancient archive holder becomes clearer only in larger quantities, in other words, accounting for everything that remains of the ancient archive.

This introductory chapter gives an overview of the state of previous research on Neo-Assyrian diglossia, the language situation in the following Neo-Babylonian period, and alphabetic scribes as the writers of alphabetic texts and functionaries of the Neo-Assyrian empire. It is concluded with sections on the structure of the study and notes on terminology and conventions used in this study.

1.1. Diglossia in the Neo-Assyrian empire

The Aramaization of Assyria has been approached from several different angles in previous scholarship. Early works have emphasized the rising numbers of Aramaic and West Semitic names in the Assyrian population and their role in all strata of Assyrian administration.¹¹ Martti Nissinen continued this work in a prosopographical study of the Neo-Assyrian empire and demonstrated that if Aramaic names are to be considered a sign of “arameanness,” they were practically

⁹ Fishman 1965.

¹⁰ Applying this question to multilingual texts and ancient archives is discussed in sections 3.1.2 and 3.2.2.

¹¹ Garelli 1982; Tadmor 1982.

everywhere in Assyrian society.¹² While the rising number of Aramaic names is an indicator of the spread of the Aramaic language, linking it to specific groups of people under the category of “Arameans” has been criticized in current scholarship.

Aramean (the noun *aramu* or the gentilic *aramāyu*) is an umbrella term for nomadic peoples who posed a threat to the western areas of the Assyrian kingdom. They appear as the antagonists of Assyrians in the royal inscriptions of Assyrian kings since Tiglath-Pileser I (r. 1114–1076).¹³ He, by his own account, “crossed the Euphrates twenty-eight times, twice in one year, in pursuit of the *ahlamû*-Arameans.”¹⁴ The Assyrians utilize this label for the groups and kingdoms that appear in the late second millennium to fill the power vacuum left by the diminished Assyrian regime.¹⁵ Jonathan Valk argues that even in the early attestations of Arameans in Assyrian royal inscriptions, it is a political label rather than an ethno-linguistic category: the nomadic groups labeled as Arameans are a threat to the Assyrian agrarian society and are thus grouped together under this heading.¹⁶

In his three-part study of ethnicity in Assyria, Mario Fales studies the concepts of different groups of “foreigners” and “Assyrians” through use of the Assyrian gentilic *-āy/āyu*.¹⁷ He concludes that the Assyrian semantic field of the term “Arameans” (*aramāyu*) has shifted by the seventh century to denote linguistic abilities, such as Aramaic/alphabetic scribes.¹⁸ This change corresponds with the increasing amount of Aramaic documentation and number of Aramaic names within the Neo-Assyrian empire,¹⁹ and signifies that Arameans were not necessarily seen as a separate social category associated with the Aramaic language in seventh-century Assyria.²⁰ Following this premise, this study approaches the Aramaization of Assyria as a sociolinguistic phenomenon.

1.1.1. “High” and “low” language and ideological ties to language

The role of Aramaic in relation to the Akkadian language in the Assyrian empire is a key factor in understanding the spread of Aramaic in the Neo-Assyrian period.

¹² Nissinen 2014.

¹³ Millard 2010.

¹⁴ RIMA 2 A.O.87.4: 34, translation from Grayson 1991, 43.

¹⁵ On the histories of these groups and kingdoms, see the landmark studies of the recent decades Lipiński 2000; Niehr 2014; Younger 2016; Bunnens 2022.

¹⁶ Valk 2024.

¹⁷ Fales 2013a; Fales 2015; Fales 2017.

¹⁸ Further discussion of this professional group in section 1.3 below.

¹⁹ People with Aramaic names are present in all levels of the Assyrian society, as demonstrated by Nissinen 2014.

²⁰ Aramaic and Arameans appear as distinct phenomena in cuneiform sources; see Valk 2024. As Valk argues, Arameans in Assyrian royal inscriptions represent an overlapping category of hostile non-Assyrians who do not conform to the Assyrian way of life and order; akin to how the Greeks referred to several different groups of people as “barbarians.”

Assessing this relationship requires multilevel studies on the language situation, at both macro and micro levels.²¹ Current scholarship has focused on the macro level assessment of diglossia in Assyria. Diglossia refers to the language situation within a community where two languages or varieties of a language are used, each with different functions, and categorized as “high” and “low” language.²² These classifications imply how the languages are perceived by the society: one is held in higher regard than the other and determines which contexts these languages are used in.

Usually, in the context of Neo-Assyrian diglossia, Akkadian is considered the high language and Aramaic the low, vernacular language. Generally, this classification seems applicable: Akkadian was the literary language used by scholars of the Assyrian empire, and contemporary Aramaic evidence is mostly limited to everyday use of language. However, instead of ascribing the high and low varieties between just Akkadian and Aramaic, Karen Radner describes the diglossia situation in the Neo-Assyrian period as a divide between Standard Babylonian (high) and three vernaculars: Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian dialects and Aramaic.²³ Standard Babylonian refers to the dialect of Akkadian commonly used in literary texts, including royal inscriptions. Radner’s categorization is supported by the find context of Aramaic clay tablets from the Neo-Assyrian period, which only appear in the context of Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian texts. While there was also an attempt to promote the use of Neo-Assyrian also for literary productions,²⁴ the Standard Babylonian dialect was the main language of literature.

Standard Babylonian and Aramaic appear in parallel only in monumental inscriptions of provincial governors from the early Neo-Assyrian period and in areas where Aramaic was a prominent language. The 9th-century statue of Adda-it’i, governor of Guzana, from Tell Fekheriye bears a bilingual inscription: Standard Babylonian on the front, Aramaic on the back.²⁵ In the Standard Babylonian inscription, Adda-it’i uses the title of governor of Guzana (*šakin māt*), while the Aramaic inscription refers to him as king of Guzana (*mlk gwzn*). Two more examples of Aramaic monumental inscriptions come from Arslan Tash (Hadattu): two lions, one with a bilingual (Akkadian and Aramaic) and one with a trilingual inscription (Akkadian, Aramaic and Luwian hieroglyphic).²⁶ The inscriptions on the lions have similar contents to each other, installed by Inūrta-bēlu-ušur, the governor of Kar-Šalmaneser/Til-Barsip/Masuware. One significant difference

²¹ Berlejung 2021, 13.

²² Ferguson 1959.

²³ Radner 2021.

²⁴ Livingstone 1989, xxi.

²⁵ Most recent edition in Dušek & Mynářová 2016. For copy, see first edition by Abou-Assaf, Bordreuil & Millard 1982.

²⁶ The bilingual inscription on Lion M 7519 is published in Röllig 2009. The Luwian part from the Lion with the trilingual inscription is published in Hawkins 2000, 246–247.

between the inscriptions is, that in the Luwian inscription Inūrta-bēlu-ušur refers to himself as “country lord” (REGIO-*ni*(-)*DOMINUS-ia-sá*),²⁷ which Guy Bunnens suggests referred to the status of an independent king in the first millennium, rather than the title of governor used in the Akkadian and Aramaic inscriptions.²⁸ In these examples, the languages appear parallel and are presented on equal footing, suggesting that the governors installed by Assyrians recognized the multilingual context. The variance in titulature, however, could imply only a partial compliance with Assyrian rule: the expressions of ruling identity are more assertive of independence in languages other than Akkadian.

As has been established, while Aramaic is known to appear parallel to Standard Babylonian in monumental contexts, in the everyday use of writing Aramaic appears alongside the other two vernaculars. The sporadic appearance of Aramaic as either epigraphs or monolinguals, and usually only in certain text types, raises questions about the motivations for using it. Were there ideals or social norms guiding the usage of Aramaic in the Neo-Assyrian empire – especially at the state level? Indirect references to Aramaic letters appear in Assyrian royal correspondence, which provide clues into the language abilities and norms of the administration. In the commonly quoted letter to Sīn-iddina, an official from Ur, Sargon II prohibits the use of Aramaic:

SAA 17 2: 13–20: [As to what you wrote]: “There are informers [... to the king] and coming to his presence; if it is acceptable to the king, let me write and send my messages to the king on Aram[aic] parchment sheets (*ina ŠÀ si-ip-ri* [KUR.]*ár-m[a-a-a]*)” – why would you not write and send me messages in Akkadian (*ak-ka-da-at-tu*)? Really, the message which you write in it must be drawn up in this very manner – this is a fixed regulation!”²⁹

In the beginning, Sargon quotes the previous letter sent by Sīn-iddina, where he has suggested writing to the king in Aramaic instead of Akkadian. Sargon’s response to this is clearly negative and he appears to emphasize the necessity of writing royal correspondence between Babylonia and Assyria in Akkadian. Laurie Pearce argues that this indicates Sīn-iddina’s inability to recognize the appropriate language-choice in the social domain of correspondence with the king.³⁰ Fales provides another alternative motive for using Aramaic: he suggests that Sīn-iddina’s request to use Aramaic relates to a wish to encrypt delicate information sent through the territories between Ur and Assyria, based on the informers coming to the king

²⁷ Transliteration and translation from Hawkins 2000, 246.

²⁸ Bunnens 2022, 105.

²⁹ Translation from Dietrich 2003, 5.

³⁰ Pearce 1999, 364–365.

mentioned by Sīn-iddina.³¹ Fales argues that Sargon’s refusal indicates denial of potential dangers. Radner rejects this interpretation and instead suggests that Sargon wished to keep up the cultural tradition of writing in Babylonian when corresponding with Babylonian officials.³² The term *akkadāyu* in the Neo-Assyrian context appears to specifically refer to Neo-Babylonian, as it is used in contrast to *aššurāyu*.³³ In the context of this letter, the appropriate translation would be “Babylonian” rather than “Akkadian”. The emphasis here is not on the choice between Aramaic and Akkadian, but between Aramaic and Babylonian. Pearce is therefore correct in relating this conflict to social domains and the role of the participants in this exchange, but the issue is not in writing to the king, but that a Babylonian official is writing to the king and not using the expected language.

Nevertheless, the problem seems to be an ideological one, rather than an issue of not understanding Aramaic. Sargon’s reaction implies that there was a conscious choice to use certain languages in certain situations according to societal norms, as there was certainly no lack of Aramaic knowledge at court. Aramaic/alphabetic scribes (LÚ.A.BA *ar-ma-a-a*, *ṭupšarru aramāyu*) are well attested within the Assyrian court, and their functions and roles are discussed further in section 1.3 below.

The discussion of multilingualism in Assyria is rarely applied at the micro level: identifying the sociolinguistic environment of individuals.³⁴ Exceptions of this are the monumental inscriptions and the letter of Sargon II quoted above, which are generalized to reflect the language attitudes of the Assyrian rulers. While the bilingual archival corpus is recognized and utilized in macro level studies on diglossia,³⁵ this corpus has not yet been sufficiently utilized in sociolinguistic micro level studies.

1.1.2. Assyro-Aramaic archives and the Aramaic legal language

The bilingual Assyro-Aramaic archives are the main source of seventh-century Aramaic. Previous studies of these archives have focused on publication, re-edition, and categorization of archival documents.³⁶ While parallels to the archives are utilized for understanding the contents of individual documents, there are few efforts to pull this material cohesively together.³⁷ The first effort to publish and

³¹ Fales 2007, 104 n. 47.

³² Radner 2021, 176.

³³ For example, in reference to different types of writing boards in SAA 10 101: 8–9.

³⁴ On applying these questions to ancient sources, see Berlejung 2021, 13–15.

³⁵ Such as Radner 2021; Fales 2007.

³⁶ See the categorizations and overviews by Fales 2021; Fales 2007; Fales 2000.

³⁷ Most comprehensively Fales 1986. The evidence was also reviewed in Fales et al. 2005; Fales 2007; Fales 2021.

collect all Neo-Assyrian Aramaic evidence published by then was by Fales in AECT. This study was the first to show the systematic use of Aramaic legal language across sites.

The variation of topics and legal formulas within the Neo-Assyrian Aramaic corpus demonstrates how the legal language of Aramaic was still developing in seventh-century Assyria, particularly in private, more informal domains of the economy. The Aramaic legal formulas in the seventh-century evidence are thus far understudied. The formula of sale documents was outlined by André Lemaire, albeit primarily with evidence from private collections and without provenance,³⁸ and this text type has been of further interest to scholars of later Aramaic tradition.³⁹ The formula of the Aramaic loan documents has been approached thus far archive by archive,⁴⁰ and the current publication stage of multiple bilingual archives has set the stage for comparative work on standardization and alphabetic scribal tradition, which I aim to advance in this work. The roots of Aramaic legal terminology in the Neo-Assyrian legal tradition have been repeatedly emphasized,⁴¹ and this corpus represents the early steps towards the more standardized form of Imperial Aramaic.⁴² A recent discussion is whether late Assyrian Aramaic should already be thought of as a forerunner to Imperial Aramaic,⁴³ but opting for more flexible categorizations such as Assyrian Aramaic or Mesopotamian Aramaic⁴⁴ is a safer choice considering the limitations of the legal corpus. This categorization also considers the Assyrian loan words and influences in the terminology and formulas.⁴⁵

1.2. Aramaic in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods

Comparison between the Neo-Assyrian and the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid evidence shows how the language situation evolved on the macro level.⁴⁶ The shift

³⁸ Lemaire 2001, 58–64.

³⁹ The transfer of formulas from the cuneiform tradition is recognized, for example, in the study of the Elephantine Papyri; see Gross 2008, 7–9, 64–66.

⁴⁰ The formula of the loan documents in the Ma'allānāte archive is discussed in Lipiński 2010, 255–266. The same approach was taken by Röllig 2014, 8–11.

⁴¹ See, for example, Fales 2010, 191–193.

⁴² Orthographic variation within the corpus implies that Aramaic legalese was not at this point standardized, unlike under Achaemenid rule, as argued by Gzella 2015, 130–131. The aspects of regional variation are discussed in chapter 8.

⁴³ Fales 2021, 7–8.

⁴⁴ This term is applied to account for the Aramaic used in the Neo-Babylonian corpus; see Gzella 2015, 133.

⁴⁵ On the Aramaic loanwords in Akkadian, see most recently Abraham & Sokoloff 2011; Cherry 2023.

⁴⁶ The time frame often referred to as the “long sixth century” includes the late seventh, the sixth and early fifth centuries.

to Imperial Aramaic also represents the eventual shift of roles between Akkadian and Aramaic. Under Achaemenid rule, Aramaic became the official language of the empire, not just one of them. While Akkadian persisted as the language of the Babylonian elite, this status was probably permanently altered when the priestly elites of Babylonia, for whom Akkadian was a marker of identity and prestige, lost their status after the rebellions against Xerxes.⁴⁷ This rebellion was marked by the “end of archives,” which refers to the drastic and simultaneous end of major archives from cities in northern Babylonia that participated in the rebellion (Sippar, Babylon, Borsippa, Dilbat and Kish), while archives from southern Babylonia were unaffected.⁴⁸ The archives that end represent the administration in northern Babylonian temples under the jurisdiction of the Babylonian urban elite, and as a result of the rebellion, the Persian rule probably applied changes to the administration of these temples and restaffed them.⁴⁹ As Akkadian eventually lost both its prestigious and official status, the balance between Aramaic and Akkadian was overturned in favor of Aramaic.

Direct evidence for the use of Aramaic in the Neo-Babylonian period is restricted mainly to marginal Aramaic epigraphs on clay tablets and alphabetic impressions on bricks at Babylon.⁵⁰ Aramaic epigraphs in the Neo- and Late Babylonian corpus seem to be limited to a restricted domain, as demonstrated in recent case studies.⁵¹ In a case study on three epigraphs on tablets from Sippar, Bastian Still and Rieneke Sonneveld show with a careful study of the prosopography and the social setting of the documents that the Aramaic epigraphs in these documents are tied to the entrepreneurial community in Sippar’s harbor, which functioned as a trading hub between southern Mesopotamia and the rest of the Near East.⁵² Such a multicultural context seems appropriate for multilingualism.

Similarly to the epigraphs on tablets from the Neo-Assyrian period, epigraphs from the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods are concise and formulaic. Sonneveld identifies two types of epigraphs.⁵³ Type one is characterized by a personal name, usually preceded by the term *štr*, “document”, which is sometimes followed by genitive construction with the relative particle *zy* (= *štr (zy)* PN, “document (of) PN”). The second type of document includes a more detailed summary, such as the transmitted object in the transaction (e.g., in BE 10 106: *štr*

⁴⁷ On the status of Akkadian in sixth-century Babylonia, see Hackl 2021b.

⁴⁸ Waerzeggers 2003–2004.

⁴⁹ Waerzeggers 2003–2004.

⁵⁰ Streck estimates that there are ca. 300 Neo-Babylonian/Late Babylonian tablets with Aramaic epigraphs (Streck 2017, 169). The first 231 were listed in Zadok 2003, 558–78, 570. The list is extended and corrected in Oelsner 2006. Zadok estimates that there are only three Aramaic monolingual documents from Babylonia (Zadok 2003, 558).

⁵¹ Still & Sonneveld 2020; Sonneveld 2021.

⁵² Still & Sonneveld 2020.

⁵³ Sonneveld 2021.

zbdnny' zy qn', “Document of Zabid-Nanāya, regarding livestock”).⁵⁴ The format and contents of the epigraphs are similar between the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian material, but a significant difference seems to lie in the terminology used. The term *štr* is not utilized in the Neo-Assyrian epigraphs, which tend to switch between *dnt* (*dannutu*) and *'grt* (*egirtu*), both often translated as “deed” or “contract”.⁵⁵ Still and Sonneveld also note the use of the term *u'iltu*,⁵⁶ which in the Neo-Babylonian period refers to a document regarding debt,⁵⁷ which may suggest that it was used as an equivalent for *'grt*. Future comparative research should aim to discover whether this difference in terminology is simply a temporal development of Aramaic legal language or a variation based on location.

Other similarities relate to the creation of the document and the role of the Aramaic notation. Sonneveld demonstrates that the epigraph is in the second order of priority in relation to a seal impression,; the left edge and reverse are usually suitable, smooth spaces for impressions.⁵⁸ Neo-Assyrian documents typically have a standardized location for seal impressions on the obverse, but it is also sometimes used for Aramaic epigraphs if other space is not available.⁵⁹ The placement of epigraphs in Neo-Assyrian material is most often on the left edge, but this convention changes according to available space and the length of the epigraph.⁶⁰ In both the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian material, the Aramaic epigraphs are low-ranking in the hierarchy of elements in documents. They are added last, their placement is not standardized, and they are not necessary for the legal validity of the document but for the utilization of the document. Sonneveld suggests that the epigraphs reflect the needs of an archive holder in the context of a private dossier in the Murašû archive, either identifying who is indebted to him or who he is indebted to.⁶¹ A similar phenomenon is present in Aramaic epigraphs from the Neo-Assyrian period,⁶² and it thus seems safe to assume that the traditions of writing Aramaic epigraphs in both northern and southern Mesopotamia relate to the same function, at least in private archives.

In addition to the epigraphs, some evidence of the prevalence of Aramaic is visible in personal names. Aramaic names continue to appear in the Neo-

⁵⁴ Transliteration and translation by Sonneveld 2021, 131.

⁵⁵ See section 2.2 on further discussion of Aramaic epigraphs and the terminology discussed here.

⁵⁶ In Still & Sonneveld 2020, 103.

⁵⁷ Contrary to Neo-Assyrian where it is used primarily of astronomical reports written on horizontal long documents; see Radner 1995, 72–73.

⁵⁸ Sonneveld 2021, 132.

⁵⁹ For example, in SAA 14 72, a triangular-shaped loan docket of barley from Nineveh inscribed on a “long axis,” the Aramaic epigraph begins on the left edge in relation to the cuneiform text but continues to the seal space due to the lack of space. The space on the left edge is limited due to a string hole, which was placed in the middle of the edge.

⁶⁰ Fales 1986, 5.

⁶¹ Sonneveld 2021, 134.

⁶² Discussed further in section 2.2 and as already observed by Fales 1986, 9.

Babylonian and Late Babylonian material,⁶³ and Sonneveld notes that the peak of the Aramaic portion of the onomasticon dates to the Achaemenid period when the Aramaic language also reached its peak status.⁶⁴ They appear, however, mainly in rural contexts and only marginally in urban archives, which are characterized by the Babylonian urban elite who bore good, proper, Babylonian names as status symbols.⁶⁵

1.3. Alphabetic scribes in the Neo-Assyrian period

To understand who wrote Aramaic texts and developed, learned and passed on the Aramaic legal language, I discuss next the evidence of the professional group of alphabetic scribes in the Neo-Assyrian period. Alphabetic scribes employed in the Neo-Assyrian administration are the clearest indication of the official status of Aramaic. This section is focused on their professional domain in administration.

In the cuneiform corpus, alphabetic scribes are attested in administrative lists, legal documents, and letters. The key term used for an alphabetic scribe in the Neo-Assyrian period was *tuṣṣarru aramāya* (written both as LÚ.A.BA *ar-ma-a-a* / LÚ.DUB.SAR *ar-ma-a-a*), often translated as “Aramean scribe” or “Aramaic scribe.”⁶⁶ Next, I discuss the attestations of alphabetic scribes in the Neo-Assyrian cuneiform corpus.⁶⁷

Pearce has suggested that the Aramaic scribes of the Neo-Assyrian period only participated in the administrative domain rather than in scholarly activities like the Neo-Babylonian alphabetic scribes (*sēpiru*).⁶⁸ While the remaining evidence of Aramaic texts from the Neo-Assyrian period is primarily from the hands of administrative scribes, the later Aramaic literary evidence suggests that the alphabetic scribes were not simply administrative secretary-scribes but formed their own literary tradition.⁶⁹ Perhaps they were excluded from the cuneiform

⁶³ For language forms of Babylonian of the first millennium, Neo-Babylonian ca. 1000–600 and Late Babylonian ca. 600–690, see Hackl 2021a.

⁶⁴ Sonneveld 2023, 123.

⁶⁵ Sonneveld 2023, 123.

⁶⁶ As was discussed above in section 1.1 regarding the link between the Aramaic language and Arameans.

⁶⁷ These are collected from the Oracc in Korp 2021 dataset from all attestations of *Armaaya*; most of these 32 attestations in total are in reference to alphabetic scribes. For the Oracc in Korp 2021 dataset see Sahala, Alstola, & Jauhiainen 2021.

⁶⁸ Pearce 1999, 362–363.

⁶⁹ The story of Aḥiqar is a prime example of a literary tradition that was transmitted through generations of scribes. On Aḥiqar and Aramean literature in general, see, e.g., Merlo 2014. The story recounting the war between Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukīn in the 3rd-century Papyrus Amherst 63 contains such accurate details aligning with Assyrian sources that it must originate from an Assyrian-Aramaic scribal tradition, although its exact history of transmission cannot be traced; see Fales 2020; Frahm 2003, 38–39.

scholarly tradition, but it appears that alphabetic scribes enjoyed a status similar to the cuneiform scribes they often accompanied.

Alphabetic scribes appear sporadically in the cuneiform corpus. In administrative lists they are often listed among other scribes and administrative staff, with some exceptions. In the Nimrud wine lists, they appear among Assyrian and Egyptian scribes (CTN 1 9), foreigners such as an Elamite and people from Hatti and Arpad (CTN 1 21), palace personnel and high-ranking officials (CTN 1 13), and military personnel, particularly the *kišir ša šamši*, “the Šamaš cohort,” which appears twice immediately after Aramaic scribes (CTN 1 10; 13). The wine lists are presumably organized into groups of professions associated with each other, and this grouping indicates that alphabetic scribes worked alongside these professional groups.

In legal documents from Nineveh, a similar pattern appears: alphabetic scribes appear as witnesses usually among other scribes, officials such as deputies or *ša-qurbūte*,⁷⁰ and military personnel such as charioteers.⁷¹ In an extispicy query of Esarhaddon listing a number of different professional groups, Aramaic scribes are mentioned after Assyrian scribes among palace staff and people involved with production of goods (SAA 4 144). The cuneiform corpus shows a consistent pattern of Aramaic scribes associated with other scribes, particularly Assyrian scribes, which indicates that they worked in similar situations in administration. The letter SAA 16 63, reporting crimes from Guzana, tells of the pair of scribes Kutî and Tutî. The title of Tutî is broken and based on the details of their second crime it is possible that he was an alphabetic scribe. Kutî and Tutî have written and sealed silver loans of shepherds in both Assyrian and Aramaic documents and accepted a bribe to forgive the loans. Here, again, the two work side by side. This image of the alphabetic scribe and cuneiform scribes as colleagues is paralleled by the iconographic evidence, in reliefs of Shalmaneser III, Tiglath-Pileser III; Sargon II, Sennacherib and Assurbanipal, registering the spoils of war.⁷²

These attestations show alphabetic scribes as administrative functionaries: they are clearly employed in an institutional context based on their attestations as witnesses, they are attested as the personal scribe of the crown prince (SAA 14 205), and they are sent around when necessary (SAA 4 58). The practice of writing on papyrus (*niāru*) and other pliable material is also referred to in oracle queries regarding the appointment of officials and enactment of strategic plans.⁷³ These plans, likely drafted in Aramaic due to the medium, imply the involvement of

⁷⁰ Translated in the SAA series as royal bodyguard but perhaps better currently understood as royal agent, cf. Groß 2020a, 201–203.

⁷¹ As witnesses: SAA 6 127, 314; SAA 14 205; 318; 153. In one short document SAA 14 75, an alphabetic scribe is loaning sheep and silver.

⁷² Russell 1991, 292 n. 36. See also the detailed study on the representations of scribes by Reade 2012.

⁷³ SAA 4 129, 130, 131, 132, 134, 150, possibly many more.

Aramaic scribes (or at the least the Aramaic language) in political strategy and possibly even the divination process.⁷⁴

When named, alphabetic scribes are attested primarily in administrative functions, and the sources make it obvious that they collaborated with cuneiform scribes. The currently available evidence does not suggest that they were less valued than cuneiform scribes. Despite the close-knit professional domain and training of cuneiform and alphabetic scribes, the distinction made in original sources remains. This distinction should be approached as pertaining purely to the language and script used by the scribes. As the texts produced by alphabetic scribes reflect their origin in the cuneiform tradition, the curriculum for them must have been similar as well: practicing signs and correct spelling, learning the proper format and phrasing of letters and contracts, and crunching numbers and calculations.

1.4. Structure of the study

The study is structured as follows. The second chapter is a synthesis of bilingual Assyro-Aramaic archives in northern Mesopotamia and introduces the sources for the study of Neo-Assyrian Aramaic. Aramaic appears in three different types of texts, as Aramaic epigraphs (short marginal notations on cuneiform documents), as monolingual tablets (clay tablets fully inscribed in Aramaic) and bilingual tablets (tablets where the same text is written in both Aramaic and Akkadian). Examples of this typology and its implications for the function of language are also given. Chapter three discusses the theoretical framework of this study: social domains of language and approaches to bilingual texts and archives. The archival approach is discussed particularly in relation to language choice. This section also discusses the effects of social networks on language choice and the use of Social Network Analysis for archive analysis.

Chapters four to six focus on the analysis of bilingual archives from three settlements: Dūr-Katlimmu, Ma'allānāte, and Nineveh. These three locations were selected because I wanted to compare the use of Aramaic in provincial archives, represented by Dūr-Katlimmu and Ma'allānāte, and an urban settlement in the Assyrian heartland, represented by Nineveh as the Assyrian capital in the seventh century. All three include both Aramaic epigraphs and monolinguals. Texts from Dūr-Katlimmu and Ma'allānāte were published in the past decade, and their thorough comparison to the previously published corpus yields information on the development of the Aramaic legal corpus independently of Assyria proper.

In chapter seven, Social Network Analysis (SNA) is utilized on the data from the three locations. It covers the use of SNA as an archival exploratory tool and how

⁷⁴ Direct evidence of alphabetic script used in divination is limited to one Aramaic epigraph in an oracle query from Nineveh, further discussed in section 6.5. Another hint towards the use of Aramaic in court divination is the invocation of Marlahaban, the Aramaic byname of Šamaš, in two divination queries, see Valk and Svärd 2024.

bilingualism within the archives is visible in network format. This chapter goes over the work process and challenges of using SNA for ancient sources. I demonstrate how SNA was used as a tool for exploring the archives and how the bilingualism of archive holders is visible in networks.

Chapter eight is a comparison between the Assyrian heartland and the provinces, drawing together results from chapters 4–6 and the remaining Aramaic archival material from Kalhu, Assur, Marqasu, Til-Barsip, Guzana, and Burmarina. Documents from two other Assyrian capitals, Assur and Kalhu, show that Aramaic was used in more restricted situations there than within the provinces. Aramaic epigraphs are far less common in the Assyrian capitals than in the provinces, which implies that they served a specific function for people possibly not fully literate in cuneiform. The diversity of text types and the number of texts written in Aramaic is higher in the Assyrian provinces, which allows for comparison between the loan formulas used there. The comparison shows that the Aramaic legal tradition developed partially independently in different locations but shows systematic conventions utilized across the empire. Finally, the conclusions in chapter nine include summaries of the results on the functions of Aramaic in Neo-Assyrian archives, the implications of the data for bilingualism and literacy in the Neo-Assyrian period, and possible avenues for future research.

1.5. Terminology and conventions

As a rule, texts are referred to by their most recent edition. Transliterations and translations are referred to by their author. Some translations of texts are adapted from the German and French publications to English – these translations are noted in a footnote and made by looking at both the original Aramaic/Akkadian texts and the translations by their editors. Modifications to the transliteration or translation I have made in favor of an alternative reading are explained in the discussion of the text. All cuneiform transliterations were harmonized with the transliteration style used in the SAA series. All transliterations of Aramaic alphabetic texts are given a transliteration in italics. When transliterations of short texts such as Aramaic epigraphs are given, a division sign is given to indicate separation by lines. Uncertain readings of personal names are given in capital letters. Numerals are normalized to the decimal system. Punctuation marks used in alphabetic texts are indicated with a period, which are separated from the letters they follow and precede with a space. The measure *emāru* is written as “homer” in all translations. These harmonizations are not indicated separately in footnotes and apply to all transliterations and translations.

In transcriptions of names, I have chosen to follow the Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (PNA) if the individual is included in the prosopography.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ The PNA is a prosopographical index of individuals from the Neo-Assyrian period collaboratively collected by several scholars and edited by Radner & Baker 1998–2011.

Translations of all texts are harmonized accordingly. This choice was particularly influenced by the Social Network Analysis approach discussed in chapter 7, as the datasets used are based on the PNA. If a person is not attested in the PNA, I have followed the transcriptions given in the most recent edition of the document unless otherwise indicated. PNA entries are referred to with the following format: volume, page: name (number of entry), for example “PNA 2/I, 458: Hanūnu (11)”.

The terms Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian are used in reference to the two dialects of Akkadian. If the time period is intended instead, “Neo-Assyrian period” and “Neo-Babylonian period” are specifically mentioned. When documents are dated, their date is indicated in the order month-day-year, month given in roman numerals. Post-canonical dates are written with an asterisk and follow the eponym list by Simo Parpola.⁷⁶ Dates from BATSH 6, normalized according to the eponym list by Julian Reade,⁷⁷ have been harmonized with Parpola’s dating for consistency.

This study deals primarily with economic documents and thus ancient metrological units of weights and capacities are utilized. Three weight units from heaviest to lightest are: talent (written with the logogram GÚ.UN), mina (MA.NA), shekel (GÍN). These units are further divided into “heavy” (*dannu*) and “light” (*qallu*) categories, the lighter measure being half the weight of the heavier one. In other words, the heavy mina is twice the weight of light mina. Their equivalence to each other and the modern kilogram is outlined in the table below following Postgate (1976, 64 §6.2.o.):

Table 1 Equivalence of the Assyrian measures of weight to the kilogram

		Talent		Mina		Shekel		Modern
		Heavy	Light	Heavy	Light	Heavy	Light	
Talent	Heavy	1	2	60	120	3600	7200	60.6
	Light		1	30	60	1800	3600	30.3
Mina	Heavy			1	2	60	120	1.01
	Light				1	30	60	0.505
Shekel	Heavy					1	2	0.017
	Light						1	0.0085

The measures used for dry capacities, again following Postgate (1976, 67 §6.3.o.), homer/*emāru* (ANŠE), *sūtu* (GIŠ.BÁN), and *qū* (SILÀ):

⁷⁶ In Radner 1998b, xviii–xx.

⁷⁷ Reade 1998.

Table 2 Equivalence of the Assyrian measures of volume to the liter

	homer	sūtu	qû	litres
homer	1	10	100	184
sūtu		1	10	18.4
qû			1	1.84

Postgate notes that other variables of these measures are known and it is possible that these measures were also divided into “light” and “heavy” equivalents, one twice the size of the other.⁷⁸

I have followed the list of the reigns of the kings of Assyria from the PNA,⁷⁹ reproduced below:

Table 3 List of the reigns of the Assyrian kings

King	Reign
Adad-nerari II	911–891
Tukulti-Inūrta II	890–664
Assurnāṣirpal II	883–859
Shalmaneser III	858–824
Šamši-Adad V	823–811
Adad-nerari III	810–783
Shalmaneser IV	782–773
Aššur-dan III	772–755
Aššur-nerari V	754–745
Tiglath-pileser III	744–727
Shalmaneser V	726–722
Sargon II	721–705
Sennacherib	704–681
Esarhaddon	680–669
Assurbanipal	668–630

⁷⁸ Postgate 1976, 67.

⁷⁹ Radner 1998b, xxi.

2 Sources: Bilingual Assyro-Aramaic archives

In this introductory chapter I discuss the different ways bilingual archives might be categorized based on their completeness or reconstruction, text types, or between private and institutional. First, I consider the definition of a bilingual archive and the definition of cuneiform archives in general. Then I discuss the differences between the ways Aramaic was written on clay, such as the different functions a monolingual and a bilingual tablet might serve, and the function of Aramaic epigraphs. Third, I give short summaries on the bilingual archives from the Neo-Assyrian period.

2.1. Defining archives and bilingual archives

The focus of this study is cuneiform archives which also include alphabetic documents written in the Aramaic language. Aramaic documents are found only together with Neo-Assyrian cuneiform documents, not separated. This makes the archives they were originally stored in bilingual. Following the definition of Olof Pedersén,⁸⁰ a cuneiform archive is “a collection of texts, each text documenting a message or a statement, for example, letters, legal, economic, and administrative documents.” In addition to cuneiform archives found together as a group of texts in an archaeological context, archives have been reconstructed based on the contents of cuneiform texts. I include reconstructed archives within my definition of bilingual archives, although this does not come without its problems.⁸¹ Archives are often divided into institutional and private archives, depending on whether their find context and contents relate to an official building or institution (such as a palace or a temple), or a private house.⁸²

The archaeological context of a cuneiform archive is important for the definition of any archives. The situation of archaeological context varies for the bilingual archives I am including in this work. For some archives, the situation is complex: for example, the archives from Assur were divided between East and West Germany and published after the country was united. Because the exact location of texts from Nineveh was for most cases not documented, the find context is subject to speculation based on excavation reports. Most of the tablets of the reconstructed archive of Ma'allānāte were bought on the antiquities market by the Royal Museum

⁸⁰ Pedersén 1998, 3.

⁸¹ In addition to the historical and contextualizing information which is lost, there are ethical concerns with unprovenanced documents, discussed in section 3.2.1.

⁸² Pedersén 1998, 258.

of Arts and History in Brussels, completely lacking archaeological context.⁸³ While the term “archive” can also refer to the storage place of documents, I also opted to use it for the unprovenanced Ma'allānāte text collection dispersed between private collections and museums due to the clear onomastic and topical connections between the texts.

The documentation of the archaeological context of bilingual archives from the recent decades is fortunately much better: this includes the bilingual archives from Tell Šeh Hamad (ancient Dūr-Katlimmu), and Tell Ahmar (Til-Barsip), and Tell Shiukh Fawqani (Burmarina).

The benefit of good documentation is that a collection of tablets was considered a “unit,” an archive, and the type of location the archive was deposited in was known. The location can reveal information such as who might have utilized the archive. For example, the bilingual archive from Burmarina was found in one room of an Iron Age II dwelling, together with objects that merchants used,⁸⁴ indicating a private rather than an institutional archive. Defining an archive as either a public or a private archive can be difficult based on the contents of the archive alone, but the archaeological context supports the classification of the archive's function. Additionally, the location where the archive was deposited can relate to the owner of the archive: the owner can be deduced from the names reoccurring in the archived material (although not necessarily: sometimes archives were inherited or dumped). The extended context, i.e., the geographical location of the settlement, has relevance for understanding the larger social context, such as which settlements were close enough to maintain social ties or trade with, or which material resources were available. When context is lacking, as with the unprovenanced archive of Ma'allānāte, several questions remain unanswered: what size of a settlement is the archive related to, what kind of institutions were influencing the trade and administration, or whether the archive was deposited at a dump somewhere or found in a destruction layer.

In some cases, archives are divided into *dossiers*, which refers to a subcollection of an archive centered on a topic, person or a family. The concept of archives is tied to *archival documents*, which Pedersén refers to in his definition quoted above as examples of texts included in an archive. With a few exceptions, this umbrella term covers most of the Aramaic evidence from seventh-century Assyria. Within this category, there are several different document types. Aramaic is most prevalent among legal documents. This category is further divided into several subtypes of contracts and deeds.

⁸³ For further the discussion of the ethical implications of unprovenanced documents, see section 3.2.1.

⁸⁴ Fales et al. 2005, 617.

Legal documents are further divided into subcategories: *conveyance documents*, *contracts*, and *varia*.⁸⁵ Conveyance documents refer to sales and/or transfer of people or real estate, such as sales of slaves, adoption documents, marriage documents, or sales of fields. This document type was usually archived for a long period of time, as they could be of high value. Contracts are agreements between two or more parties, that define terms of the agreement. In the 7th century, contracts are typically wrapped in a sealed clay envelope, which repeats the terms of the contract and protects the inner tablet. The category of contracts includes loans (e.g., silver), delivery-contracts, work-contracts, offering debt-notes (for offerings to temples), taxation debt-notes, and obligations related to a transaction which were formulated as a contract. The final general category of “*varia*” includes other witnessed legal documents that could be used as proof, such as receipts of payments or judicial documents regarding court proceedings.

According to Nicholas Postgate in Neo-Assyrian context a *true loan* can be distinguished from another type of obligation based on a phrase that occurs in some contracts, *ina pūhi ittiši*, translated “he took in exchange,” “has taken as a loan.”⁸⁶ The assumption behind this is that the loan formula could be used for recording types of transactions and obligations other than just a loan of an object, i.e., a real exchange of an object between two individuals for a period of time. However, *the ina pūhi* clause appears sporadically and is sometimes omitted from contracts that are difficult to explain as anything but loans, for example, if the debt incurs interest. Therefore, I refer to contracts written with the loan formula in both the Neo-Assyrian and Aramaic context as a “loan document” and the subtypes such as “loan of x” (e.g., “loan of silver”) throughout this study without dividing the transactions into true loans or other types of obligations based on the formula. Moreover, a distinction between a true loan and another type of obligation in Aramaic legal documents is not yet established.

2.2. Monolinguals, epigraphs and bilinguals

Following the classification given by Fales,⁸⁷ Aramaic and alphabetic script appear in three different forms in archives. The first type discussed below is a monolingual document written completely in Aramaic. The second type and the most common format is a short marginal notation on a cuneiform tablet, commonly referred to as an Aramaic epigraph. The third and rarest type is a fully bilingual document, which includes the same information in both cuneiform and alphabetic script. These three documents serve different functions, which are discussed below.

⁸⁵ Radner 1997; Postgate 1976. I exclude from this categorization Postgate’s “corn loan dockets”, discussed in detail below in section 2.2.

⁸⁶ Postgate 1976, 37.

⁸⁷ Fales 2000.

Aramaic monolingual in this study refers to Aramaic documents written in alphabetic script despite the possible loanwords utilized in the text. The definition therefore relies more on the script rather than on language. This is intended to distinguish them from bilingual texts defined below. Most commonly, monolingual Aramaic tablets belong to the category of loans, usually either silver or grain – but they are also represented in the other categories.

The most common form of a monolingual Aramaic text is a triangular clay tablet formed around a string, and this shape is referred to as a (*triangular*) *docket*, which has become a standardized term in publications of documents from the seventh century, cuneiform and Aramaic alike.⁸⁸ In this study, I use the term “docket” to refer to this tablet shape. This shape and format of document is also used for other transactions such as silver loans in Aramaic. These documents are therefore categorized primarily based on the type of transaction. The shape is noteworthy, because this type of document was attached by a string to another object and has holes for the string to pass through. As already posited by Postgate and generally accepted in scholarship since, many of the triangular loan documents were probably originally attached to a scroll of papyrus or leather and functioned as a sealing of the document.⁸⁹

An alternative suggestion for the function of dockets was explored by Fales, who contested that dockets were supplementary to a longer text written on perishable material.⁹⁰ Based on an excerpt from the letter SAA 16 63, he argues that the dockets could have been fully functional on their own, as they might have been tied around the necks of the debtors, not around a papyrus scroll.

SAA 16 63: 10–20:

10. 1-en hi-iṭ-ṭa-šú-nu ša DUMU-a.a iq-ba-áš-šá-nu-u-ni ma-a
11. ANŠE.KUR.RA-MEŠ bi-la-a-ni ina ir-ti LUGAL lu-bíl
12. la i-ma-ga-ru-u-ni šá-ni-ú hi-ṭa-šú-nu AD-šú ša MAN
13. EN-ía KUG.UD ÉŠ.QAR ša LÚ.SIPA-MEŠ ina ŠÀ-bi ni-ib-zi aš-šur-a.a
14. ina ŠÀ-bi ni-ib-zi ár-ma-a.a i-sa-ṭa-ru ina ŠÀ-bi UZU.GÚ
15. šá^{md}PA-ŠU.2-ša-bat LÚ .IGI.DUB ša LÚ.GAL-URU-MEŠ-te ša LÚ.A.BA
16. ni-bu ša KUG.UD ina ŠÀ-bi UZU-GÚ-šú-nu ina ŠÀ-bi un-qi
17. ik-ta-an-ku ma-a šum-ma MU.AN.NA an-ni-tú la i-di-nu
18. ma-a i-mu-tú ki-i ṭa-a'-tú ta-né-pi-šu-u-ni
19. [un]-ṭa'-a-te TA UZU.GÚ-šú-nu ub-ta-ti-qu ik-ter-ru

⁸⁸ Such as BATSH 17, CTN 6, AECT, and Tell Shiukh Fawqani.

⁸⁹ Postgate 1976, 5–6.

⁹⁰ Fales 1986, 21–24.

“The first crime of Kutî and Tutî: When my son commanded them, ‘Bring me the horses, so that I can bring (them) to the king!’, they refused. Their other crime: (In the reign of) the father of the king, my lord, they wrote the silver quota of the shepherds on an Assyrian document (and) on an Aramaic document and sealed the amount of silver with the neck seals of the treasurer Nabû-qāti-šabat, the village manager, (and) the scribe, with their neck seals (and) with the (royal) stamp seal, saying: ‘If they don’t pay this year, they will die!’ (But) when a bribe was made, they cut off the [stam]p seals (and) their neck-seals, (and) threw them away. Did they not cut (them) off arbitrarily?”⁹¹

Fales translated the word UZU.GÚ-šú-nu as “their neck” instead of “their neck seals,” suggesting that the Aramaic and Assyrian documents were hung from the necks of Nabû-qāti-šabat and the scribe.⁹² Radner argues convincingly that the following *ina ŠÀ-bi un-qi*, “with the royal (stamp) seal,” in the 16th line supports instead the translation as “neck seal.”⁹³ It does not seem likely or functional that dockets were hung from a debtor’s neck – and the use of the verb *kanāku* “to seal” in the context of tying a document around the neck seems unusual. Further, docket-shaped loans are found in the archives of their creditors, thus implying that their function was the same as that of regular self-standing cuneiform loan documents: to function as a reminder and proof of a debt owed to the creditor.

Bilingual texts, on which the same contents are written in Akkadian on one side, Aramaic on the other, demonstrate that Aramaic did not have a merely secondary purpose. Writing the same text in Aramaic and Akkadian indicates that the contents of the text were intended to be read and utilized by people who were not versed in both languages but either one. According to Fales “the bilingual tablets show precisely that a fully bilingual sector of the Assyrian society must be reckoned with – a sector within which, presumably, the two languages also lent themselves to various forms of spoken interaction, admixture and reciprocal contamination.”⁹⁴ Using Aramaic and Akkadian in legal documents on an equal footing not only proves the legitimacy of Aramaic as a language of legal documents but also indicates that people who did not necessarily understand Akkadian had access to and need for legal documents.

Short Aramaic labels or epigraphs on cuneiform tablet likely served a different purpose from fully bilingual tablets. Fales argues that the Aramaic labels functioned as an archival label to aid in finding the correct document, as their

⁹¹ Transliteration and translation from Luukko & Van Buylaere 2002, 60.

⁹² Fales 1986, 21–22.

⁹³ Radner 1997, 29–31.

⁹⁴ Fales 1986, 25.

contents were usually short and identified the type of the document, person involved and/or the subject matter.⁹⁵ Most Aramaic epigraphs on cuneiform documents appear on conveyance documents. As Fales suggests, this statistical preference might be explained by the abundance of conveyance texts from Nineveh. According to Fales, the Aramaic epigraphs were written after the cuneiform script, which is apparent from their position in the margins of cuneiform text and their contents, drawn from the finished cuneiform document.

Considering the social reality related to Aramaic epigraphs raises the question of whether the Aramaic script in Aramaic epigraphs or the bilingual cuneiform tablets was written by the same person who wrote the cuneiform inscription. On the one hand, Aramaic scribes were employed alongside Assyrian scribes, as documented in both iconography and textual evidence.⁹⁶ These attestations appear mainly in court context, and do not necessarily reflect the reality of private archives. Fales argues that the influence of Aramaic on Assyrian (and vice versa), such as loanwords, implies that at least the professional group of scribes were bilingual and practiced code-switching.⁹⁷ While the question of who wrote the Aramaic cannot be securely answered, it is likely that scribes were able to write both languages, and sometimes the epigraphs were written by the same person who wrote the cuneiform document. This question becomes particularly relevant when some cuneiform tablets bear inked instead of incised epigraphs, or in some cases both.⁹⁸

If bilingual cuneiform tablets indicate that the same cuneiform tablet was intended to be used by people who both could and could not understand Akkadian, who were the short Aramaic epigraphs written for? The Aramaic epigraphs on cuneiform tablets are usually summaries of the type of the document (often *dnt*, a loanword *dannutu* from Assyrian, or *'grt*, *egirtu* in Akkadian), name of seller, buyer, real estate/people sold, and possibly a reference to which geographic area the document deals with.⁹⁹ With this type of summary, the correct tablet could easily be sourced from the archive even with limited cuneiform literacy. A label in Aramaic is also easily distinguishable from cuneiform script, almost like using a highlighting pen in the modern day.

As is shown in chapters 4–6 and 8, Aramaic epigraphs are written from an archive holder's point of view. This is evident because they rarely mention the buyer or the creditor of the transaction, who would be the presumed keeper of the tablet and thus the archive holder. This observation was made by Sonneveld regarding the

⁹⁵ Fales 1986, 11–12.

⁹⁶ Radner 2021, 149. See also the discussion of the functions of scribes in section 1.3.

⁹⁷ Fales 2007, 112. Code-switching refers to switching between two languages or varieties of languages within one conversation; in the context of written multilingualism, see Sebba 2011.

⁹⁸ Examples of this are discussed in detail in section 4.4 regarding epigraphs and their correlation (or lack thereof) with scribes from Dūr-Katlimmu.

⁹⁹ Fales 1986.

Aramaic epigraphs from the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods,¹⁰⁰ and the same phenomenon is visible in the Aramaic epigraphs from the Neo-Assyrian archives. The function of the epigraphs as an archival aid seems evident, and I thus use “Aramaic archival aids” as a synonymous term.

In addition to Aramaic written on clay tablets, there are a handful of alphabetic ostraca dated to the seventh century. Two clear examples of alphabetic ostraca come from Assur and Kalhu, referred to as the Assur Ostrakon and the Nimrud Ostrakon (which may not be written in Aramaic) respectively.¹⁰¹ Some ostraca and inscribed pottery found at Dūr-Katlimmu are dated to late seventh/early sixth century based on paleography.¹⁰² With some of the ostraca it is more difficult to say whether they should be considered as part of the seventh century evidence,¹⁰³ or Aramaic at all.¹⁰⁴ I have not included the ostraca as part of the Aramaic archival evidence from the seventh century in the overview of Aramaic archival documents (Table 1) given below due to the uncertain dating. Presumably, ostraca served different roles from clay tablets in archival processes, such as drafting, and they were thus not necessarily archived at all. The contents of the Assur Ostrakon confirm the use of ostraca for drafting letters; see the more detailed discussion in section 8.1.1. The corpus of Assyrian Aramaic ostraca is nevertheless relevant for understanding the role of Aramaic in archival processes as part of drafting documents or alphabetic training,¹⁰⁵ and it is thus discussed in this study from this angle.

2.3. Aramaic on perishable materials

The document types discussed above are only the direct evidence and what remains of written Aramaic. The unavoidable truth is that most of the written Aramaic documents will never be recovered, as they were written on perishable materials such as leather, papyrus, and possibly writing boards.¹⁰⁶ Not only are these materials referred to in cuneiform sources and depicted in iconography as the tools of the alphabetic scribe,¹⁰⁷ but their use can be inferred from the use of triangular dockets, as discussed above in section 2.2. The use of perishable materials echoes throughout this work, as I explore the possibility that the triangular *cuneiform* dockets would also be used to seal alphabetic scrolls. Triangular cuneiform dockets

¹⁰⁰ Sonneveld 2021.

¹⁰¹ See the discussion of these ostraca in sections 8.1.1 and 8.1.2 respectively.

¹⁰² BATSH 17 2**–25**, many mostly illegible.

¹⁰³ Röllig suggests that the more illegible and nonsensical ostraca from Dūr-Katlimmu inked with illegible and malformed letter forms (BATSH 17 6**–7**) may either be writing exercises or used for testing a brush before writing (Röllig 2014, 238–239). As such, the documents are difficult to date based on paleography.

¹⁰⁴ See the discussion of the Nimrud Ostrakon and the question of the language used in the document in section 8.1.2.2.

¹⁰⁵ See discussion of the BATSH 17 6** ostrakon in section 4.4 regarding alphabetic education.

¹⁰⁶ These aspects are discussed in the context of Nineveh in section 6.7.

¹⁰⁷ See the discussion of alphabetic scribes in section 1.3.

appear at many sites, but they are particularly abundant in the temple and palace archives from Kalhu.¹⁰⁸ As such, these dockets are evaluated from the point of view of using perishable materials and bilingual administration in an institutional setting.

2.4. Neo-Assyrian bilingual archives

Neo-Assyrian bilingual archives have been found at nine sites, indicated on the map (Picture 1) below. The bilingual archive from Ma'allānāte is unprovenanced and purchased on the antiquities market (see section 5.1 on its acquisition history) and it is thus not indicated on the map. Additionally, 24 unprovenanced Aramaic documents from private collections have been published by Lemaire in NTA, many of which cannot be identified with a specific site or an archive based on their provenance.¹⁰⁹ Some of these documents are, based on their onomastics and format, from the archive of Šulmu-šarri from Dūr-Katlimmu, which was excavated between 1978 and 2010. These documents are also included in the publication of the legally excavated Aramaic documents in BATSH 17.¹¹⁰

The NTA includes an appendix of Aramaic documents published since AECT. Many of these documents belong to archives which have later been published fully and are therefore also included in the full editions.¹¹¹ Two triangular dockets in Baghdad (NTA 1*-2*) from Assur and Nineveh published since AECT are included in Table 4 below.

Outside of the exceptions mentioned above, I have not included the texts published first in NTA among the Aramaic archival evidence as it is laid out in Table 4 below. The reason for this is that the unprovenanced documents cannot be associated with a specific archive or site based on their contents.¹¹² Moreover, Aramaic dockets are rarely dated by year,¹¹³ and thus their dating often relies on the cuneiform documents found together with them. Without their find context, it is difficult to determine whether these documents come from the seventh or sixth century based on their paleography.

Table 4 below provides the number of Aramaic content (monolinguals, bilinguals, and epigraphs) on clay tablets from different sites dated to the Neo-Assyrian period in tabular format. The contents of these archives and the sites they

¹⁰⁸ See section 8.1.3.

¹⁰⁹ Texts 1–24 in Lemaire 2001. Many of the documents are from the private collections of Moussaieff and Schøyen, but Lemaire does not indicate the current owners of all published texts (19–24), and notes that some of them (no. 6) are only read from photographs.

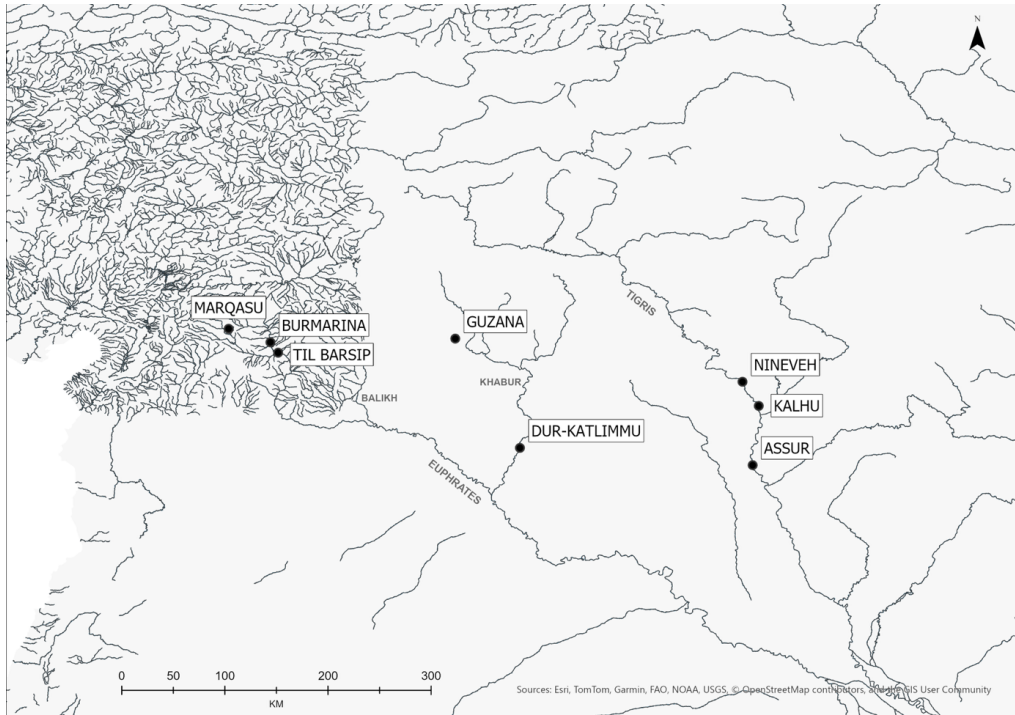
¹¹⁰ The looted tablets from private collections which have been published in other publications are numbered in BATSH 17 with an asterisk, texts D1*–D10*.

¹¹¹ NTA 4*–5* from Burmarina; 6*–7* Til-Barsip; 10*–32* Ma'allānāte; and 33*–34* from Dūr-Katlimmu.

¹¹² See the discussion on the ethical issues of unprovenanced archives in section 3.2.1.

¹¹³ See the discussion of the Aramaic loan formulas in section 8.3.

come from are described in more detail in their respective chapters 4–6 (Dūr-Katlimmu, Ma'allānāte, and Nineveh) and 8 (Assur, Kalhu, Marqasu, Til-Barsip, Burmarina, Guzana) with analysis of the functions of Aramaic in the archival process.



Picture 1 A map of all Neo-Assyrian sites with Assyro-Aramaic bilingual archives. Ma'allānāte is not pictured as the location of the site is unknown. Basemap Esri. Map by Paula Gheorghide

Table 4 Aramaic archival documents from Neo-Assyrian sites

Ancient name	Modern name	Aramaic archival content			Most recent edition of Aramaic texts	AECT number
		Epigraphs	Monolinguals	Bilinguals		
Dūr-Katlimmu	Tell Šeh Ḥamad	74	183	0	BATSH 6 ¹¹⁴ ; 17	N/A
Til-Barsip	Tell Ahmar	0	2	0	NTA 6*–7*	N/A
Burmarina	Tell Shiukh Fawqani	8	19	0	Tell Shiukh Fawqani	N/A
Ma'allānāte	(unprovenanced)	4	24	0	Lipiński 2010	N/A
Nineveh	Kuyunjik	35	6	2	AECT 1–42; ¹¹⁵ Hug 1993, p. 24–25	1–42

¹¹⁴ While this is the publication of the Neo-Assyrian cuneiform documents from Dūr-Katlimmu, it also includes the Aramaic epigraphs accompanying the tablets.

¹¹⁵ The epigraphs and the bilingual documents are also included in the editions of the SAA series.

Ancient name	Modern name	Aramaic archival content			Most recent edition of Aramaic texts	AECT number
		Epigraphs	Monolinguals	Bilinguals		
Assur	Qal'at Sherqat	1	9	0	AECT 46-52; Hug 1993 p. 19; Faist 2020 6; One unpublished	46-52
Kalhu	Nimrud	0	2	0	Millard 1972, 1-2	43-44
Guzana	Tell Halaf	0	7	0	AECT 53-57, 2 unpublished	53-57
Marqasu	Kahramanmaraş	1	1	0	Fales 2019; <i>Marqasu</i> 28	N/A

2.5. Conclusions

As established in the current chapter, the majority of the bilingual archives come from provincial areas of the Assyrian empire, but Aramaic documents have been found at each of the major cities of the Neo-Assyrian empire: Assur, Kalhu, and Nineveh. Most of the evidence dates to the 7th century and continues to the post-canonical period.

Three sites stand out in terms of including both epigraphs and monolinguals: Nineveh, Ma'allānāte, and Dūr-Katlimmu. Additionally, the number of texts and the state of publication from these sites permit the evaluation of archival habits among individual archive holders, reconstruction of social networks, and evaluation of the standards of Aramaic use in the seventh century. Moreover, as Nineveh represents the capital of the Neo-Assyrian empire during the 7th century, and Dūr-Katlimmu and Ma'allānāte represent the provincial reach of the administration, these three sites enable comparison of archival and scribal habits between the core and the northwestern provinces.

Based on this review of evidence, Aramaic legal documents from Northern Mesopotamia align with certain norms:

the available material is mostly loan documents, but not exclusively so, triangular dockets are the most common format of Aramaic monolinguals but not the only medium, and

Aramaic epigraphs tend to follow the pattern outlined by Fales already in 1986, usually defining the type of document and the debtor or seller.

Finally, the use of Aramaic tends to be much more prominent in what would be classified as private administration, although this division into private and institutional is often blurred.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ See the next chapter, section 3.2.1.

3 Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

Determining the functions of Aramaic in bilingual archives relies on sociolinguistic theory on (written) bilingualism and archival analysis. To understand the motives for utilizing two languages and scripts and the roles they fulfill, I frame my work with the concepts of language choice and social domains (section 3.1). As these concepts are primarily applied to data collected from modern communities, I discuss their suitability for ancient sources. Language choice can be influenced by several factors, such as whether the transaction is related to an institution such as a temple or a palace, or which socio-economic or cultural background the participants come from. However, the scope of evidence is limited, and bilingual cuneiform archives can hardly represent the social contexts of language.

As the sources on the use of Aramaic are mostly limited to archival documents, the use of archival analysis is necessary for understanding the context of the documents: who wrote them, for what purpose, when and for whose eyes (3.2). Most private cuneiform archives concern a certain “archive protagonist” and their social circle, spanning several generations. While these archives do not necessarily reflect the language choices within the larger community, they provide an opportunity to observe similarities, standards, and diachronic changes in language choice within the archival habits of the central figures of the archives. As such, archival analysis is in part a study of the whole archive and its structure, but also the records that make up the archive, requiring a combination of methodologies. One part of understanding the data is applying historical and philological methods to the study of the documents. As a supplementary tool, Social Network Analysis can be utilized for exploring and “distant reading” of archival data (3.2.3), such as detecting patterns and relations among the documents in an archive.

3.1. Language Choice and Social Domains

The concept of social domains can be used to explain the motives behind *language choice*, i.e., the decision made by an individual to use a specific language based on the social situation in bilingual communities (3.1.1). Because language choice and social domains were initially applied to data collected from modern communities and spoken language, using these concepts in studying multilingual texts requires certain considerations (3.1.2). Moreover, the incompleteness of data and the types of sources limit the questions which can be answered with ancient archives (3.1.3). In the following sections I argue that archival documents can nevertheless be analyzed sociolinguistically by asking *who writes what language to whom and when*.

3.1.1. Social Domains

To understand the motivations for using either Aramaic or Akkadian, I apply the concept of *social domains*, introduced by Joshua Fishman to describe the social situations and institutions that influence language choices within bilingual societies.¹¹⁷ Fishman argued that three things factor into the social domain of language: topic, role relation and locale, summarizing the motivation behind language choice into one question: “Who speaks what language to whom and when?” Topic refers to the topic of conversation – whether some topics are easier discussed in certain languages either due to specialized terms or societal appropriateness. Role relation refers to the role of the speaker and hearer. Within a social domain, there can be several divisions into different roles. Locale refers to the physical location where the exchange takes place. Fishman’s approach focuses on language choices on a larger, societal scale: which domain is generally associated with which language. He argues that in bilingual communities, language choices are affected by the situation and context: topic of conversation, location such as home or work, or the conversational partner(s). As with any theoretical model, applying the concept of social domains to historical case studies relies on the researcher’s evaluation of domains based on socio-historical context: an ancient Assyrian might possibly have classified their social domains differently than the modern scholar would.

In historical sociolinguistics, *ego-centric* case studies focus on the language use of individuals. With “ego-centric”, I am referring to studies focused on one person, the *ego*. The focal point of these studies has been on innovations in grammar, spelling and code-switching between languages.¹¹⁸ This point of view is equally important in the language contact between Akkadian and Aramaic, but outside the scope of this study. Rather than to documenting code-switching, borrowing or language interference in the legal documents, my aim is to understand the influence of economic and social domains on language choice. The current study falls somewhere in between micro-scale study of personal language use and a macro-scale study of the diachronic development of social domains: because the archives are generally centered on one protagonist and his family, the data does not represent the whole surrounding community. At the same time, the material limits the view of the archive holder’s language use to the domain of economic transactions. However, the comparatively long time span of bilingual archives and their geographic locations offer a macro point of view of archival practices in the northern part of the Assyrian empire.

¹¹⁷ Fishman 1965; Fishman 1972.

¹¹⁸ For an overview, see Conde-Silvestre 2012.

3.1.2. How to approach bilingual legal documents?

While most of the research and theory on bilingualism has focused on spoken language, historical sociolinguistics generally follows the same principles.¹¹⁹ The social context of the multilingual situation is still relevant in the case of written material, and the same question remains, slightly altered: “Who writes what language to whom and when?”¹²⁰ In ancient context, defining the *who* proves a complex issue of authorship. Instead of assuming that the “who” always refers to the scribe of the text, in some cases it is possible that the author of the text is not the only party influencing the language choice. An alternative suspect here would be one of the protagonists and the commissioner of the text, likely the creditor in loan documents or the buyer in conveyance documents.

The answer to the question of *what language* in this study is either Aramaic or Akkadian, but it also takes into account whether a text is multilingual or monolingual. The purpose, audience, and writer of the text can be significantly different depending on the answer. Particularly in the analysis of multilingual texts the visual aspects of the texts are meaningful.¹²¹ The multilingual documents in the corpus of this study are also *digraphic*, utilizing two writing systems, which serves as an immediate visual cue of alternating between languages to the reader. The visual aspects may for example relate to the style of the script, which may be evaluated based on the level of care applied to writing it, or the placement of the different scripts. In multilingual texts such as cuneiform documents with Aramaic epigraphs or fully bilingual texts, the visual arrangement of the text also informs us of the hierarchy of the texts and the audience.¹²²

The question of *whom* refers to the audience of the text. The intended audience might be the person who is likely to use the text in the future and whose archive it ends up in. Another option would be a legal authority who must be able to verify the document. As addressed by Fales, the use of Aramaic in legal documents argues for the validity of the legal status of Aramaic.¹²³ The answer to the question of “when” might be the most complex; not only is the date of the document relevant, but so is the situation described in the document. The situation is defined by the genre of the text and the people involved in the transaction. An additional key aspect is *where* the document is written, as is already apparent from the uneven distribution of

¹¹⁹ Schendl 2012.

¹²⁰ This question has also been applied in the context of the ancient Near East by Pearce regarding the letter of Sargon II to Sîn-iddina on the topic of writing Aramaic to the king and by Izre’el on the Amarna letters (Pearce 1999; Izre’el 1995).

¹²¹ Sebba 2011, 11–17.

¹²² Digraphia can be a method of drawing in the intended audience and its attention and is a conscious communication strategy, as shown with the digraphic and bilingual material from the Russian-English bilingual community by Angermeyer 2012.

¹²³ Fales 2007, 102.

Aramaic documents across the Assyrian empire, particularly focused at northwestern sites.¹²⁴

To illustrate this approach to bilingual and monolingual texts from the Neo-Assyrian bilingual archives, I provide two examples from one of the bilingual archives used in this study. The Neo-Assyrian Dūr-Katlimmu archives (8th–6th centuries) were found at the Assyrian settlement Dūr-Katlimmu (Aramaic name Magdalu) in northern Mesopotamia, a significant location for Assyrian military activity. Several deposits of Neo-Assyrian cuneiform texts have been found at Dūr-Katlimmu, most of them from the so-called “Red House.”

The examples are chosen because they are Akkadian cuneiform texts with Aramaic epigraphs, both commissioned by the buyer called Adad-aplu-iddina and written by the scribe Urdu-Nabû. Both texts were found in the Red House and date to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, after the fall of the Neo-Assyrian empire. The scribe and the commissioner are the most likely people to influence the language choice of a document: the scribe because they write the document, and the commissioner because they will use the document. However, simply from the appearance of the epigraph, it can be determined that the user of the tablet, the commissioner, was probably able to read Aramaic and perhaps used it for finding the right document. The commissioner of the tablet is part of the intended audience for the completed text, but so is the legal authority: the text must have legal standing in order to use it in case of a dispute.

The text BATSH 6 37, found in the Red House, is a sealed cuneiform text documenting the sale of a field to an individual called Adad-aplu-iddina, dated to 602*:

The seal of Hanānā, son of Bēl-dan, the owner of the given field. Estate of one homer five seah, a watered field, (list of neighboring properties) – altogether five homers of watered fields (acquired) by Adad-aplu-iddina for one mina of silver in total, as compensation for granary offense (?) committed by his (Hanānā’s) son Adad-milki-ēreš at Adad-aplu-iddina’s threshing floor. The field and the storage together are legally acquired. There can be no return, trial, or lawsuit. Whoever in the future rebels(?) and contests, be it Hanānā, his sons or grandsons, and opens a court process or trial against Adad-aplu-iddina, his sons or his grandsons, must give five shekels of silver. (List of witnesses) Witness: Urdu-Nabû, the scribe. VIII, second year of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon (602*). Witness: Nabûtu.¹²⁵

Aramaic epigraph:

¹²⁴ As discussed in chapter 2 regarding the Aramaic sources.

¹²⁵ Translation adapted to English from the German translation in Radner 2002, 62–63.

The *egirtu* of Hanānā from Bait Zahir, regarding his land and house, which altogether are in Bait Zahir.¹²⁶

The scribe of the document, Urdu-Nabû, is listed as the second to last witness. The text is sealed and bears an inscribed Aramaic epigraph on top of the sealed area. The position of the epigraph implies that it was added after the cuneiform inscription. Generally, the epigraphs are written on any available space of the document and there is no formal designated space for the epigraph, although the left edge is a common place on which to write it. An inscribed epigraph implies that the epigraph must have been written while the clay was still wet, but after the writing of the cuneiform text.

The formula of the document follows Neo-Assyrian standards: seal identification of the seller, identifying the sold property and its size, location, buyer, and the price. The document then closes with a no-contest clause and a list of witnesses and a date. The epigraph contents also follow the general pattern, identifying the type of document, the seller, and the property sold. The contents of the epigraph provide additional information otherwise missing from the cuneiform document: The seller Hanānā and his field are specified as “from Bait Zahir.” Sonneveld argues that when the buyer is not identified in Aramaic epigraphs from the later Neo-Babylonian period, his involvement in the document was implied to the intended audience of the epigraph.¹²⁷ In texts from Dūr-Katlimmu, the buyer is identified only in two of the 74 Aramaic epigraphs.

The text BATSH 6 39 is another conveyance text documenting the sale of a field. In this text, the Aramaic epigraph is on the lower edge of the obverse, continuing to the left edge of the tablet.

The seal of Ubru-Harrān, son of Ilūtu-upaqa, the owner of the given field. Estate of one homer, five seah, a watered field in the land of Magdalu, next to the river, next to the field of the Elamite, next to the estate of Zangari-ibni, the rest of the field, that his (Ubru-Harrān's) brother has given, Adad-aplu-iddina acquired for the total of 16.5 shekels of silver. The price was given in full. The field is legally acquired. There can be no return, trial, or lawsuit. Whoever tries to contest the will of Aššur, Šamaš, [Bēl], and Nabû, must pay five minas of silver. XII, second year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (603*). (Witnesses) Witness: Urdu-Nabû, the scribe.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Translation adapted to English from the German translation given by Röllig in Radner 2002, 63.

¹²⁷ Sonneveld 2021.

¹²⁸ Translation adapted to English from the German translation given in Radner 2002, 67.

Aramaic epigraph:

“A contract about the field from Magdalu, which Ubru-Harrān sold, the one sold to the tenant.”¹²⁹

In bilingual archives the transaction described in the documents, sale of property, is commonly documented in Akkadian. Writing the Aramaic epigraph suggests that use of Aramaic in the process of using the document – possibly for sourcing the document from the archive – was appropriate and preferred. However, the Aramaic epigraph clearly serves a different purpose than the Akkadian text does, providing an abridged version of the legally binding document. The epigraphs do *not* have legal value, because they do not follow the formula or record witnesses. Witnesses are a key part of Neo-Assyrian legal documents: Betina Faist argues that they are the most important aspect of making a legal document, as they are always listed, even when a seal impression or date is not present.¹³⁰

Witnesses are also relevant for the reconstruction of the social setting of the writing event. Both protagonists of each document probably brought their own witnesses, or if the text was drafted in an official or temple setting, some of the people employed may have served as witnesses.¹³¹ Certain names repeat in both texts as witnesses: Salmānu-sangû-ušur, Mannî, and Mannu-kî-ahhê. The latter two names are not given any professional titles or patronyms in either text, and they are common enough names that their identification is uncertain. However, their position towards the end of the witness list and co-occurrence together implies that they may have been witnesses of Adad-aplu-iddina. Salmānu-sangû-ušur, whose name translates to “O, Salmānu protect the priest,” is identified as a priest in BATSH 6 37, and appears among the first witnesses in both. Considering the texts were written in the same regnal year¹³² and concern the purchases of Adad-aplu-iddina and the scribal activities of Urdu-Nabû, Salmānu-sangû-ušur likely refers to the same person in both. The secure identification of individuals based on names alone proves to be an issue in disambiguation, as several names are never accompanied by a title or a patronym.¹³³ Several West Semitic names are attested

¹²⁹ Translation adapted to English from the German translation by Röllig in Radner 2002, 67.

¹³⁰ Faist 2019, 261.

¹³¹ Examples of this can be seen in the Nabû temple archive discussed in section 8.1.3.1.

¹³² While not the same calendar year, both are dated to the second year of Nebuchadnezzar II, see Brinkman 1993.

¹³³ An additional issue lies in the varying spellings of names used between Aramaic and Akkadian. In cuneiform texts from Dūr-Katlimmu, certain names are written differently in the Aramaic epigraphs. Some of these are direct translations, such as in BATSH 6 54: 5 *Ilu-iqīša* (DINGIR-*i*-BA), written *El-yahab* (‘*lyhb*) in the epigraph. Some might represent the pronunciation of the name otherwise written in logograms. In BATSH 6 94: 4, the name GIN-DI-*man*, otherwise read as “Mukin-Salmānu,” is written in the epigraph as *Ubru-Salmānu* (‘*bršlmn*). There are possibly several names in the Aramaic monolingual texts, which could be identified with individuals

in both texts, including Yahwistic names, which may be accounted for by Assyrian deportations. While the witnesses may not be important in the language choice of the document, they are a part of the larger social context of both the event of writing and the social fabric of Dūr-Katlimmu. The presence of deportees at Dūr-Katlimmu and in the social circles of Adad-aplu-iddina and Ubru-Nabû may have influenced their use of Aramaic while the repeated presence of the priest Salmānu-šangû-usšur may be accounted for by ties to the temple of Salmānu in Dūr-Katlimmu.

To conclude, determining the influences on language-choice in legal documents is the sum of several variables: the protagonist, the scribe, paratextual and paleographic aspects, the subject matter, the linguistic and social environment, and the date of the text. While strong conclusions cannot be drawn on two texts alone, general trends may be present when the texts are observed together with the rest of the archives.

3.1.3. Potential and Issues

The limitations of the material for sociolinguistic analysis are obvious: the data is limited to economic texts, which leads to limited analysis of social domains. However, the relationships reflected in the texts extend further than transactional relationships: witnesses, although their role and relationships in the Neo-Assyrian period is poorly known, may well represent friends and trusted relations of the creditors and lenders or sellers and buyers in texts. Similarly, the Assyrians often use professional titles as identifiers of individuals, which give clues to the social strata represented in the archives. Familial ties are represented in several aspects: in patronyms, adoption contracts, in business transactions, and in the archive structures themselves. The archives usually stay in the family, which provides an opportunity for analysis of generational changes in language choices.

The weaknesses of the approach also relate to relationships. Defining the quality and strength of ties between ancient people is not as simple as with modern studies, in which the subjects may define their own close and distant links. In ancient sources, some influential ties between people are bound to be invisible. As an obvious example, women are very underrepresented in the available material, which will certainly rule out the representation of some social domains. While an individual archive may include attestations of hundreds of people, even the largest archive cannot project a complete picture of language use in the surrounding community: individuals from lower socio-economic classes may be attested more than once, if ever, in cuneiform sources. Accepting this limitation, the analysis of social domains must be adjusted accordingly: sociolinguistic analysis of bilingual archives leads to ego-centric case studies of archival protagonists and their language choices. Naturally, ego-centric studies will not present a complete picture

appearing in the cuneiform texts, but these connections may go unnoticed due to the differences in spelling. This disambiguation issue is discussed in detail in section 7.3.

of the social domains of either Akkadian or Aramaic, but historical sociolinguistics is always limited by the restrictions of data.

Despite the issues, defining the social position and influences of the archival protagonists will help in contextualizing the use of Aramaic in the Neo-Assyrian period. As the number of Aramaic texts from the Neo-Assyrian period continues to grow, albeit in short inscriptions and mundane records of sales and loans, the available material must be thoroughly examined. While waiting for the discovery of direct statements of the social status of Aramaic, glimpses of the reality and use of language are available in the published material.

3.2. Archival Analysis

This study applies archival research methods to analyze the language choice within the bilingual archives. As the main bulk of the Aramaic evidence from the Neo-Assyrian period is limited to what Assyriologists would classify as “archival documents” (as opposed to literary texts), this method is intuitively suitable for the material. Observations on the Aramaic material in their archival context, and jointly with Neo-Assyrian texts they were archived with, amount to more than individual texts. Understanding the function, timespan, and relationships between the documents helps us to understand the functions and domains of Aramaic within an archive.

Records within archives were created with the intention of fulfilling a part in a work process.¹³⁴ Understanding whether records are created for internal purposes of the institution (unilateral, involving one party) or for proving legal obligation (bilateral, involving two or more parties) also informs us about the audience of the document.¹³⁵ Understanding the purpose of documents and the work process they were part of can inform us about the domain where the chosen language was relevant. Archives were not intended only for storing information of the past, but for using that information. An archive, therefore, is not only the result of a work process, but supports and creates it. Michael Jursa asks the question, “what could an administration potentially achieve and what was it created to achieve” in the context of whether an archive was created for a “police function” (managing obligations) or predicting and guiding future transactions.¹³⁶

The classic archival methodology describes the records and their arrangement to better gain insight into the function and work processes of an archive.¹³⁷ An archive can also be approached beginning with its function – what kind of records were necessary to support its function and its actors?¹³⁸ Intuitively, the classic

¹³⁴ Thomassen 2001, 374.

¹³⁵ Borrowing the legal terminology as defined and used by Postgate 2001, 185.

¹³⁶ Jursa 2004, 147.

¹³⁷ Thomassen 2001, 384.

¹³⁸ Thomassen 2001, 384.

approach is certainly more suitable as we do not know enough about the Neo-Assyrian administrative and legal processes to presume what they would have needed. Rather, the Neo-Assyrian sources are notoriously silent on administrative instructions, such as who should do what and how.¹³⁹ Therefore the purpose of administrative departments and individual records have to be reconstructed based on the remaining evidence. However, as we know our archives to be incomplete, we may ask what is missing, and whether it was written on perishable materials.

In the next section, I go over the definitions of archives in Assyriology, the process of reconstructing an archive and its functions. Then, I explain how sociolinguistic theory on linguistic domains can be applied to archival research, and how archival methodology can help answer questions of bilingualism.

3.2.1. Defining and reconstructing archives

An archive can be understood archaeologically as the physical space where records were deposited and collected for future reference. Assyriologists tend to use the term more broadly, defined more by the text types within a body of texts. The definition of Pedersén is “a collection of texts, each text documenting a message or statement, for example, letters, legal, economic and administrative documents.”¹⁴⁰ This definition is applied in opposition to the term “library,” defined by Pedersén as “a collection of texts normally with multiple copies for use in different places at different times, and includes, e.g., literary, historical, religious and scientific texts.”¹⁴¹ It should be noted that this distinction can be blurred, as library texts can be found among archival texts and vice versa.¹⁴² In alignment with Pedersén’s definition of an archive, I use the term *archival document* in opposition to library texts. With archival document I refer to several different text types that would be archived for future reference, such as letters, legal documents, and administrative documents.

Recent studies of historical archives both in Assyriology and more broadly in ancient history in the volume edited by Michele Faraguna use the definition of Encyclopaedia Britannica “the organised body of records produced or received by a public, or private, entity in the transaction of affairs and preserved by it for specific needs and purposes.”¹⁴³ This definition is also particularly fitting for Assyriology, because while the term archive also encompasses the physical space where the body of records was stored, this is not always available to Assyriologists. Many archival

¹³⁹ The Neo-Assyrian bureaucratic system relied on oral instructions as argued by Postgate 2007. This is in stark contrast to the documentation of work processes from the Middle Assyrian period, which can often be reconstructed in minute detail because the bureaucratic process utilized written instructions, see Postgate 2001.

¹⁴⁰ Pedersén 1998, 3.

¹⁴¹ Pedersén 1998, 3.

¹⁴² See, for example, in the context of Nineveh, Parpola 1986, 224.

¹⁴³ Faraguna 2013, 8.

documents have been illicitly looted and sold on the antiquities market, from where they are purchased by private collectors and museums alike. This is both an unethical practice and harmful to archival research, as unprovenanced documents lack archaeological context and the antiquities trade has been directly linked to encouraging looting and other criminal activity.¹⁴⁴ However, as Pearce et al. have noted, even this definition of an archive is problematic for Assyriology, as the order of the records, whether they were intentionally archived or not, and the completeness of the archive are most often unknown.¹⁴⁵ Assyriologists rarely have the benefit of dealing with an undisturbed and complete archive, and much can be lost in both antiquity and modern times.¹⁴⁶

Reconstruction of the original archive and its internal organization of unprovenanced text collections can be achieved with prosopography, dating and contents of the texts. Relevant parts of the context are, for example, the types of documents and roles of individuals and institutions in the transactions.¹⁴⁷ The process of reconstructing an archive is centered on prosopography particularly in private archives, by identifying the central protagonists of the documents, the members who would benefit from holding on to the archived records.¹⁴⁸ Prosopographical reconstruction of archive structure alone may also result in circular reasoning, as prosopography relies on disambiguation of individuals based on archives.¹⁴⁹ Similar approaches must also be taken when the archaeological context is not recorded up to modern standards, as in early excavations. In such cases “museum archaeology,” the process of detective work via excavation reports and museum numbers, can help restore some of the lost information.¹⁵⁰

A key aspect in identifying the archive’s purpose is to identify the archive holder. Here, the difference between *institutional* (sometimes referred to as “official”) and *private* archives (sometimes referred to as “family archives”) is relevant. Institutional archives are understood to be collected and maintained by an institution or individuals acting in an official capacity. Defining an archive as institutional relies heavily on the storage of the archive within an institutional building such as a palace or temple, but also on contents if the transactions relate to temple or palace economy.¹⁵¹ Many archives are also defined as private by Assyriologists if they relate to business conducted by persons outside of their official

¹⁴⁴ Brodie 2023; Brodie 2009.

¹⁴⁵ Pearce et al. in preparation.

¹⁴⁶ Baker provides an excellent schema of possible scenarios that result in archival incompleteness in Baker 2004, 6.

¹⁴⁷ The problems with relying on prosopography alone for archival reconstruction have been discussed by Von Dassow 1994, 108.

¹⁴⁸ This process is outlined by Baker (2004, 5–8) in the context of the illicitly excavated Nappahu family archive.

¹⁴⁹ Pearce et al. in preparation.

¹⁵⁰ For an example of this approach, see regarding Nineveh archives, see Reade 1986; Parpola 1986.

¹⁵¹ Veenhof 1986, 9.

position. As Klaas Veenhof notes, the difference between the institutional and private archives is less significant, as private archives belong to members of the elite who usually occupy some kind of official position anyway.¹⁵² Recognizing the difference between private and institutional fields is therefore difficult, and often private dossiers can be stored within institutions or mixed with the body of institutional documents.¹⁵³ Despite these difficulties, this distinction can be important to make when attempting to understand how an archive was organized.

Many documents within the same archive cannot necessarily be attributed to any of the central persons. There are several possible explanations for this depending on the archive. Some individual documents may be *retroacta*, transferred to the archive holder from the previous owner in the process of purchasing a property. Sometimes this may be related to *satellite archives*, a term utilized by Caroline Waerzeggers to refer to smaller archives related to and possibly found together with larger archives.¹⁵⁴

While the external structure of an archive or how the archive was physically organized can, in exceptional cases, be deduced from archaeological context,¹⁵⁵ this information is often lacking either due to insufficient documentation, illicit digs, discarding the archives or disturbance already during antiquity. Hints towards the archival method may be provided by the physical aspects of documents, such as archival aids positioned on the surface of the document that would be visible when stored.¹⁵⁶ There are several different ways to reconstruct the internal logic of archives in order to better understand their function and the work process for which they were intended. Jursa outlines four approaches to organizing institutional archives: by subject (files by topic), formal (incoming, outgoing, and stock-taking), keywords, or departments which the documents relate to.¹⁵⁷ A common approach taken to private archives is to organize the records by dossiers of individuals; the central figure (creditor, buyer) of documents who would benefit from keeping the document.¹⁵⁸ This approach is also taken with bodies of texts that would by content seem more appropriate for private archives, but which were found together with institutional documents, either archived or discarded together.¹⁵⁹

The process of organizing by dossier relies on disambiguation of individuals, that is, assessing the probability that a recurring name refers to one or more

¹⁵² Veenhof 1986, 9–10.

¹⁵³ This issue is dealt with in the Neo-Assyrian context by many others before, for example Fales 2003; Kwasman & Parpola 1991, xx–xxi.

¹⁵⁴ Waerzeggers 2014a, 19–20.

¹⁵⁵ For an overview of different methods of storage and organization, see Veenhof 1986, 11–14.

¹⁵⁶ Veenhof 1986, 15.

¹⁵⁷ Jursa 2004, 149.

¹⁵⁸ On the maintenance and collection of private archives, see Wunsch 1993, 7–8.

¹⁵⁹ For example, the legal documents from the Nineveh palatial archives edited most recently in SAA 6 and SAA 14 and organized by central protagonist. Many of these documents relate to transactions performed by individuals in private context rather than their official capacity.

persons. When the same name appears as a central protagonist in a body of documents, it is likely that the name refers to the same person.¹⁶⁰ Recurring names of witnesses may also be used to identify a connection between individual texts and the archive they presumably belonged to when the central protagonist of the text is broken.¹⁶¹ Identifying the central protagonist(s) and the presumed archive holder(s) contextualizes the archive, and provides information on what Pearce et al. refer to as “the horizon of activity,” the institutional or economic field where the archive holder was active.¹⁶²

3.2.2. Archival analysis in combination with linguistic domains

Private archives, centered on one or more protagonists and their transactions, can provide an *ego-centric* point of view on the archival habits of an individual. By extension, these archival habits can reveal information about language habits and abilities. Language choices within institutional archives can reveal attitudes harbored by authorities and institutions towards the utilized languages.

Understanding a bilingual archive, its lifespan, its internal organization, and its users can answer the question used to define the linguistic domains of the utilized languages: “who writes what language to whom and when.”¹⁶³ The *who* is the scribe, whose language abilities are obviously necessarily governing the language choice. Notably, in the case of Aramaic epigraphs, the writer of the alphabetic text is not always necessarily a professional scribe.¹⁶⁴ *What language* is again the matter of defining whether the archive includes monolingual documents, cuneiform documents with Aramaic archival aids, and/or fully bilingual documents. The *Whom* depends on the definition of institutional and private archives. In institutional archives, the intended audience would be the people working within the departments which the records relate to. Within private archives, the archive holder(s) should be able to at least source and utilize the documents, for example, to prove their claim to land or debts. For this type of situation, legal documents should be legible and usable for the authorities as well as the archive holders.

When is again a more complex question than simply the date of documents. In terms of dating, it relates to the timespan covered by the archive and temporal changes in language choice within it. But this question also covers other aspects of

¹⁶⁰ On the process of disambiguation and the reciprocal relationship between archive research and prosopography, see Pearce et al. in preparation.

¹⁶¹ Fales demonstrated that fragmentary texts belong to the dossier of Assurbanipal’s charioteer Rēmānni-Adad based on the witnesses who belonged to his wagon group (Fales 1987).

¹⁶² Pearce et al. in preparation.

¹⁶³ Discussed above in section 3.1.2.

¹⁶⁴ See the discussion of this possibility regarding the documents from Dūr-Katlimmu in 4.4.

the situation behind the document, such as the transaction type and where the transaction took place. The transaction type or topic of each document should be compared to the other components of the archive. As has been previously observed by Radner, the conveyance-type documents are as a rule written in cuneiform and Neo-Assyrian while alphabetic script and Aramaic were more prominent in loan documents in seventh-century Assyria.¹⁶⁵ Although not exclusively true,¹⁶⁶ this pattern is visible in all archives analyzed in chapters 4–6 and 8. The *where* is particularly relevant, as a large portion of Aramaic documents stem from the northwestern areas of the Assyrian empire. The location where the document was drafted may reflect local scribal habits in format and language, and reflect connections to other archives from sites nearby.

The answers to these questions highlight general trends within individual archives and sometimes in wider society, but also exceptions to trends. Sometimes these exceptions can be explained by other variants, such as the provincial location of the archive, the topic or the abilities of the individual writing or utilizing the document. Nevertheless, while the question can and should be applied to individual documents, asking it of a body of documents reflects norms of language choice applied by the archiving party.

The topic of records relates to the scale of formal and informal, which reflects the domains where languages were seen as appropriate. Formality in legal documents is expected as they should be able to prove claims during litigation. However, the difference between formal and informal functions on a spectrum. The transaction recorded in a text may rule the need for formality. Conveyance documents are the most standardized among the legal documents, and in Postgate's words: "the most formal."¹⁶⁷ They held more value and could even be used as pledge documents.¹⁶⁸ The spectrum between formal and informal lies in the standardized conventions and breaking them. In order to observe the conventions and patterns of abstaining from them, archival documents must be read in comparison to their contemporary parallels.

All three corpora analyzed in the following three chapters (Dūr-Katlimmu, Ma'allānāte, and Nineveh) are published and organized by archive or dossier in their publications. I take into consideration the typology established in their publications, but apply the terminology established in section 2.2 for cohesiveness. As much of the Aramaic corpus is informal and does not always follow an established standard, some texts are more difficult to classify by type than others.

¹⁶⁵ Radner 2011, 395.

¹⁶⁶ As exemplified by Lemaire 2001. See also the discussion of pledge documents written on rectangular tablets in Aramaic in 8.3.

¹⁶⁷ Postgate 1976, 4.

¹⁶⁸ As observed by Postgate 1976, 12. This practice is attested in the loan document CT 33 19: 9–10 (FNALD 26) *dan-nu-tú ša É ana šá-pár-te šak-na-at*, "sale document of house is placed as pledge."

In some cases, my reading and understanding of the text deviates from the publications. These disagreements are argued when these cases are discussed in detail. As part of analyzing the archival documents, philological analysis and historical methods are utilized. While the purpose of this study is not to offer new editions of the archival texts, some alternative readings are offered and discussed, especially when relevant for understanding the purpose and context of the text, and for comparing local and standardized aspects of the Aramaic loan formulas.

The process of reconstructing the functions of the archives and the role of Aramaic in the work processes it supported is as follows, based on the idea of social domains.

1. Description of the archival context

This involves an overview of the archaeological context if available. I also approach the reconstructed hypothetical archive here by describing the archival protagonists and their domains of business described by the archive.

2. Identifying the text types where Aramaic is relevant

The next step in understanding the role of Aramaic within the archives involves going through the text types where it was utilized. Following the three-type division explained in section 2.2, I analyze the use of Aramaic monolinguals, bilinguals, and archival aids according to text type and transaction. The role of Aramaic within individual domains is achieved by comparing it to the use of Akkadian within the archives.

3. Dossier-specific analysis

I identify trends of format, shape and socio-economic domains within the dossiers of the archive. The analysis considers the social circle of the central protagonists, their status and types of transactions they were involved in, connections to other settlements if apparent in the texts, and involvement of institutions if relevant.

4. Analysis of deviation from established patterns within the archive and between other sites

Each text corpus from the different sites exhibits trends of using Aramaic in more informal situations and particularly in loan transactions. However, each site includes deviations from established trends of format, shape, and transaction. Possible reasons and implications for these deviations are offered by engaging with sociolinguistic theory. The remaining data is mainly restricted to economic transactions, which means that the domain of transactions is already limited to one domain. What does vary, however, is the scale of formality, which does imply that the work process involved with a transaction affected the language choice.

This process aims to outline the following to address the functions of Aramaic in archival practices and work processes:

- situations where Aramaic was deemed appropriate and useful
- how Aramaic was adapted for economic transactions in terms of format
- commonalities and variation of format and language choice between sites.

While the chosen case studies can only offer a fractional view of the language situation and the norms of using Aramaic in the Assyrian empire, patterns of use can indicate norms and standards applied widely within the empire.

3.2.3. Archival analysis with Social Network Analysis methodology

As archives are by definition relational and usually the archived documents have some kind of relationship to each other, I initially intended to study the archives with Social Network Analysis. Social Network Analysis is a methodology based on modeling and measuring relationships between people or other entities as networks.¹⁶⁹ This approach was based on the idea that language choice depended on the people attested in the texts; for example, that certain protagonists would prefer one language for their documents. As has been shown in the context of modern multilingual communities, social networks influence language choice and evaluation of social domains,¹⁷⁰ and social attributes such as age and gender can factor into the language use.¹⁷¹

Not only does the social network of a person have an impact on language use, but so does their personal identity. Our identities are enforced and formed by the people surrounding us: family, friends, and co-workers. In diglossic communities, language choice and social domains reflect the identity of the language user. Locality may be represented by one's language; for example, using the vernacular language may be a conscious choice to show community allegiance instead of simply reflecting the social status of the user.¹⁷² On the other hand, language choice may reflect the identity one wishes to attain. When the norms of the society apply a certain prestige to one language or dialect, appearing as the user of that language or dialect can be desirable.

Using Social Network Analysis for the study of historical sociolinguistics assumes that the phenomena of language maintenance, shift and innovation are typical of multilingual communities, even in the past. Historical data is always

¹⁶⁹ See the further discussion on the key concepts of Social Network Analysis and its application in Assyriology in chapter seven.

¹⁷⁰ In the hallmark study on language-switching between Bokmål and Rannamål in a Norwegian community, Blom and Gumperz show that involvement in the local community increased the use of the vernacular language, whereas those with a more open social network used standardized language more often (Blom & Gumperz 1972).

¹⁷¹ In a social network study measuring the correlation of locality (defined as involvement in local community) and language use, Milroy and Margrain demonstrate that older generations of bilingual communities are generally less open towards the "outer group" and therefore use one of their languages more than the other (L. Milroy & Margrain 1980). Gender and age alone do not factor into the daily language choices, but the social network of the language user does, as argued by Wei, Milroy, & Pong 1992.

¹⁷² L. Milroy 1987, 19.

limited and sets boundaries for the type of analysis that can be performed and difficulties arise especially in defining relationships between people.¹⁷³ The relationships reflected in legal documents offer a mere glimpse of the social activity of ancient people, whereas in studies on language choice and social networks in modern communities the quality of relationships is defined by the people participating in the study. With historical data, relationships based on kinship and trust are not necessarily visible, and records of communication within the home would be rarer to encounter than records of purchasing grain.

The above-mentioned limitations of data do not necessarily prevent the evaluation of the effects of social networks on language choice. Even with limited economic data, it would theoretically be possible to observe a scenario, for example, where Aramaic was used only in transactions with the deportee community. However, after experimentation with network data, this approach did not lead to significant results in terms of language choice. It quickly became clear that language choice depended much more on the text type and the archive's central person rather than the people they interacted with.¹⁷⁴

The influence of social networks may nevertheless be implicit in the data. Linguistic change and innovation require links beyond the community, usually to a "broker": a person who is connected to more than one densely connected community and is able to transfer information from one community to another.¹⁷⁵ If switching between Aramaic and Akkadian in certain situations is based on social norms, a person practicing the switching may be in the position of the broker – balancing between communities of Aramaic and Akkadian speakers. Therefore, in an ego-centric archival study, the analysis of the immediate and long-distance relationships of the egos is central to understanding the linguistic environment of the ego. Attributes of the participants in the network, such as social rank, office, and gender are generally relevant for understanding the influence of the ego and the situations of language use.¹⁷⁶ Analysis of the social circles of the archive protagonists provides background for them, but it is difficult to evaluate how much the social circles influence their archive habits.

The social network data collected for this purpose is described in chapter 7. The data does function well for exploring the relationships between texts, such as organizing and visualizing the texts according to language, date, dossier, or transaction type. In some cases, the SNA approach proved to be useful for disambiguation and for identifying the close circles of the archive protagonists. These results are discussed in detail in chapter 7.

¹⁷³ Conde-Silvestre 2012, 335–336.

¹⁷⁴ This is demonstrated in chapter 7 with the graphic visualization of the network structures.

¹⁷⁵ J. Milroy 1992, 173–183.

¹⁷⁶ Conde-Silvestre 2012; Sairio 2009.

3.3. Conclusions

The concepts of social domains and language choice can be applied to studying ancient sources if the limitations of the data are recognized. Acknowledging these limitations requires an estimate of what data is missing. Simultaneously, ancient textual sources should be used to their full extent by including input from the writing medium, such as visual and material components, not just the contents of the text the medium bears.

Answering the *who writes what language to whom* questions based on ancient archival documents requires a combination of methods: study of the archival documents themselves, the larger whole they make, and what connects individual records into an archive. Social Network Analysis can function as an organizational tool for studying the relationships between texts and individuals, but the analysis of the social relationships in bilingual archives does not explain language choice. Thus, it alone does not function as a suitable method for the question of explaining the functions of Aramaic in archives.

As there seems to be a direct correlation between language choice and the topic of documents, Aramaic appears to serve specific functions in archives that can be analyzed in terms of format (multilingual or monolingual, shape of document), legal formula, and the work process the records were created to serve. These aspects are analyzed in the following chapters to identify the social domains of Aramaic archival records.

4 Dūr-Katlimmu archives

In this chapter, I discuss the patterns of language choice between Aramaic and Akkadian in the Assyro-Aramaic cuneiform archives from Dūr-Katlimmu. As a military base, administrative center, and frontier between Assyria proper and the Aramaized provinces, Dūr-Katlimmu represents a meeting point between the peripheral and the central practices of writing. Most of the Neo-Assyrian documents from the site are associated with the economic activity of Šulmu-šarri, whose role as a *ša-qurbūte* mediating between the Assyrian king and his provinces mirrors the position of Dūr-Katlimmu.¹⁷⁷ As the best-preserved and largest collection of Aramaic legal documents from the Neo-Assyrian period, the archive of Šulmu-šarri functions as an unprecedented case study on the habits of language choice in one individual's archive.

4.1. Historical background of Dūr-Katlimmu

The site of Tell Sheikh Hamad, called in ancient times Dūr-Katlimmu (Assyrian) and Magdalu (Aramaic), was excavated by a German team lead by Hartmut Kühne between 1978 and 2010. The results of the German team are published in the series *Berichte der Ausgrabung Tall Seh Hamad/Dūr-Katlimmu* (BATSH). Dūr-Katlimmu was located in the Jazirah, right on the eastern riverbank of the Hābūr river, 70km from the modern city of Dēr ez-Zōr in Syria. It was a significant Assyrian city from the Middle Assyrian period and part of the provincial system, located at the intersection of two routes of the king's road.¹⁷⁸ Middle Assyrian texts (dated to the reigns of Shalmaneser I and Tukulti-Inūrta I) from Dūr-Katlimmu consist of administrative documents and letters.¹⁷⁹ During the Reconquista period of Neo-Assyrian kings, Dūr-Katlimmu was incorporated into the province of Laqē, which had been a part of the province of Rašappa until the second half of the 8th century.¹⁸⁰ Several smaller settlements in the area may have been under the jurisdiction and influence of Dūr-Katlimmu, which Kühne suggests may have been settled by deportees.¹⁸¹

Assyrian culture in Dūr-Katlimmu is in part represented by the temple of Salmānu, whose personnel are represented in the corpus. Salmānu was the city god

¹⁷⁷ The title *ša-qurbūte* is usually translated as “royal bodyguard” in the SAA series, but I prefer the more neutral translation “agent” used by Groß 2020a, 201. I return to the functions of the *ša-qurbūte* in section 4.2.

¹⁷⁸ Radner 2002, 3.

¹⁷⁹ Röllig 2008; Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996.

¹⁸⁰ For a detailed overview of the development of Dūr-Katlimmu's position in the provincial jurisdiction see Radner 2010, 4–6.

¹⁸¹ Kühne 2010.

of Dūr-Katlimmu and was depicted as a protector of Assyrian kingship.¹⁸² Kühne suggests that this relationship between Assyrian kings and Salmānu through the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian periods also reflects the continuation of links between the Assyrian heartland and Dūr-Katlimmu.¹⁸³ Radner noted that Salmānu's name (written with the logogram SILIM in cuneiform, *šlmn* in alphabetic script) was the theophoric element in five names of Assyrian kings, implying a strong connection between the god Salmānu and Assyrian royalty.¹⁸⁴ Another popular theophoric element, Būru, occurring in the names of Dūr-Katlimmu suggests the presence of devotion to the deity, but there are no explicit mentions of a temple or Būru residing in Dūr-Katlimmu.¹⁸⁵ The temple of Salmānu was also potentially a factor in the legal proceedings in Dūr-Katlimmu. The involvement of the temple, as hinted by the fines to the temple specified in the penalty clauses of some of the conveyance documents from Dūr-Katlimmu, is discussed further in section 4.3.2.

In the seventh century, Dūr-Katlimmu was both an important military location and an administrative center, and the presence of military and intelligence officials is well represented among the people attested in the corpus. Part of its importance was due to location on the river routes and the king's road,¹⁸⁶ functioning as an access point between the Assyrian heartland and the neighboring provinces of Raṣappa, Hindanu and Suhu.¹⁸⁷ The international flair of Dūr-Katlimmu as a meeting point of Assyrian, provincial and foreign influences is characterized by the people attested in the corpus.

Two highlights of the “non-locals” in the corpus are references to the “field of the Elamites” located in Dūr-Katlimmu and one Arabian witness. Specifying their locality suggests that they are marked by their non-Assyrianness despite owning property and participating in the trade and legal processes of the local community. The field of the Elamites is mentioned in two texts, both written by the same scribe Urdu-Nabû during 603 and 600.¹⁸⁸ Elamites are otherwise unattested in the corpus and appear here only as owners of a neighboring field in the context of specifying the location of a transferred field. This mention of the Elamites may relate to the placement of deportees in Dūr-Katlimmu, although they are mentioned a decade

¹⁸² Radner 1998a; Radner 2012. The penalty clause of BATSH 6 69: r.6 specifies a fine to be paid to “Salmānu who resides in Dūr-Katlimmu,” which strongly suggests the presence of a temple. The temple has not been excavated, but was possibly located on the citadel, where one fragment of a library text was also found, as suggested by Radner 2002, 20.

¹⁸³ Kühne 2009.

¹⁸⁴ Radner 1998a.

¹⁸⁵ Radner 2002, 16.

¹⁸⁶ The king's road of Dūr-Katlimmu is mentioned both in texts from the site (BATSH 6 7; 70) and in one text from Nineveh (SAA 6 335: 7–8).

¹⁸⁷ The relationship between Dūr-Katlimmu and its surroundings is discussed in Radner 2002, 3–6.

¹⁸⁸ BATSH 6 39: 7 and BATSH 6 40: 10.

after the collapse of the Assyrian empire. The Arabian witness is mentioned almost a century earlier in a document dated to 692, “Witness Tanis-dê, Arabian, master of the given silver.”¹⁸⁹ Radner suggests the title following the gentilic noun *arbaya* is connected to the phrase *bēl-hi’āti ša šarpi*, a person in charge of weighing the silver exchanged in the transaction.¹⁹⁰ These attestations of non-locals, although temporally far apart, attest to the recognition of locale-based social categories in Dūr-Katlimmu and to the presence of non-Assyrians in the area.

The local institutions, such as the temple of Salmānu and the governing bodies of Dūr-Katlimmu are likely to be reflected in the language situation at hand. While the Assyrian empire required the use of Akkadian for some levels of administration, it also encouraged the spread and use of Aramaic through its imperial practices, such as resettling deportees and installing governors from local contexts.¹⁹¹ Dūr-Katlimmu exemplifies that multilinguality was an inherent part of the imperial system, not simply its consequence: the use of Aramaic and Akkadian is deeply rooted in the archival processes of the site. Was this intentional or was the administrative system simply flexible enough to accommodate local customs? Based on the utilization of alphabetic scribes in seventh century administration, this seems intentional. At Dūr-Katlimmu as elsewhere in seventh-century Assyria, Aramaic held a steady position in the short-term loans of commodities, as will be seen in the following sections.

4.2. Description of the archives at Dūr-Katlimmu

The Neo-Assyrian cuneiform documents from Dūr-Katlimmu were published by Radner in BATSH 6,¹⁹² and the Aramaic documents by Wolfgang Röllig in BATSH 17.¹⁹³ The excavated tablets were part of the collection of the Dēr ez-Zōr Museum in Syria, but their current status is unknown. The Neo-Assyrian material stems from Lower Town II, where the site expanded between the tenth and ninth century. The citadel and Lower Town I are Middle Assyrian. Lower Town II was surrounded by a city wall and included palatial buildings.¹⁹⁴ Texts from the Neo-Assyrian period were found in three main areas of Lower Town II: “The Neo-Assyrian residences” in Lower Town II, dated to the eighth and seventh centuries, the “northeastern corner,” and areas within and outside of the “Red House” dated to the seventh and sixth centuries. One text was found on the citadel.

¹⁸⁹ BATSH 6 130: r.3–4: IGI *m̄ta-ni-is-de-e* LÚ.*ar-b[a]-a-a* EN-KÙ.BABBAR-*na-še-e*. Transliteration and translation adapted from Radner 2002, 174.

¹⁹⁰ Radner 2002, 174.

¹⁹¹ On deportations as part of imperial strategy, see, e.g., Valk 2020. On local governors in provinces, see Bunnens 2009.

¹⁹² Radner 2002.

¹⁹³ Röllig 2014.

¹⁹⁴ See the layout of Dūr-Katlimmu in Radner 2002, 2.

In the northeastern corner, a large palatial complex with three different sections was excavated. Nine cuneiform texts were found in different sections of the palatial complex.¹⁹⁵ These include five conveyance texts, three silver loans, one court document, and one administrative text.¹⁹⁶ Only three of the texts are dated, the dates ranging between 676 and 635*. Three of the conveyance texts have Aramaic epigraphs. In total 25 Aramaic texts were found in the northeastern corner, mainly from Room B.¹⁹⁷ The main protagonists in the texts vary and there is no obvious archival connection between them. However, as already pointed out by Radner,¹⁹⁸ they show a clear connection to the Red House archive: three texts include persons who are also mentioned in the Red House archive; Šulmu-šarri, the scribe Salmānu-ahu-ušur and Šamšia.

The Neo-Assyrian residences refer to a building complex constructed during the office of governor Nergal-ereš and are part of the rebuilding and structural replanning of Dūr-Katlimmu.¹⁹⁹ In the Neo-Assyrian residences, three cuneiform tablets and one amulet were found in different rooms of the building complex. Some of the same names appear also in Red House texts. The three cuneiform tablets are one sale of house (BATSH 6 11), a fragmentary contract with unclear contents (BATSH 6 13), and one administrative text recording amounts of grain (BATSH 6 14). The amulet is shaped like an arrowhead, and the cuneiform text on it, while legible, is incomprehensible. Five Aramaic texts were found in three different locations of the Neo-Assyrian residences. Four of them are fragments,²⁰⁰ one is a loan of silver (BATSH 17 D35). The names in the contracts cannot be identified with individuals appearing in the rest of the corpus.

The Red House set in Lower Town II was used in two phases: the main occupation phase from the late Neo-Assyrian period to the late Neo-Babylonian period and the following reuse phase after parts of the construction had become dilapidated and were purposefully destroyed in the Achaemenid period.²⁰¹ The texts found in the Red House range between 828 and 600*, with the majority of the texts dating to the reign of Assurbanipal. The corpus of texts found in the Red House includes 180 cuneiform tablets and fragments, of which 67 have Aramaic epigraphs, and 132 Aramaic documents.²⁰² Radner and Röllig categorize the tablets to several

¹⁹⁵ Five from Room B (BATSH 6 2–6), three from Room K3 (BATSH 6 7–9), and one from Room RR (BATSH 6 10).

¹⁹⁶ BATSH 6 9, listing amounts of grain and wine given to different persons; only one name in the list is preserved.

¹⁹⁷ See the table in Röllig 2014, 3.

¹⁹⁸ Radner 2002, 26.

¹⁹⁹ Fügert et al. 2014.

²⁰⁰ BATSH 17 D 179–181; 183.

²⁰¹ See the helpful schema of the timeline of the Red House in Kreppner 2016, 180.

²⁰² Numbers are based on the table which records 132 Aramaic texts found in different rooms in the Red House, in Röllig 2014, 4. In addition to this number, one adoption document with a foot

different archive holders based on the names appearing in the material. The most prominent one is Šulmu-šarri (60 cuneiform tablets, 15 Aramaic dockets), whose tablets were stored in the Red House and date to the mid 7th century. Several of the other archive holders have only one or two texts associated with them; the exceptions to this are Rahīmi-il (six cuneiform texts, three with envelopes), Barruqu (three Aramaic dockets), and Iddin-ahhē (three cuneiform texts). These three people are discussed jointly with Šulmu-šarri in section 4.5, as they are all connected to him, and the Red House texts reflect mostly Šulmu-šarri and his circle's private money lending and purchases. As the Red House was the residence of Šulmu-šarri and his descendants, the documents which do not mention Šulmu-šarri as the buyer but predate his death could possibly have been stored in his archive if he or his family obtained the rights to the loans or the sold object specified in the contracts.

According to Janoscha Kreppner's analysis of the stratigraphy and the textual evidence, it is likely that the Red House was constructed during the 630s when the most prominent archival protagonist in the Red House documents, Šulmu-šarri, was appointed *ša-qurbūte*.²⁰³ As the literal translation would be "he who is near", the title has previously often been translated as "royal bodyguard." However, as Šulmu-šarri's consistent residence in Dūr-Katlimmu exemplifies, the *ša-qurbūte* were not stationed near the king and could not function as bodyguards. Radner argues that as the title was given to Šulmu-šarri at an older age, it is more likely a prestige title.²⁰⁴ However, Melanie Groß argues that rather than literally standing in guard near the king, these functionaries mediated between the king and the provincial system by transmitting instructions and messages, escorting troops, and transporting captives.²⁰⁵

Šulmu-šarri's archive details his vast estates within and in the vicinity of Dūr-Katlimmu,²⁰⁶ including a whole village owned by him.²⁰⁷ The practice of officials of the Neo-Assyrian empire owning villages is attested elsewhere and speaks for the wealth and influence of Šulmu-šarri and others like him.²⁰⁸ Most of Šulmu-šarri's texts were found in rooms WV and YV of the Red House. Röllig emphasizes that while none of the texts were found in their original storage situation, but rather deposited with pottery and everyday objects when part of the building collapsed,

imprint (BATSH 17 1**) was found in the Red House, but it is counted among inscribed objects rather than documents in the publication.

²⁰³ Kreppner 2016.

²⁰⁴ Radner 2002, 14.

²⁰⁵ Groß 2020a, 201–203.

²⁰⁶ On Šulmu-šarri's profile see also Radner 2017, 220–221.

²⁰⁷ The village of Šulmu-šarri (URU.ŠE ša mDI-mu-MAN) is mentioned in the court document BATSH 6 71 (dated 26.XII.630*, eponym of Šalmu-šarri-iqbi). The document records the village in the province of URU.É-LÚ.GAL-KAŠ.LUL.

²⁰⁸ For example, Rēmanni-Adad, chief charioteer of Assurbanipal purchased a village of Dannaya and a town near Nerab (SAA 6 325; 326).

the find context shows that the Aramaic dockets were indeed archived and not simply discarded after a short period.²⁰⁹ Šulmu-šarri's sons Šamaš-ahhē-iddina, Nabû-ili, and Nabû-nāšir are known from the Red House texts.²¹⁰

The latest texts from the Red House were found in the reuse phase and date to the sixth century, with some ostraca from the late sixth or early fifth century. According to Kreppner, the socio-economic situation of the Red House and surroundings changed significantly after its destruction in the Achaemenid period, and the lack of texts from this period can possibly be associated with this development or a switch to perishable writing materials.²¹¹

Despite the best efforts of the excavators, some texts were looted and ended up on the antiquities market. The Aramaic texts from private collections that have been previously published and are identified as part of the corpus based on onomastics, language and other factors are included in the appendix of BATSH 17 with separate numbering and an asterisk.²¹²

In the following sections (4.2.1–4.2.3), I give a general introduction to the different text types and the distribution of languages across the corpus. I begin with the cuneiform corpus, followed by the monolingual Aramaic documents and then the Aramaic epigraphs on cuneiform tablets. Each section demonstrates the general structure of the economic documents and shows the patterns of genre distribution within the corpus. This section gives an overview of the Dūr-Katlimmu text collection, which prefaces section 4.3 analyzing the language choice in the Red House documents.

4.2.1. Neo-Assyrian texts

Table 5 Text types of the Neo-Assyrian texts from Dūr-Katlimmu. The table follows the categorization given in Radner 2002, 225–229 with some modifications²¹³ and includes the 14 texts published later in Radner 2010.

Text type	Number of texts
Sale of a house	9
Sale of a person	70
Sale of a field	32
Sale of a field and person	1
Sale of a garden	5

²⁰⁹ Röllig 2014, 5.

²¹⁰ Šamaš-ahhē-iddina and Nabû-ili in BATSH 6 32:7; Nabû-nāšir in BATSH 6 199: r. 5.

²¹¹ Kreppner 2016.

²¹² Röllig 2014, 1.

²¹³ Overlapping categories “S/P” for “obligation /judicial document” and “U” for “contract” were merged, and “judicial documents with pledges” were counted among “judicial documents.”

Text type	Number of texts
Sale of an unknown object	47
Judicial document	16
Pledge	4
Receipt	3
Loan of barley	2
Loan of silver	5
Loan of silver with pledge	4
Loan of an unknown object	1
Contract (unknown topic)	12
Administrative text	4
Amulet	1
Library text	1
Lexical list	1
Uncertain	7
School text	1
Letter	2 (+ one fragment of an envelope <i>Radner 2010: 12</i>)

There are 215 Neo-Assyrian cuneiform documents from Dūr-Katlimmu published in BATSH 6,²¹⁴ as well as 14 additional ones published by Radner subsequently.²¹⁵ Most of the dated texts are from the 7th century, the oldest text dated to 828 (BATSH 6 116) and the latest to 600* (BATSH 6 40). As seen in Table 5, most of these documents would be categorized as conveyance documents. Other text types represented in the Neo-Assyrian corpus are three administrative texts,²¹⁶ one amulet (BATSH 6 12), one lexical text (BATSH 6 198), and one fragment of a library text found on the citadel (BATSH 6 1). This fragment was identified as a library text due to its physical appearance and neat script, similar to the library texts from Nineveh and Assur and distinct from the script used in the legal documents of the corpus.²¹⁷ Over a quarter of the texts (68 tablets, 6 fragments) contain Aramaic epigraphs, which are discussed further in section 4.2.3. below.

²¹⁴ The number above includes envelopes and six fragments of Aramaic epigraphs that were once part of cuneiform documents (BATSH 6 a–f).

²¹⁵ Radner 2010.

²¹⁶ BATSH 6 9; 14; 197.

²¹⁷ Radner 2002, 26.

The conveyance texts in the corpus generally follow the standard formula of Neo-Assyrian conveyance texts.²¹⁸ Radner has noted two aspects of local variation to the format: placement of the seal identification both above and below seal placement, when in other Neo-Assyrian texts it is written completely above the seal.²¹⁹ Another is the penalty clause, which typically specifies a reimbursement 10 times the purchase price, but is lowered to three times the purchase price in Dür-Katlimmu texts.²²⁰ While the corpus can be roughly divided into loan documents in Aramaic and conveyance documents in Neo-Assyrian, there are a few cuneiform texts that deviate from the norm. These cuneiform loans are discussed below with possible reasons for the choice of language and script behind them.

The corpus includes 10 silver loans written in cuneiform, all of which follow the standard Neo-Assyrian contract formula.²²¹ The majority of the silver loans are in Aramaic, discussed below in section 4.2.2. Many of these are fragmentary and can be identified as silver loans based on the *egirtu* shape of the tablet (horizontal rectangular tablet with an envelope). Two additional fragments, one of an envelope (BATSH 6 149) and one of an inner tablet (BATSH 6 153), have only witness lists preserved – based on their format as the *egirtu* type and the content Radner qualifies these as either silver loans or judicial documents. There are a few possible reasons for choosing Neo-Assyrian over Aramaic for the silver loans. Four silver loans written on the vertical *dannutu*-shaped tablets also include pledges of fields. The inclusion of pledges in these texts is likely the key reason for writing the documents in this format and in cuneiform, as they may also have been used as proof of acquisition of real estate if the loan was not paid. Some of the *egirtu*-type silver loans may be explained with connections to the heartland of Assyria. The debtor in one of the cuneiform silver loans (BATSH 6 5a/b) is identified as a person from Kalhu, and one of his witnesses, Nabû-šarru-ušur, potentially appears as a creditor in one cuneiform silver loan (BATSH 6 6),²²² and as the guarantor in another (BATSH 6 22). Thus, these texts may be connected by the same circle of people and stem from the same archive, although these texts are too fragmentary to say for certain. Speculatively, the *egirtu*-type silver loans may have been chosen over Aramaic dockets by persons who were from the heartland of Assyria and more used to this format rather than the Aramaic loan documents.

In addition to the *egirtu*-type silver loans, the corpus includes two grain loans recorded in cuneiform (BATSH 6 138; 201), both fragmentary. These are identified as grain loans by Radner in part due to their triangular docket shape; one

²¹⁸ The standard formulas of Neo-Assyrian conveyance texts and loans as outlined in Postgate 1976, 12–55. pages

²¹⁹ Radner 2002, 20.

²²⁰ Radner 2002, 20.

²²¹ BATSH 6 5a; 5b; 6; 22; 23; 41; 104; 114; 129; 131.

²²² The name is not fully preserved; Radner reconstructs the first signs in line 1 as [ša mdPA]–MAN–PAP.

includes a partially preserved ANŠE sign (“homer”) which supports the identification as a grain loan.²²³ As the docket type is only known from grain loans, the identification is clear. The docket shape indicates that the inclusion of a parchment sealed with the docket was standard in all grain loans – writing the docket in cuneiform implies that some of these documents were originally written in two scripts and two languages.²²⁴ The choice of writing the grain loan dockets in cuneiform is unorthodox in Dūr-Katlimmu, and due to the fragmentary state of the texts it is difficult to say what prompted the decision. While writing cuneiform grain loans is not unprecedented, the choice of writing a bilingual document likely relates to the intended audience of the document – probably not fluent in either chosen language. As Dūr-Katlimmu also had considerable traffic from the heartland of Assyria, these unconventional language choices in loan documents could reflect the language preferences of the population traveling from the major cities of Assyria, used to the conventions used in their place of origin.

Radner pointed out that the cuneiform scribes often made grammatical mistakes in stative forms in the texts, specifically in plural and feminine forms of the stative.²²⁵ As the scribes consistently show the switch between š and s in spelling Akkadian words, Radner concludes that Neo-Assyrian must have been only used as a written language in 7th-century Dūr-Katlimmu, whereas Aramaic would probably have been the spoken language. The lack of fully preserved letters to and from Dūr-Katlimmu complicates this question, as letters would arguably be closest to the spoken language.²²⁶ Evaluating the language situation simply based on economic documents is complicated by the genre: expressions within the legal language could become “frozen” and thus grammatically incorrect.²²⁷ As is shown in the sections below, many aspects of the parallel use of Akkadian and Aramaic and at Dūr-Katlimmu support Radner’s conclusion. First, based on the number of Aramaic texts from the site, which is not limited to one house, archive or dossier, Radner’s suggestion may well be true. Second, it is particularly noteworthy that short-term archival texts, such as loans to be paid by next harvest and would thus have to be utilized more often than proof of land ownership, were written primarily in Aramaic. Finally, a further indication of limited cuneiform literacy is the use of Aramaic archival aids, which are not limited to one dossier either.

²²³ BATSH 6 138: 1: 9 AN[ŠE ŠE.BAR].

²²⁴ See the discussion of the triangular cuneiform grain-loan dockets from Kalhu in section 8.1.3.

²²⁵ Radner 2002, 20.

²²⁶ While some fragments of Neo-Assyrian letters from Dūr-Katlimmu are published in *Radner* 2010: 3; 10; 12; 14, they are not discussed here in detail due to their fragmentary contents.

²²⁷ Or appear grammatically incorrect due to vernacular influences: the language abilities of the scribes from the corpus of Judean exiles and West Semites in rural Babylonia were evaluated by Hackl by comparing letters and legal documents. He demonstrates that vernacular features present in the epistolary corpus also affected the language of legal documents (Hackl 2017).

4.2.2. The Monolingual Aramaic texts

All 183 Aramaic dockets, dated between 676 and 630, come from the Lower Town II of Dūr Katlimmu: 24 from the northeastern corner, five from Neo-Assyrian residences, 132 from the Red House, eight from south of the Red House and 14 from east of the Red House. The Aramaic clay tablets from private collections and originally published elsewhere are numbered as D1*–D10* in BATSH 17. Texts D1**–D27** represent ostraca and other objects with Aramaic writing. The delightful highlight of this last portion is text BATSH 17 D1**, which is an adoption document with the foot imprint of the adopted daughter Masâma. Masâma is also possibly attested in BATSH 6 69 as a slave bought by Šulmu-šarri. Röllig has suggested that the name of the adopter could be reconstructed as Rahîmi-il,²²⁸ whose dossier is discussed below jointly with Šulmu-šarri’s archive. However, only the initial letter *rēš* of the name(?) is retained on the tablet, so this is very uncertain. The document is incised on one side, inked on the other.

Most of the monolingual alphabetic documents are loan contracts (Table 6) in stark contrast to the cuneiform documents, which include a greater variety of document types and are mostly conveyance texts. The most typical subtype is loans of barley and silver, but several loan documents are too fragmentary to categorize into these subtypes. Typically, the Aramaic loan documents from Dūr-Katlimmu follow a format where the seal identification includes the debtor (*htm* PN, “seal of PN”), and the creditor is named as the owner of the loaned goods (*zy* PN *lhm*, “of PN”). This format is discussed further below. The triangular docket BATSH 17 D27 diverges from the format, identifying the seal of the creditor (*htm* PN1 *l* PN2 *ksp* 7, “seal of PN1, 7 shekels of silver debited to PN2.”) This is unorthodox, as the debtor is generally the one sealing the document. This may either be a scribal mistake or bring to question whether *htm* should indeed be understood as a “sealed document” (*Siegelurkunde*) as Röllig initially suggested.²²⁹ However, I am partial to reading *htm* as the direct equivalent of the NA₄.KIŠIB PN1 seal identification in the Neo-Assyrian loan formula.

Based on the specific mention of a seal in the format, one would expect that all the dockets would include seal impressions. However, this is not the case. Many of the documents are unsealed – which may suggest that they are not “true loans” but rather notes of other types of obligations.²³⁰

²²⁸ Röllig 2014, 228.

²²⁹ Röllig 2014, 7.

²³⁰ See the discussion of true loans and the issue of understanding the transaction of the documents in 2.1.

Table 6 The typology of the Aramaic documents from Dūr-Katlimmu.

The numbers include all dockets and fragments from BATSH 17 1–183, 1*–10*,²³¹ and the adoption document 1**. The ostraca (2**–27**) are not included because their dating to the seventh century is uncertain and their function as written documents was likely different from clay tablets.

Text type	Number of documents
Loan of silver	46
Loan of silver with pledge	3
Loan of grain	34
Loan of beans	1
Loan of unknown object	7
Adoption document	1
Unclear	101

The Aramaic loan documents from Dūr-Katlimmu tend to lead with a seal identification, followed by the debtor and the object lent, then the creditor. Röllig has identified two types of both silver and barley loans, which differ in form with the introduction of the creditor. The format has parallels with the short format of the cuneiform dockets from Kalhu.²³² The standardization of the format at Dūr-Katlimmu implies that alphabetic writing in this context was a norm, something that required and followed guidelines.

Table 7 Structure of Aramaic loan documents at Dūr-Katlimmu, adapted from the description of the format by Röllig 2014, 8-10.

Barley type I, “full form”	Barley type II	Silver type I	Silver type II
1. Seal identification on 2. Debtor 3. Object	1. Seal identification on 2. Debtor 3. Object	1. Seal identification on 2. Debtor 3. Object 4. Creditor	1. Seal identification on 2. Debtor 3. Object

²³¹ Röllig notes that the inclusion of D10* in the corpus is uncertain, probably because the individuals attested in the text are not identified elsewhere in the corpus (Röllig 2014, 223).

²³² These are discussed in detail in section 8.1.3.

Barley type I, “full form”	Barley type II	Silver type I	Silver type II
4. Amount of barley	4. Amount of barley ²³³	5. Amount of silver	4. Amount of silver
5. Creditor (l)	5. Creditor	6. Interest	5. Creditor
6. Interest	(zy)	7. Date	6. Interest
7. Harvester clause	6. Interest	8. Witnesses	7. Date
8. Witnesses	7. Harvester clause		8. Witnesses
9. Date	8. Witnesses		
	9. Date		

4.2.3. Aramaic epigraphs

Aramaic epigraphs are either inked or incised on 74 of the cuneiform documents. Most of them are conveyance documents, but there are also a few silver loans (BATSH 6 41; 68) and judicial documents (BATSH 6 88; 109; 117). While the contents of the epigraphs are inconsistent, there are certain general trends. The information included in the epigraph usually specifies the type of the document, name of the seller, the type of property sold, name of the person sold, or other data such as a toponym, eponym, or a personal name not otherwise attested in the document. These personal names may in some cases be the name of the person who later purchased the sold property and consequently obtained the contract as proof of purchase (*retroacta*). Most of the epigraphs specify the type of the document as *dnt* (*dannutu*) or *grt* (*egirtu*) (Picture 2). This prevalence of document type, almost a necessary component of the epigraph, is also visible in the observations made by Fales on 24 Aramaic epigraphs from Assur, Kalhu and Nineveh.²³⁴ The name of the buyer is not usually included in the Aramaic archival aids, which makes sense since this information should be implicit to the archive holder.²³⁵ One possible exception is discussed below.

This phenomenon aligns with Sonneveld’s observations on the epigraphs from Rībat’s dossier from the Murašû archive.²³⁶ Sonneveld argues that there are two types of epigraphs in the dossier. Type 1 epigraphs are written from the point of

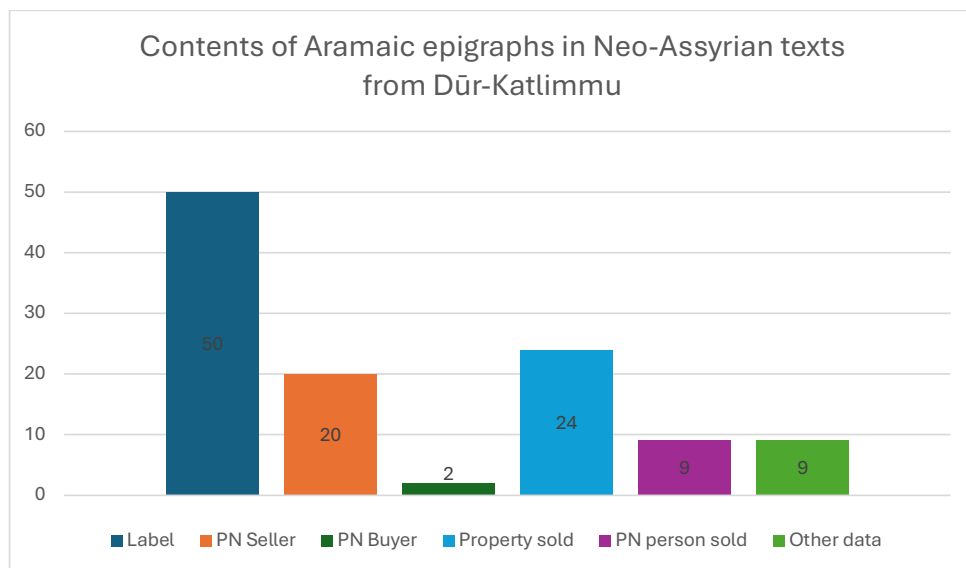
²³³ The amount of barley may also be specified after naming the creditor, for example in BATSH 17 D 9: 1–3: *h̄tm h̄sn š 'r' [n zy] slmsr 'lwh 10(!) b 'p'lg'h' yrbyn h̄šdn 10*, “Seal of Ḥasīnu(?), bar[ley] of Šulmu-šarri, 10 (Homers) debited to him. Half of it accrues (interest). 10 Harvesters.” Transliteration and translation (adapted from German to English) from Röllig 2014, 38.

²³⁴ Fales 1986.

²³⁵ BATSH 6 115.

²³⁶ Sonneveld 2021.

view of Rībat, meaning that his presence in the transaction is implied and unnecessary to include in the epigraph: instead, the epigraph informs him who owes him and what. Type 2 epigraphs are written from a third party’s point of view and offer a neutral summary of the transaction, including Rībat’s involvement. The type 2 epigraphs appear on specific types of documents (four records of tax payments and a lease of field) and are all from the same year, and thus facilitate the needs of another archive holder, perhaps an administrative bureau.²³⁷ A similar phenomenon is likely present in the Dūr-Katlimmu archive.



Picture 2 Chart displaying how often each class of information was featured in Aramaic epigraphs. “Label” here refers to the Aramaic expression used to specify the type of the document, such as *dnt*, *grt*.

One of the Aramaic dockets bears a marginal Aramaic inscription – or rather just one incised sign on the edge of the tablet: *kaf*.²³⁸ Rölliġ tentatively suggests it might be shorthand for “silver”, as the document is a loan of silver, and this marking could have served a similar archival purpose as the epigraphs on Neo-Assyrian ones; to quickly source the document.²³⁹ However, as this is the only example of a potential marginal epigraph on an Aramaic docket from Dūr-Katlimmu, the purpose of the sign remains inconclusive.

²³⁷ Sonneveld 2021, 135–136.

²³⁸ BATSH 17 D33

²³⁹ Rölliġ 2014, 33.

Some of the Aramaic epigraphs in the corpus are inked (31 in total), some incised (34) and some tablets (8) include both incised and inked epigraphs.²⁴⁰ Some of these epigraphs appear to be added after the transaction described in the document took place. This seems most likely in cases where the tablet includes both an incised and an inked epigraph. The contents of an inked epigraph can imply that it was written after the initial transaction. For example, in a conveyance document found in the Red House, an individual called Bamute buys a house from a man called Muteğa. The epigraph on the text reads as follows:

BATSH 6 115: l.e. a – r.e. c: 'grt byt' lbr?²⁴¹[...]/ 'l m^fw²¹[t]g w b n [...]/ 'l[^fm n²]b
x wsrš^fr¹

“Document (about) the house/houses belonging to BR[...], at the expense of Mu[te]ga... Eponym of Nabû²-šarru-ušur.”²⁴¹

The epigraph either includes information about a transaction that took place after the initial sale, or, if the name of Bamute is reconstructed instead of BR[...], the epigraph unconventionally records the buyer's name. As mentioned, the archival aids are usually written from the point of view of the archive holder, and thus the buyer's name is not usually included in them. First, Röllig notes that reconstruction of the name *lbm*[t], “of Bamute” instead of *lbr*[...] “of BR[...]” would be possible on the first line.²⁴² The final legible sign could be a broken mem based on the copy. This reading would make more sense if Muteğa's name is correctly reconstructed – in that case, it would be correctly summarizing the contents, albeit with a slightly odd use the preposition 'l preceding the seller's name “at the expense of Muteğa.” However, if the buyer's name Bamute is to be read here, this epigraph is clearly not written from his point of view. It seems more likely that the epigraph was added afterwards during another transaction concerning the house: if it was sold or pledged to Šulmu-šarri. Several factors support this. First, this is the only document from the Red House associated with the protagonist Bamute, and it is thus otherwise disconnected from the other more prominent archive holders Rahīmi-il and Šulmu-šarri. None of the persons involved in the transaction or as witnesses are attested elsewhere in the corpus either. Therefore, this document is unlikely to be related to the family of Šulmu-šarri. The eponym of the cuneiform inscription is unfortunately fragmentary, but it is possible that the eponym of

²⁴⁰ BATSH 6 includes a helpful table where the column for Aramaic epigraphs (*aramäische Beischrift*) indicates whether the epigraph is inked or incised (Radner 2002, 225–229).

²⁴¹ Transliteration and translation (translated from German to English) from Röllig in Radner 2002, 156. The date is probably post-canonical 644*, as other texts dated to the eponym of the *rab ša rēši* Nabû-šarru-ušur also appear in the corpus (BATSH 6 51 and 52).

²⁴² Radner 2002, 157.

Nabû²-šarru-ušur recorded in the alphabetic script is related to a later transaction rather than the original conveyance.

4.3. Language Choice in the Red House texts

Most of the documents from Dūr-Katlimmu were found in the Red House. The texts concern Šulmu-šarri and his economic activity, and consequently this section focuses mainly on the language choice in his dossier. Additionally, some of the other smaller dossiers (Rahīmi-il and Barruqu) found in the Red House are discussed here to show that the same patterns align with smaller subsets of the corpus. Text typology and language choice within the Red House

Table 8 Text types and their totals from the Red House in either Neo-Assyrian or Aramaic, from BATSH 6 and 17 and Radner 2010 (Text 14).

	Neo-Assyrian	Aramaic
Loan of silver	2	30
Loan of silver with pledge	3	2
Loan of grain	2	29
Loan of beans	0	1
Loan (unknown object)	1	7
Pledge	4	0
Sale of person	67	0
Sale of house	7	0
Sale of garden	5	0
Sale of field	31	0
Sale of field and people	1	0
Sale (unknown object)	45	0
Judicial document	14	0
Judicial document with pledge	1	0
Letter	1	0
Receipt	3	0
Adoption document	0	1
Contract of unknown topic	9	1

	Neo-Assyrian	Aramaic
Administrative	1	0
Uncertain	1	64
Total	198	135

While D54 and D57 are the only dockets Röllig classifies as “true barley loans” (“Darlehen, Gerste” and “Gerstedarlehen”), I have not made a distinction between these documents and other barley transactions using the loan formulas in Table 8 above. The former, Röllig classifies as a true loan because the loan accrues interest and includes a harvester clause,²⁴³ the latter because the term *qrn* “capital” is used in the fragment.²⁴⁴ What constitutes a true loan in the Aramaic grain loans is difficult to say – there are no formulaic expressions that can exclusively be used to distinguish between a true loan and another type of obligation recorded in the loan format.

As seen in Table 8 above and expected in relation to other bilingual archives, alphabetic script was primarily used to record loan documents, and cuneiform was chosen for conveyance documents and court documents. The texts BATSH 17 D1*–D10* from private collections are not included in Table 8 due to the unknown find context. The numbers follow the classifications of the publications BATSH 6 and 17 with some modifications.²⁴⁵

As the table shows, these rules did not come without exceptions, and there is variation among the chosen language per text type. These exceptions are examined in more detail in relation to Šulmu-šarri’s dossier, which is the only dossier in the archive with both alphabetic and cuneiform tablets. The exceptions to the pattern of language choice hint at which domains were considered more suitable for cuneiform, and which factors affected the language choice in these cases.

4.3.1. Šulmu-šarri

Šulmu-šarri’s dossier, where he functions as the main protagonist is dated between 667 and 630* and includes 68 cuneiform texts and 14 Aramaic documents.²⁴⁶ Several points signal that the Red House archive belonged to him and his kin. First, he is attested most often as either a buyer or a creditor. Second, of the significant number of 32 Aramaic epigraphs in his dossier, none include his name, which suggests that the connection to him is implied simply by the inclusion in his archive.

²⁴³ Röllig 2014, 128.

²⁴⁴ Röllig 2014, 134.

²⁴⁵ Fragmentary documents have been merged into categories under “Contract of unknown topic,” “Sale (unknown object)” etc.

²⁴⁶ Two of his documents BATSH 6 31 and 68 are dated to the eponym of Bēl-šaddû’a, which Reade dates to 630 but which is not included in Parpola’s list.

Third, all documents where Šulmu-šarri functions as the buyer or creditor were found in the Red House.

Šulmu-šarri's documents reflect both his archival needs and the local legal standards. Each document needed to be legally valid and legible, which affects both formatting and language choice. Simultaneously, all documents must have been legible to either Šulmu-šarri or people he employed, so that correct documents could be sourced from the archive when necessary. Therefore, language choice within the dossier reflects both institutional needs and influences and the needs and influences of Šulmu-šarri's personal relationships.

Table 9 Distribution of document types in Šulmu-šarri's dossier.

	Akkadian	Aramaic
Loan of silver	0	3
Loan of silver with pledge	1	0
Loan of grain	0	11
Pledge	1	0
Sale of person	39	0
Sale of house	3	0
Sale of garden	2	0
Sale of field	8	0
Sale (unknown object)	12	0
Judicial document	1	0
Receipt	1	0
Total	68	14

As seen in Table 9, in Šulmu-šarri's dossier the language choice based on document type is mostly standard compared to the rest of the Dūr-Katlimmu corpus. Conveyance texts are written in cuneiform, and the alphabetic dockets are reserved for loan documents. The contents are not unsurprising for a private dwelling, but it is interesting to note that letters are almost absent from the archive. As a *ša-qurbūte*, Šulmu-šarri was certainly in correspondence with peers and possibly even the king. The only remaining evidence of this correspondence is a fragment of a letter published after BATSH 6, written in cuneiform.²⁴⁷

His dossier includes two exceptions to the rule, both loans of silver against a pledge recorded in cuneiform. BATSH 6 41 is a loan of silver including a pledge of *bēt-zatāri*. The *bēt-zatāri* is otherwise unattested in the cuneiform corpus, but

²⁴⁷ Radner 2010 no. 14. While this letter does not contain the name of Šulmu-šarri, it was found in the Red House.

based on the context, which specifies that Šulmu-šarri is to cultivate and harvest the *bēt-zatāri*,²⁴⁸ Radner suggests this term refers to a type of field.²⁴⁹ The Aramaic epigraph supports the identification as a type of real estate, as it reads *'grt šlmn 'zry z byt'*, “document of Salmānu-idrī regarding the house(estate?).”²⁵⁰ Below the final lines of the incised epigraph, traces of an illegible inked epigraph are visible, probably added at a later stage. The text follows the structure of a standard Neo-Assyrian loan document, with a few oddities: the name of the debtor is identified by a matronym rather than a patronym (Salmānu-idrī, son of Melu'), and the contract does not specify the date of the payment. It simply states that the *bēt-zatāri* will be released when the debt is paid.

The second exception, BATSH 6 104 is fragmentary and Šulmu-šarri's name is therefore not preserved, but, due to the presence of his regular witness Iddin-ahhē, Radner has included this text in Šulmu-šarri's dossier. Here, five people are pledged against a loan of silver. The choice of using Neo-Assyrian rather than Aramaic in both of these exceptions is likely related to the pledge, as cuneiform documents of the *dannutu* type were generally preferred for transfers of people and real estate. However, two Aramaic texts BATSH 17 D2 (rectangular) and BATSH 17 D18 (triangular) from the Red House record the pledging of people against a loan of silver. Documents recording a pledge in Aramaic are not common but have been found in increasing numbers in the past decade.²⁵¹

The Aramaic pledge documents are relatively rare in the Assyrian Aramaic corpus, and thus merit further discussion regarding their formula. BATSH 17 D2 is a vertically shaped Aramaic monolingual tablet. Only the reverse is preserved. It is clearly a legal document due to the witnesses and date, but the clause preceding the list of witnesses hints at a pledged daughter:

r.

1. [] 'l² n/ph¹ . tḥt . ksph

2. [x . yqln . brth

3. [y(h)n]'p¹q šhdn

“... in place of his silver ... they will [] ... his daughter [he will relea]se.

Witnesses:”²⁵²

Radner restores here in the third line the verb *npq* in the Hafelel stem, with the literal meaning “to bring out,” perhaps better understood as “to release” in this

²⁴⁸ Reconstructed in line 9: *e-[ra-áš e-ši-d]i*

²⁴⁹ Radner 2002, 41.

²⁵⁰ Transliteration and translation (translated from German) from Röllig in Radner 2002, 73.

²⁵¹ For a summary of this document type in Aramaic see section 8.3.

²⁵² Transliteration and translation adapted from Röllig 2014, 26.

context.²⁵³ As Radner points out, this would correlate with the use of *napāqu* in Neo-Assyrian documents.²⁵⁴ This reading of the text type would explain the shape of the document²⁵⁵ and the mention of “his daughter” (*brth*) on line 2.

The other pledge document BATSH 17 D18 is a well-preserved sealed triangular docket.

o.

1. ḥtm . z²p² / d² . wb¹ly .
2. 'šth . p/bz²h . nḥsy .
3. pn . dh² . rbd .
4. mslm¹sr .
5. bksp .
6. [š]qln

r.

7. 10² + 2 mn . yḥšb
8. 'k¹sp¹ . lnḥsy .
9. 'št¹ . yḥ x x .

Witnesses

“Seal of ZPD and Ba'alāya, his wife ... Nuhšāia, in the presence of ... Mušallim-Aššūr, in silver 12 shekels. Whoever gives back the silver to Nuhšāia, will ... the wife.”²⁵⁶

Röllig reads line 3 as *pn . dh² . rbd* ., “im Beisein von ...,” but notes that while “die Lesung dieser Zeile ist ziemlich sicher, eine Deutung aber bisher nicht möglich.”²⁵⁷ Here, the exact phrasing of the transaction in lines 2–3 is uncertain. The clause in lines 7–9 regarding the repayment of the silver to Nuhšāia, resulting in something happening to the wife, is reminiscent of other pledge documents.²⁵⁸

If this document is indeed pledging Ba'alāya, it stands out from other Aramaic pledge documents on two accounts. First is the shape, as other pledge documents are usually recorded on rectangular tablets like BATSH 17 D2 discussed above.²⁵⁹ The second oddity is the lack of the term *rhn* “(to) pledge,” which features in other pledge documents.²⁶⁰ Loan documents with pledges in Aramaic are not very common, and thus this irregularity in formula may simply relate to the small sample

²⁵³ Radner in Röllig 2014, 26.

²⁵⁴ Radner in Röllig 2014, 26.

²⁵⁵ Pledge documents in Aramaic are often rectangular; see section 8.3.

²⁵⁶ Transliteration and translation (translated from German) from Röllig 2014, 56

²⁵⁷ Röllig 2014, 56.

²⁵⁸ Aramaic pledge documents are discussed in section 8.3.2.

²⁵⁹ For example, *Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 46–47 discussed in section 8.3.2.

²⁶⁰ Such as BATSH 17 D22; ACP 64.

size, but the current evidence suggests that there was no formalized expression for the pledge clause in the Aramaic legal language.

Other loans in Šulmu-šarri's dossier are more regular. As expected, the eight grain loans²⁶¹ in Šulmu-šarri's dossier are written only in Aramaic. The amounts of grain range between 3 and 20 homers, and the number of harvesters provided as part of repayment correlates with the amount of grain loaned. As is typical of the grain loans, the witnesses are rarely given any kind of identifiers other than their name; their patronym is attested only when there is a need to disambiguate from another namesake,²⁶² and additional information is provided when debtors and witnesses are from different locations.²⁶³ The lack of titulary suggests two things: familiarity with the archive holder and informality. Titles are used either to signal prestige or in situations where the user of the document needs to be reminded of the identity of a person.

While some of the dockets are sealed, this was not strictly necessary in grain loans, suggesting that they come from a less formal context. Another indication of the informality is that they are dated only by month and year, and the only consistent clause regarding payment is the harvester clause, which suggests that the repayment was due during the next harvest. Sometimes the interest is specified (for example, in BATSH 17 D31: 4–5: “Its interest is its half”, *bplgh . rbyh .*) and sometimes the document records that the payment is due *l'dr*, the equivalent of the Assyrian phrase *ina adri*, “at the threshing-floor.”²⁶⁴ Four dockets also include some of Šulmu-šarri's frequent witnesses, particularly Šamšia, who may also be the co-debtor in one of the dockets (BATSH 17 D9*). Their presence among the few listed witnesses in grain loans further supports the forming image about the context of the transactions: informal, probably practiced outside of institutional influences and related to the personal business of Šulmu-šarri.

4.3.2. Institutional influences on legal documents

The institutional actors that would possibly affect Šulmu-šarri's economic documentation are his position in the Assyrian provincial system as a *ša-qurbūte* and the temple of Salmānu in Dūr-Katlimmu. These institutions are reflected in his documents primarily by the witnessing parties, who represent people from the temple, military, and administration.

While Šulmu-šarri was not involved with the temple of Salmānu, some elements of the institution are visible in his dossier. In conveyance documents of Šulmu-šarri, Salmānu is invoked on three occasions in the penalty clauses, the only attestations

²⁶¹ Not including three grain loans where the creditor's name is partially broken but could be reconstructed as Šulmu-šarri: BATSH 17 D36; D50; D121.

²⁶² As in BATSH 17 D4*, where one of the witnesses of Šulmu-šarri is Šulmu-šarri, son of Rapa'.

²⁶³ In BATSH 17 D6 and D7.

²⁶⁴ BATSH 17 D39: 7; D40: 4; D57: 4

of a fine directed to the temple of Salmānu in texts from Dūr-Katlimmu.²⁶⁵ All three appear in sales of female slaves to Šulmu-šarri, with different sellers. The penalty for contesting the sale is high in comparison to the price of half a mina of silver for one or two slaves: ranging between one mina of gold to one mina of gold and 10 minas of silver. The involvement of the penalty fine to the temple may imply, that the temple was involved in the process of the purchase, as suggested by Poppy Tushingham.²⁶⁶ All three cuneiform tablets include incised Aramaic epigraphs on the left edge, and one with an additional inked epigraph on the lower edge (in BATSH 6 45). One of the texts mentions the scribe Inūrta-[...] (BATSH 6 53), who also wrote another conveyance text in the corpus (BATSH 6 54). While his name is broken in both attestations, the seller in these texts is the same person Nergal-šarru-ušur/'Athar-šarru-ušur. The second text, despite the same scribe, does not include the penalty fine for Salmānu, which implies that the inclusion of the penalty was not dependent on the scribe.

Only four people associated with the temple appear in Šulmu-šarri's dossier, all priests, as witnesses to sales of slaves written in cuneiform.²⁶⁷ One attestation of the priest Inūrta-ahu-ušur is in a sale of slaves that includes a clause specifying that the purchase was done according to the testimony of him and two other people included as witnesses.²⁶⁸ Radner suggests this clause implies that there was a judicial process preceding the purchase of the slaves.²⁶⁹ Faist has suggested that judicial proceedings may have been held in temples or at the temple gates based on references to oaths and procedures in front of statues or symbols of deities.²⁷⁰ The role of priests as witnesses may be explained via the involvement of the temples in the judicial process and by extension also in the acquisition process of slaves and real estate. The other witnesses in texts involving priests are not the usual witnesses of Šulmu-šarri, which may indicate that these texts were drafted outside his usual circles. If conveyance texts or some of them were drafted in the temples, the language choice as Neo-Assyrian may be explained as due to this influence.

Šulmu-šarri's ties to the court, administration and military of Assyria are more strongly represented in his social network: his witnesses frequently feature military personnel, city overseers and people associated with the court. These people are rarely attested with Šulmu-šarri more than once or twice, indicating weaker ties to them. There are a few exceptions to this rule, however: his fellow *ša-qurbūte*, Sagībī and Zārūtī, who serve as witnesses for Šulmu-šarri in three documents each. Additionally, a charioteer called Sa'altī-il is featured in three documents with

²⁶⁵ BATSH 6 45; 53; 69.

²⁶⁶ Tushingham 2019, 41.

²⁶⁷ BATSH 6 41; 45; 66; 95.

²⁶⁸ BATSH 6 66: r.13–15: *ina UGU-hi pi-i ša m*MAŠ-PAP-AŠ *ša m*AMAR-*ha*-AŠ *ša m*10-*ha-ta* A-šú *m*DI-*mu*-LUGAL GÉME *iš-še-eq* Transliteration from Radner 2002, 106.

²⁶⁹ Radner 2002, 107.

²⁷⁰ Faist 2011, 256–257.

Šulmu-šarri, twice as his witness and once as a co-plaintiff with other influential persons in Dūr-katlimmu.²⁷¹ These relationships do not seem to correlate with any patterns of using Aramaic epigraphs, but they are not visible in the Aramaic documents either, although this cannot be said for certain due to the lack of titles in the Aramaic documents.²⁷² The relationships may be more relevant in situations where formality and prestige were required, thus affecting the language choice in favor of Neo-Assyrian.

The personal connections of Šulmu-šarri involve both his inner circle and other, more distant people in his community. The inner circle represents Šulmu-šarri's strong ties: people who would affect his language use and vice versa. These influences may be reciprocal in spoken language, but not necessarily in the textual evidence. In the economic-legal documents, Šulmu-šarri was likely an influential party for his inner circle; due to his elite status, wealth and influence he may have enforced norms for administration within his community at Dūr-Katlimmu, such as the use of Aramaic epigraphs. The weaker ties in Šulmu-šarri's community are represented by people he was scarcely in contact with, and contacts once removed from him; these ties often influence one's language use with innovations and new ideas.²⁷³ The inner circle and strong ties are examined below, followed by the weaker influences.

4.3.3. Šulmu-šarri's social circle

Šulmu-šarri has a consistent set of trusted witnesses, who often appear in his documents within the first five witnesses, both in the alphabetic and cuneiform parts of the dossier. Three of them belong to the same family: the brothers Iddin-ahhē and Šamšia and their father Mannu-kī-Arbail.²⁷⁴ Iddin-ahhē also appears as a buyer and seller in three documents (BATSH 6 117; 118; 184), and as a witness for Šulmu-šarri in at least one document from the Aramaic corpus.²⁷⁵ In the three texts where Iddin-ahhē is a central protagonist, Šulmu-šarri appears as a witness in one (BATSH 6 117); the other two have broken witness lists. Iddin-ahhē's purchases involve land and slaves, and two of the documents include Aramaic epigraphs on

²⁷¹ BATSH 6 8; 64; 71.

²⁷² On the issues of disambiguation between names of individuals in the Akkadian and Aramaic parts of the corpus, see section 7.3.

²⁷³ See chapter 2 on weak ties, social networks and language. Weak social ties function as mediums for new information according to the theory of Granovetter 1973. This concept has been employed in the context of language change by Milroy, who argues that people with extensive social links to different groups can function as an early adopter and a bridge to linguistic change within groups (J. Milroy 1992, 177–205).

²⁷⁴ The inner circle of Šulmu-šarri is clearly visible in the network data. For an illustration of this see section 7.4.

²⁷⁵ In text BATSH 17 D8, he is the second witness, identifiable as the same person based on the other attested witnesses. While the name is attested in other Aramaic documents as well, these attestations cannot be securely connected to this individual.

the left edge of the tablet. He bears no titles in any of the documents, but his purchases imply some degree of wealth. His brother Šamšia is attested only as a witness, and he is identifiable in seven Aramaic documents from the corpus.²⁷⁶

The father of the two, Mannu-kī-Arbail, son of Aširā,²⁷⁷ is attested as a patronym 10 times. He also appears as a witness for Šulmu-šarri nine times, once in one of the documents from the alphabetic corpus (BATSH 17 D8). While none of the family members are given any titles, their family must have been on close terms with Šulmu-šarri to appear as witnesses. As Iddin-ahhē's three documents were also found in the Red House, it is possible that they were also stored there.

Another prominent witness in Šulmu-šarri's circle was Nabû-mār-šarri-ušur, who is only attested in the cuneiform documents. He is a frequent witness in Šulmu-šarri's dossier and is mentioned once as a secondary creditor (BATSH 6 2). The fifth frequent witness of Šulmu-šarri is Nabû-šarru-ušur, son of Adad-abu-ušur. He is also documented selling a slave to Šulmu-šarri and as a field owner adjacent to another field purchased by Šulmu-šarri (BATSH 6 44; 176). While these people who feature as witnesses in Šulmu-šarri's documents are not identified with titles indicating prestigious positions, they are attested in similar businesses as Šulmu-šarri: moneylending and acquiring slaves and real estate. Additionally, some of their documents were found in Šulmu-šarri's estate in the Red House, possibly entrusted for storage by Šulmu-šarri. All this implies that Šulmu-šarri's inner circle consists of individuals in similar monetary positions. The practice of using Aramaic epigraphs also appears in the documents where his inner circle is featured as sellers, demonstrating the normalcy of this practice within his social group.

Šulmu-šarri's inner circle demonstrates that his language choices were not based simply on personal preference but represent wider norms in the archive habits of the Dūr-Katlimmu elite. An example of this is the use of Aramaic archival aids in the dossier of Iddin-ahhē. On the other hand, his dossier was archived in the same place, so consistency in using the same archival habit is expected. Despite the different dossiers and languages utilized in the Red House archive, the archive shows cohesion in language choice by text type and the use of archival aids. Similarly, the attestations of the same group of witnesses (Iddin-ahhē, Šamšia) in both the Aramaic and Neo-Assyrian documents of his dossier show that the transactions behind the documents have similar social settings. This cohesion suggests that language choice is primarily affected by the type of transaction within this social group, not by the people involved.

The weaker links of Šulmu-šarri, such as infrequent contacts or people from distant locations, are more difficult to identify than his frequent witnesses. Some of these have already been discussed above regarding his institutional relationships; many of the occasional witnesses such as trade agents or military personnel may

²⁷⁶ BATSH 17 D7; D8; D10; D31; D36; D1*; D9*.

²⁷⁷ Only attested as Mannu-kī-Arbail's patronym in BATSH 6 45.

have been visitors to Dūr-Katlimmu, thus qualifying as links to other locations in Assyria and beyond. More obvious examples are people identified by their origin, although they are relatively rare. Several people from Hindānu, south of Dūr-Katlimmu, are attested in the corpus, sometimes as witnesses and sometimes as sellers of slaves. Individuals from the cities north-west of Dūr-Katlimmu, such as Til-Barsip and Harrān, appear sporadically as sellers or witnesses.

Additionally, several affiliations with locations named using the *bīt*-PN formula are mentioned in his dossier: Bīt-Aššur-lē'i, Bīt-Binini and Bīt-Sa'ili.²⁷⁸ None of these locations are commonly mentioned in the Assyrian sources, and they seem to refer to smaller settlements in the vicinity of Dūr-Katlimmu. These locations appear in the context of land sales, which attest to Šulmu-šarri's reach (at least monetarily) to the surrounding areas of Dūr-Katlimmu. Only one person from Nineveh appears as a witness in his dossier, another *ša-qurbute* (BATSH 6 47: r. 8–9) The long-distance links of Šulmu-šarri seem to have extended primarily further to the northwestern provinces, and towards Hindānu along the Euphrates.

4.3.4. Conclusions on language choice in the dossier of Šulmu-šarri

While the evidence is biased towards Šulmu-šarri as the archive protagonist, he was likely an influential actor in mediating between the use of Aramaic and Akkadian in Dūr-Katlimmu. His title of *ša-qurbute* positioned him as a mediator between the king and the province, with connections to both the local community of Dūr-Katlimmu and the heart of the Empire. This position is reflected in his use of language: the use of Aramaic in notation of cuneiform tablets, perhaps within the domain of his household, and use of Akkadian on matters requiring a higher level of formality such as acquisitions of people and real estate. Members of his inner circle are also attested in the Aramaic documents, which mostly deal with grain and silver loans. The Aramaic loan documents often list fewer witnesses, which could indicate that this aspect of Šulmu-šarri's economic activity was handled in more private situations than purchases of slaves and real estate. The members of the repeating group of witnesses in both Aramaic and Neo-Assyrian documents are not identified by title, which further suggest their proximity to the archive protagonist Šulmu-šarri.

²⁷⁸ Bīt-Binini and Bīt-Sa'ili clearly refer to locations due to the spelling with the sign URU (BATSH 6 48). Bīt-Aššur-lē'i is not spelled with URU (BATSH 6 71), but as it appears in a witness list where other witnesses are specified by a location, this is possibly also a placename rather than a group name. Radner also tentatively suspects a location mentioned in two texts (BATSH 6 17 and 119), URU.ba-di-a-din-a-a, may be a variant spelling of Bīt-Adīni.

4.3.5. Other dossiers from the Red House

Several documents both in Akkadian and Aramaic found in the Red House are not considered part of Šulmu-šarri's archive, as he appears as neither the creditor, seller, nor plaintiff in any of them. They relate to sales (conveyance texts and judicial documents related to real estate). Several of the cuneiform documents include Aramaic epigraphs; many, but not all, are inked. These inked epigraphs may be additions of later archive holders, such as Šulmu-šarri, if he obtained the sale document as part of the purchased item. Next, I highlight two smaller dossiers found in the Red House, attributed to Barruqu and Rahīmi-il. Both dossiers are connected to Šulmu-šarri and his inner circle.

Barruqu's dossier is worth mentioning, as it is exclusively in Aramaic. It is small, consisting of only three texts (BATSH 17 D19; D2*; D7*). Only one of the texts in this dossier found in the excavations was from room JW of the Red House (BATSH 17 D19). All three texts are silver loans, and Barruqu appears as both the debtor and creditor. They date between 643 and 627, and include persons attested elsewhere in the corpus. In one text, Ah-abû appears as Barruqu's co-debtor – an Aramaic silver loan where he is the debtor was also found in the northeastern corner GF/RB. Rölliġ claims the same Barruqu is also attested as a pledged person in an undated conveyance text (BATSH 6 104), presumably to Šulmu-šarri due to the Iddin-ahhē's presence in the witness list. As the date of the text is not preserved and Barruqu's patronym is not preserved, it is uncertain whether this is the same Barruqu, although it could perhaps explain how his dossier ended up in the Red House.

The dossier of Rahīmi-il is small, but its inclusion in the archive housed in the Red House and clear connections to the dossier of Šulmu-šarri merit the examination of his social status and habits of language choice in his social context. Rahīmi-il was a *bēl narkabti*, which is literally translated as a chariot owner,²⁷⁹ although the function of the title is obscure.²⁸⁰ He is only attested in six tablets and one envelope, dated between 683 and 634. Rölliġ suggests that his name could be reconstructed as the name of the adopter in the Aramaic adoption document of Masamâ, but as only the first letter of the name is preserved, this is speculative.²⁸¹ His dossier slightly predates that of Šulmu-šarri, which provides a glimpse of the earlier language situation. Rahīmi-il's connection to Šulmu-šarri is obvious, as his dossier is part of the Red House texts, and he appears once as a witness for Šulmu-šarri together with his brother Adad-kabti-ilani (BATSH 6 62). Rahīmi-il appears in the texts as a seller (BATSH 6 64), witness (BATSH 6 62), plaintiff (BATSH 6 109;

²⁷⁹ For example in PNA 4(1), "Bēl-narkabti" Baker 2017, 28.

²⁸⁰ Groß argues that the title should be considered separate from the *mār damqi*, "chariot driver", as they appear as separate categories in administrative context and the *bēl narkabti* do not appear as subordinates unlike the *mār damqi* (Groß 2020a, 213–215).

²⁸¹ In BATSH 17 1**, line b 1 šlḫ ṛ¹ x x [x x x x x] m/r t [] translated by Rölliġ as "Es schickte R[ahīmi-il(?)] xx[]" in Rölliġ 2014, 226–228.

110), buyer (BATSH 6 107), and lessor of field (BATSH 6 108); and he owned fields in Rubu, Sibtu, and in Šulmu-belāti. The people Rahīmi-il is attested with belong mostly to Šulmu-šarri's inner circle: Iddin-ahhē, Nabû-mār-šarri-ušur, and Šamšia. In Rahīmi-il's dossier, they only appear together with Šulmu-šarri, and in texts outside of Šulmu-šarri's involvement, there are no other persons who are repeatedly attested with Rahīmi-il.

The cuneiform documents in Rahīmi-il's dossier are conveyance documents (BATSH 6 107; 111), pledges of fields (BATSH 6 108ab), judicial documents (BATSH 6 109ab; 110ab), and one fragment of a witness list (BATSH 6 112). Writing these documents in cuneiform is typical of both Dūr-Katlimmu and the Assyrian empire more widely.

While the lack of Aramaic texts associated with Rahīmi-il limits the analysis of language choice in his dossier, there are two Aramaic epigraphs on the texts in his dossier. One epigraph in his dossier is on the envelope of a judicial document regarding a field he owns in Šulmu-belāti (BATSH 6 109a, dated to 661). The court case is brought by Bēl-šarri-ušur, a *ša-qurbūte*. The epigraph reads as *'gr{x x}t zy 'r' blsr!r'*, "document regarding land of Bēl-šarri-ušur," omitting both the names of the plaintiff and the name of the accused. The epigraph is incised, which suggests that it was written for Rahīmi-il.

Another incised Aramaic epigraph associated with the dossier is on a fragmentary conveyance text (BATSH 111). While Rahīmi-il's name is not preserved in the fragment, it is associated by Radner with the dossier of Rahīmi-il as it was found in the same room as the other texts in his dossier. The Aramaic epigraph on the left edge of the document is badly damaged, but bears traces of the word *zbn*, "to sell, buy," which would be appropriate considering the contents of the cuneiform text.

These two epigraphs are an example of the use of Aramaic epigraphs in the archival process of people other than Šulmu-šarri, as they cannot be later additions like many of the other inked epigraphs found in the Red House and listing buyers and creditors other than Šulmu-šarri. The use of epigraphs was not limited to him, but was normal in his circles.

As exemplified by the two smaller dossiers, the people involved are part of Šulmu-šarri's social circle and followed similar norms of language choice in their economic documents.

This aligns with the general language choice trends both within the corpus of Dūr-Katlimmu and with the bilingual archives from the Neo-Assyrian period at large. As highlighted within Šulmu-šarri's archive and other texts from Dūr-Katlimmu, the few exceptions to the general trend of using Aramaic for loans suggest that the preferred language and writing system was Neo-Assyrian and cuneiform if a pledge was involved. The institutional influences of the temple of Salmānu and the administration are only reflected in the cuneiform corpus, which may suggest that these documents were drafted in a formal setting and sales were

of interest to these institutions. Grain loans, exclusively in Aramaic, may represent a more private domain due to their more concise contents – ‘informal’ only in the sense that they were not necessarily of institutional interest. The prominent use of Aramaic at Dūr-Katlimmu can be attributed to the clearly attested connections with the western parts of the Assyrian empire, which are also more strongly represented in Šulmu-šarri’s archive. The use of Aramaic in the epigraphs of cuneiform tablets seems to correlate with the archive holder, as they do not record the name of the buyer, the presumed archive holder. As is argued below, they seem to be unrelated to the scribe drafting the document.

4.4. Scribes and writing Aramaic in Dūr-Katlimmu

Identifying alphabetic scribes is difficult, because alphabetic documents typically omit the name of the scribe. Neo-Assyrian cuneiform documents are also inconsistent in recording the scribe of the document. The corpus from Dūr-Katlimmu includes interesting evidence on the scribes of alphabetic texts from two perspectives: bilingual literacy of cuneiform scribes and archive holders (section 4.4.1) and employment of alphabetic scribes (4.4.2).

4.4.1. Scribes and Aramaic epigraphs

Only 21 names of cuneiform scribes are preserved in the corpus from Dūr-Katlimmu, six of them incompletely. Four of the scribes each drafted several documents in the corpus (Table 10) which provides an opportunity to study the language choice and particularly the inclusion of Aramaic epigraphs in their documents.

Table 10 Scribes who wrote several texts with Aramaic epigraphs in the Dūr-Katlimmu corpus.

Scribe	Aramaic epigraphs
Gabbu-ilāni-ēreš	BATSH 6 121; 133
Inūrta-...]	BATSH 6 53–54
Salmānu-ahu-iddina	BATSH 6 45; 144
Urdu-Nabû	BATSH 6 37–40

The use of Aramaic epigraphs on cuneiform documents does not correlate with the scribe. The most frequently appearing scribe, Urdu-Nabû, wrote at least four of the cuneiform documents – two of these include Aramaic epigraphs. The incised epigraph on BATSH 6 37 is positioned neatly on the obverse in the same space with the seal impression. On BATSH 6 39 the epigraph is incised on the margins of the tablet, beginning on the reverse and ending at the left edge. In both texts, the buyer of the field is an individual called Adad-aplu-iddina, otherwise unattested in the corpus. Because the two other texts written by Urdu-Nabû, BATSH 6 38 and 40, do

not include Aramaic epigraphs and they both have the same buyer Arrî, it seems more likely that the epigraph was related to the preferences of the person buying the goods and holding on to the tablet.

While the two documents drafted by Gabbu-ilāni-ēreš both include Aramaic epigraphs, this hardly counts as a pattern. Both are sales of property, but BATSH 6 133 is too fragmentary to determine the buyer of the property to confirm whether both would belong to the same dossier. The inconsistency is also apparent in the method and position of the epigraph: the epigraph on BATSH 6 121 is inked; the other one on BATSH 6 133 incised. Thus, the two epigraphs are not necessarily both associated to the scribe Gabbu-ilāni-ēreš, as the inked epigraph may have been added later.

The two epigraphs on the documents written by [...]Inūrta are very likely from the same hand. Both epigraphs are incised, placed on the left edge of conveyance documents (BATSH 6 53; 54) that record transactions between the same two individuals Šulmu-šarri and Nergal-šarru-ušur/'Aṭḥar-šarru-ušur,²⁸² and are dated to the same day, 16-XI-641*. They follow the standard epigraph formula and identify the document by the label, transferred object, and its seller.²⁸³ The other document records the sale of two slaves by Nergal-šarru-ušur/'Aṭḥar-šarru-ušur and his brother (BATSH 6 54), and the additional seller is probably the reason why the transactions were recorded on two tablets instead of one. Due to these circumstances and the standardized and neat form of the epigraphs it is likely that these epigraphs were indeed written by [...]Inūrta.

Of the two documents written by Salmānu-ahu-iddina, one includes two Aramaic archival aids (BATSH 6 45), one incised, one inked. The other document (BATSH 6 144) either never had one or it has broken off. The document bearing Aramaic archival aids is a sale of a slave, sold by Mannu-kī-Salmānu to Šulmu-šarri, dated to 650. The incised epigraph is positioned on the left edge of the tablet and identifies the tablet with the name of the seller (*dnt* . [*mn*] 'gš'l[*m*]n, “document of Mannu-kī-Salmānu”).²⁸⁴ The inked epigraph is placed on the lower edge of the tablet and refers to the document with the term *egirtu* rather than *dannutu* ('*grt* . x x, “document of [...]).²⁸⁵ Although the inked epigraph is too faded to read the rest

²⁸² This name has an unexpected phonetic reading as recorded in the alphabetic script ('*ṭḥrsršr*, 'Aṭḥar-šarru-ušur) compared to the cuneiform spelling (^{md}MAŠ.MAŠ–MAN–PAP). This and other similar cases in the Dūr-Katlimmu corpus are discussed in section 7.3.

²⁸³ BATSH 6 53: a–b: *dnt* 'mtšlmn 'mt 't 'ṭḥrsršr, “Document about Amat-Salmanu, slave (f) of 'Aṭḥar-šarru-ušur, son of Šamaš-ahu-ušur”, transliteration and translation (adapted from German to English) from Radner 2002, 88. BATSH 6 54: a–c: *dnt* 'lyhb w'm[n]š:l'm' x 'b[dy] 'ṭḥrsršr wšlmn' 'h'[šr] b[ny] [ss]h[(x)'šr], “Document about El-yahab and Mannu-šallim, ... Sl[aves of] 'Aṭḥar-šarru-ušur and Salmanu-ab[u-ušur], son[s of Šamaš]-ahu-[u]šur,” transliteration and translation (adapted from German to English) from Radner 2002, 90.

²⁸⁴ Transliteration and translation (translated from German) from Röllig in Radner 2002, 78.

²⁸⁵ Transliteration and translation (translated from German) from Röllig in Radner 2002, 78.

of the inscription, the alternating use of *egirtu* and *dannutu* in reference to a single text implies that the terms were interchangeable²⁸⁶ and possibly that the epigraphs were written by different persons, as the different methods suggest. A parallel to this double epigraph can be found in the same corpus: in BATSH 6 43, an incised epigraph on the seal space continuing to the right edge reads *dnt . 'bdh . zy . gnt'*, “document of Ubda’ regarding a garden,” and the inked one begins *dnt 'bdh mš[...]*, “document of Ubda’”²⁸⁷ Here, too, the inked epigraph seems to differ from the contents of the incised epigraph, although the ink is too faded to determine how.

The inconsistencies in the method of applying Aramaic epigraphs and the lack of correlation between scribes and the epigraphs suggests that these additions to the cuneiform text were not directly related to the scribes but rather to the person holding on to the text. While the incised Aramaic epigraphs may well be added by the scribe writing the texts, they were possibly added when requested, not as a standard part of the conveyance texts. Their semi-regular content suggests that there was a norm for formulating the epigraphs: specifying the transferred goods and possibly the seller were easy identifiers for the buyer holding on to the tablet. However, the epigraphs were written wherever space was available: sourcing a document based on the label alone would make it difficult from storage on a shelf if the label was not clearly visible on the edge of the tablet. Fales has suggested that due to the occasional placement of the epigraphs in the space reserved for seal impressions or in the opposing area on the reverse between witnesses and date, these epigraphs would “function as elements of legal notarization or ‘endorsement’”.²⁸⁸ Due to the issues of random placement of the epigraphs and the occasional double epigraphs, this purpose seems unlikely.

What does an inked epigraph as a later addition imply about the writer of the epigraph? Could they have been written by non-scribes? If their purpose is to aid the archive holder in sourcing the correct tablet, alphabetic literacy is already necessary for their function. As officials of the Assyrian state could receive at least some level of scribal training in cuneiform,²⁸⁹ writing alphabetic script was not outside their abilities.²⁹⁰

On the other hand, many epigraphs on documents found at Nineveh, all incised, suggest that they were written by scribes from the northwestern regions of the empire, because they do not align with any specific dossier.²⁹¹ Some of the epigraphs

²⁸⁶ As has already been suggested in the context of Dür-Katlimmu in Fales et al. 2005, 611–612.

²⁸⁷ Transliteration and translation (translated from German) from Röllig in Radner 2002, 75.

²⁸⁸ Fales et al. 2005, 613.

²⁸⁹ As argued by Parpola based on a letter written by an Assyrian government official requesting a scribe be sent to him (SAA 15: 17), in Parpola 1997.

²⁹⁰ As the Assur Ostrakon (discussed in section 8.1.1.) suggests, some of the correspondence between the Assyrian elite was likely exchanged in Aramaic. This letter could have been drafted by a professional scribe rather than the sender Bēl-ētir himself.

²⁹¹ See epigraphs on documents from Nineveh in section 6.5.

from the Burmarina corpus were written in ink with a brush while the clay was still wet, as suggested by lightly imprinted traces on some of the tablets.²⁹²

The most likely scenario in the light of this evidence is that the incised epigraphs were written when the transaction was initiated, and the inked when the tablet was reused in transferring ownership of the object attached to the document, such as a field, house or a slave. While it is possible that a scribe was present to create a new epigraph, especially if the transaction was somehow policed by institutions, this would not be the only option. The archive holder should be able to write and Aramaic epigraph on his own, as the archival aid would serve no purpose if the archive holder was not literate in the alphabetic script. A further implication of this reasoning is that if incised archival aids were added by a scribes, they were obviously literate in both writing systems.

4.4.2. Scribes writing Aramaic documents

Loan documents, which at Dūr-Katlimmu are primarily written in Aramaic, do not explicitly state the scribe – with one exception. The exception to this is the unprovenanced text BATSH 17 D8*.²⁹³ The text is a loan of silver between the debtor Paṭṭuṭu (*ptṭ*) and the creditor Šulmu-šarri, a triangular incised docket with two other recorded witnesses, with the scribe Raṣunî included as the third and final witness.²⁹⁴ Raṣunî is not attested in other texts from Dūr-Katlimmu.

Postgate suggested that scribes are recorded among the final witnesses in Neo-Assyrian cuneiform legal documents,²⁹⁵ but often the scribe is not specified even in the cuneiform documents. Due to the explicit use of *spr* (scribe) and the position of Raṣunî as the final witness, this is the only reliable example of a scribe recorded in the Aramaic texts from Dūr-Katlimmu. Identifying scribes based on their position in the witness list of the Aramaic documents has proven unsuccessful. Only seven individuals are attested as repeated witnesses. They appear in different positions within the witness lists – no one appears more than once as the last witness.

In the rest of the Dūr-Katlimmu corpus, the term *spr* appears in one another instance: on an inked Aramaic inscription written on a fragment of a container from either the sixth or fifth century (BATSH 17 25**). The inscription lists amounts of wheat for different individuals, the first of whom is Nabû-kēnu-balliṭ: *l'nb¹wknblṭ spr*, “for Nabû-kēnu-balliṭ, the scribe.”²⁹⁶ Nabû-kēnu-balliṭ is not attested in other texts from Dūr-Katlimmu. Due to his position in the list and the preposition *l* he is simply listed here as an individual receiving grain like the other listed individuals,

²⁹² For example, in *Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 23. See also the discussion in section 8.2.3.

²⁹³ This text belongs to a private collection and has been published in Geller & Kwasman 2003.

²⁹⁴ BATSH 17 D8*: 9: *ršny spr* ‘Raṣunî, the scribe.’ Transliteration and translation (translated from German) from Röllig 2014, 222.

²⁹⁵ Postgate 1976, 10.

²⁹⁶ Transliteration and translation (translated from German) from Röllig 2014, 258.

rather than the scribe of the inscription itself. Nevertheless, these texts both attest to the use of *spr* for scribe at Dūr-Katlimmu, rare as it may be.

Why would the scribe of Aramaic documents be omitted? Is this an indicator that the dockets were simply shortened versions of a papyrus or a parchment they were attached to – perhaps omitting the scribe to spare space? This seems unlikely: if we imagine envelopes of cuneiform tablets functioning similarly to Aramaic dockets, sealing a document until further use, two examples of envelopes from Dūr-Katlimmu attest that the scribe was included in the inscription on the envelope.²⁹⁷ Leaving out the scribe is much too standard for Aramaic dockets to be an accidental omission. However, this does not mean that there were no alphabetic scribes at all, or that the Aramaic documents were drafted by people without scribal training. In addition to the abovementioned scribe Raṣunī, other indirect evidence from Dūr-Katlimmu points towards the practice (and possibly training) of alphabetic scribes in the area – which I address below.

The ostraca from Dūr-Katlimmu include two illegible Aramaic texts, inked by an insecure and untrained hand.²⁹⁸ Both were found in the Red House, and although they cannot be securely dated based on their sign forms, some of the other inscribed ostraca from the Red House date to the late seventh and early sixth century.²⁹⁹ These texts are compilations of random signs, not written words. Röllig suggests that these are likely to be either scribal exercises, examples of training the alphabetic script, or “scrap sherds” used by scribes to test their writing instrument – either way, they are evidence of developed scribal practices at Dūr-Katlimmu.³⁰⁰ The ostrakon BATSH 17 6** has letter-like forms, only a few of them recognizable as any characters. However, to me the sequence of four signs on the sherd BATSH 17 7**, if read diagonally from the upper right corner, could be read as a sequence of *'bgd*. This alphabetic sequence is already known from the early history of alphabetic writing and is broadly attested.³⁰¹ While the appearance of this sequence does not necessarily make the ostrakon BATSH 17 7** a writing exercise, it demonstrates how embedded the sequence is in the scribe’s mind; even if he was simply testing a writing instrument, the sequence functions as a test, a placeholder for real words. The use of this sequence hints that the alphabetic scribes of the Neo-Assyrian period were trained with similar writing exercises known from the tradition of alphabetic writing.

These two sherds from Dūr-Katlimmu are the only known potential examples of training alphabetic writing from the Neo-Assyrian period – which is remarkable because hardly anything is known of the schooling of alphabetic scribes. But would these ostraca be examples of scribal training, something expected of a person who

²⁹⁷ BATSH 6 109a and 110a.

²⁹⁸ BATSH 17 6** and 7**.

²⁹⁹ BATSH 17 11*, and ostraca from the northeastern corner 21**–22**.

³⁰⁰ Röllig 2014, 238–9.

³⁰¹ On the spread of the alphabetic scripts, see Lemaire 2008.

would be writing for their trade, or examples of learning to write in a more “general education” context, much as in the modern day? These sherds may demonstrate a person learning *to write*, not necessarily to work as a scribe, a profession which includes much more than literacy. Cuneiform scribes were trained with knowledge of different text types, formulas of legal documents, scientific tradition, divination, and much more. While Aramaic scribes could have had similar training, the evidence for this is still lacking.³⁰²

Certain features of alphabetic writing present at Dūr-Katlimmu and other sites suggest that there were both standardized and localized aspects of alphabetic scribal education. One of these is related to the styles of Aramaic script identified by Rölliġ within Dūr-Katlimmu:

1. Fine type: written with a small and pointed stylus, using dots as word separators,
2. Mixed type: written with both small and bold strokes. Rölliġ notes that the text would have been initially written with a broader hand, but smaller lettering was used to save space – which would explain the mixture of broader and finer script on the two sides of dockets,
3. Broad type: Deeply incised and thicker towards the end of the stroke.³⁰³

The reasons Rölliġ suggests for the variation between types are the quality of the clay and the writing instrument, the skill level of the scribe and at which stage of the writing process Aramaic was added. The use of punctuation marks in the finer script type is attested in other archives as well, and this may be related to the transmission of alphabetic writing tradition among alphabetic scribes. While the script types cannot be associated with an individual scribe, they may relate to scribal training within Dūr-Katlimmu. Due to the regional variation in cuneiform sale documents from Assyria, Tushingham has suggested the possibility of apprenticeships in relation to the Neo-Assyrian cuneiform scribes.³⁰⁴ She suggests that “Perhaps one may imagine a two-part process of transmission from the capital to the administration of that particular location and then from the local administration to the scribes active in that area.” A similar process could be imagined for the transmission of schooling for the alphabetic scribes, which would explain both the uniformity of the Neo-Assyrian Aramaic legal corpus and regional variation within it. In an apprenticeship, drafting documents may also have been a part of the schooling, leading to different levels of scribal hand mastery.

Rölliġ has shown that the alphabetic scribes followed certain orthographic standards for spelling Assyrian names, adapting the alphabetic script to account for long vowels using *matres lectionis*.³⁰⁵ For example, the eponym Ša-Nabû-šū is

³⁰² See section 1.3 on the roles of Aramaic scribes in the Neo-Assyrian period.

³⁰³ Rölliġ 2014, 17–18.

³⁰⁴ Tushingham 2019, 47.

³⁰⁵ Rölliġ 2014, 15–16.

spelled *šnbšw*, where the *waw* stands for the final long vowel -ū. He argues that these writing conventions, consistent grammar and terminology suggest that the alphabetic scribes received uniform training like cuneiform scribes did. While the omission of scribes could mean that literacy in Aramaic may have been accessible to non-scribes, the significant consistency of alphabetic texts in Aramaic across Assyria suggests that alphabetic scribes were trained according to a standard.³⁰⁶ The format of Aramaic epigraphs on cuneiform tablets is also very uniform, specifically as the labels *dnt* and *'grt* are rarely omitted. These similarities point towards shared standards across Assyria, which would have been enforced in scribal training. Finally, the explicit mention of the scribe Raṣunî suggests that there was an alphabetic scribe present, and he was unlikely to be the only one. In the larger military and administrative centers like Dūr-Katlimmu, uniformity within the Aramaic corpus is higher.

Aramaic is involved in several stages of the archival process at Dūr-Katlimmu. In the first stage of the transaction, the decision to draft the document in either Aramaic or Neo-Assyrian is made. This choice is dependent on the type of transaction, most often loans of barley and silver. The language choice is also a choice of medium. The use of triangular dockets, even when they are inscribed in cuneiform, implies that the document was originally written both in Akkadian (on the triangular clay docket) and in Aramaic (on a scroll the docket was presumably attached to.)

When cuneiform is chosen as the language of the transaction, Aramaic is still often involved in the form of an archival aid. Archival aids are only useful if the archive holder or handler of the documents is proficient in alphabetic script. Thus, the writer of inked alphabetic epigraphs, especially when a document bears both an incised and an inked epigraph, is often likely the archive holder. Incised epigraphs could also be written by archive holders when the clay tablet was still wet, but their regular terminology and format across the Assyrian text evidence implies that this convention was taught and practiced by scribes.

The use of Aramaic archival aids shows that in the following stages of organizing and utilizing archives Aramaic was seen as a more convenient language, or perhaps rather that the alphabetic script was more convenient. Another indicator of convenience is documents of short-term storage, such as loan documents of silver and barley which would typically be paid back within a year, would have to be retrieved and read more often than documents proving ownership of slaves and houses.

³⁰⁶ Comparison between the material from the Assyrian heartland and the provincial locations is dealt with in chapter 8.

4.5. Conclusions on the use of Aramaic in Dūr-Katlimmu archives

To review the social context of language choice in the archival processes of Dūr-Katlimmu and particularly the archive of Šulmu-šarri, I return to the question of *who writes what language to whom and when?* The writers of the Aramaic documents in Dūr-Katlimmu are certainly trained scribes – perhaps scribes of varying skill and ability – but the level of standardization suggests trained scribes. The record of the alphabetic scribe is additional evidence of the presence of this professional group (BATHS 17 D8*: 9). Both the alphabetic and cuneiform scribes at Dūr-Katlimmu use unique loan formulas which deviate consistently, but not dramatically, from the expected norm in the seventh century. The seal identification, *htm* (“seal”), used in the Aramaic documents from Dūr-Katlimmu is rarely attested elsewhere and is very characteristic of this location. Similarly, the cuneiform scribes wrote the seal identification sometimes both above and below the seal impression and modified the penalty clauses to local customs.³⁰⁷ These influences suggest at least partially localized training,³⁰⁸ but perhaps according to some empire-wide standard.

As already hinted at above, Aramaic is utilized in all stages of the archival process in Dūr-Katlimmu. Aramaic documents are produced, and even when a document is written in cuneiform, it is often accompanied by an Aramaic archival aid. These archival aids may also be added when a document is repurposed and transferred as part of a transaction. Some of the Aramaic epigraphs on clay tablets were not necessarily written by scribes but perhaps by the archive holder when a sale document was passed onto the next buyer of the sold object.

Regarding the question of *what language*, documents from Šulmu-šarri's archive have an exceptionally high number of Aramaic epigraphs and Aramaic monolinguals. Both types are also attested in dossiers associated with other central protagonists. Šulmu-šarri's loan documents are almost exclusively written in Aramaic, while documents of long-term value (sale documents and loans with pledges) are written in Neo-Assyrian. The same pattern aligns with most documents in the Red House archive.

The work processes Aramaic was involved in are determined by the transactions behind the documents. Language choice at Dūr-Katlimmu is divided between loans in Aramaic/alphabetic and conveyance documents written in Akkadian/cuneiform. Aramaic is thus particularly prevalent in the more mundane transactions which can be handled within the private domain, but high-value documents requiring durability and, in cases of conflict, authority, were written in Akkadian. The

³⁰⁷ Radner 2002, 20.

³⁰⁸ As argued by Tushingham 2019.

exceptions to this rule reveal that loans were documented in cuneiform especially if pledges of real estate were included in the transaction. As already noted by Radner, the durability of clay tablets over leather scrolls was probably recognized already in the ancient world; hence documenting the acquisition of valuables like fields and houses in cuneiform on clay would have been more secure for long-term storage.³⁰⁹ But as is clear from the number of incised Aramaic dockets, writing alphabetic script on clay was not out of the question. The choice of writing in cuneiform may therefore relate to other social or institutional dynamics at play. The involvement of temples could have been as practical as employing cuneiform scribes who were able to draft the sale documents, and their involvement in purchases of land could be part of the strategy to be involved in the local community and maintain power and influence.

The *whom*, the intended audience of the text, is primarily the archive holder and user, particularly with Aramaic epigraphs. But even in the context of private archives the institutional context may play a role, as these archival practices do not exist in a vacuum. The state could function as another institutional influence on the language choice; as Dūr-Katlimmu was a central point between the Assyrian heartland and the provinces, administrative scribes were likely posted on site to handle the affairs of officials. Perhaps monitoring sales of real estate in cuneiform was also in the interests of the Assyrian state, as has been suggested regarding the Harran census list and the storage of legal documents in Nineveh regarding purchases of land in the western areas of the empire,³¹⁰ many of which are copies instead of the original documents.³¹¹ Šulmu-šarri, an official of the state and a very wealthy one, would fit the profile of persons of financial interest to the state. Even though Aramaic administrative scribes were employed by the Assyrian state,³¹² the cuneiform tradition was kept up by institutions such as the temple and the imperial administration. The documentation of sales in cuneiform could have been regarded as more formal by the state. In comparison, documenting loans in alphabetic script reflects a more private domain of economics; the loans are usually lower in value and include fewer and less formalized clauses and fewer witnesses. Moneylending was probably practiced outside institutional supervision, and the exceptions of writing loan documents in cuneiform was likely tied to either the wishes of the creditor or the involvement of a valuable pledge. The continuation of the use of the Assyrian formula even after the fall of Nineveh reflects the high involvement of the state until the end of the empire.

Despite the different domains and the language choice, the cuneiform and alphabetic parts of the corpus are clearly tied to each other by the people involved.

³⁰⁹ Radner 2011, 397.

³¹⁰ Kwasman & Parpola 1991, xx–xxi; Fales 2003, 225.

³¹¹ Radner 1997, 40.

³¹² As discussed in section 1.3 regarding the role and function of alphabetic scribes.

Šulmu-šarri is not the only one in Dūr-Katlimmu conforming to the norm of using Aramaic for loans and cuneiform for sales: this is a norm within the community.

5 The Ma'allānāte archive

5.1. Introduction

The Ma'allānāte archive is an unprovenanced text collection from an unknown location, called Ma'lānā (*m'lnh*) in the alphabetic inscriptions and Ma'allānāte in cuneiform (for example in ACP 11: 5: URU.ma-'a-la-na-te). The majority of the texts were purchased on the antiquities market by the Royal Museum of Arts and History of Brussels in 1972. The exact date of acquisition is not available, and the collection was made known by Edward Lipiński at the 29th Congress of Orientalists in Paris, July 1973. Several texts from private collections have been connected to the archive based on their contents. The Aramaic texts from the Brussels collection were published in 2010 by Lipiński in *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics III: Ma'lānā* and the cuneiform texts in 2018 by Denyse Homès-Fredericq and Paul Garelli in *Ma'allānāte, archives d'un centre provincial de l'empire assyrien* (ACP). One tablet from a private collection, three from the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem, one from the Kayseri Archaeological Museum, and one from the Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan were published before the publication of the Brussels collection. In addition to the 71 documents included in the volume, two tablets from the Lands of the Bible Archaeology Foundation and two tablets from the private Schøyen collection have been suggested in the Oracc ATAE-subproject to belong to the same archive.³¹³ These four documents are not included in the analysis below, because they do not have clear onomastic connections to the rest of the archive. I use the ACP numbers given in the volume by Homès-Fredericq and Garelli to refer to both the Aramaic texts (only referred to by Lipiński by the museum numbers) and the texts from private collections published before the Brussels collection.

The archive represents administration in a small provincial Assyrian location otherwise unattested in the cuneiform corpus. Homès-Fredericq and Garelli place this in the Upper Khabur valley.³¹⁴ While Lipiński suggested that the title *šaknu ša ēkalli* (LÚ.GAR-*nu ša É.GAL*, “palace prefect”) borne by the first archive holder, and the contents of the administrative documents and the presence of palatial personnel as witnesses imply the presence of a royal palace in Ma'allānāte,³¹⁵ this does not seem likely. Rather, the documentation from Ma'allānāte indicates it to be

³¹³ The texts ACP 72–73 in the Oracc ATAE Ma'allānāte subproject (<http://oracc.org/atae/mallanate/> accessed Sep 2025) are published in Grayson, A. Kirk 1991. The texts Schøyen 47 and 50 are suggested by Radner to come from Ma'allānāte based on some of the personal names in George et al. 2017, 78–79, 82–84. As none of these texts have clear onomastic connections to the three protagonists in the Ma'allānāte archive, and they are unprovenanced, I chose not to include them in this analysis.

³¹⁴ See the discussion of other alternatives in Homès-Fredericq and Garelli 2018, 28–29.

³¹⁵ Lipiński 2010, 8.

a rural location characterized by farm land, and the archive depicts the economic activities of a *šaknu* managing a royal estate and reporting to the royal administration.³¹⁶ The title *šaknu ša ēkalli* is also attested at Marqasu, as the title of two witnesses, Ahu-lamar and Arba'ilu, in a sale of slaves dated to 641*.³¹⁷ As the only other known *šaknu ša ēkalli* far from the heartland of Assyria, an Assyrian royal palace based on this title seems improbable. According to Groß, the word “palace” in this regard can refer to the royal household as an administrative entity rather than the literal palace.³¹⁸ The presence of servants of the royal family in Ma'allānāte implies maintained connections to the royal household.

Despite the rarity of the title *šaknu ša ēkalli* and the ambiguity of the responsibilities of *šaknus* in general, some suggestions on their administrative duties can be made based on the evidence from Ma'allānāte and the attestations of *šaknus* elsewhere. *Šaknu* may also refer to a provincial governor (also *pahūtu*) when combined with the ruled territory, *šakin* + X, e.g., *šakin Guzana*, “governor of Guzana.” On its own, *šaknu* refers to the lower administrative position translated as “prefect.”³¹⁹ Postgate has posited that military functionaries defined as “of the palace” belong to the royal cohort of the *rab ša-rēši*.³²⁰ Considering the palace prefects who did not serve in the royal cohort, Groß has contested this idea.³²¹ *Šaknus* are also mentioned in litigation clauses as possibly claimants for property, much like governors and *hazannus*.³²² The inclusion of a possessive suffix at the end of *šaknu* (*šaknušu*[/*nu*], “his/their *šaknu*”) in litigation clauses and letters shows that *šaknus* had some people directly under their authority.³²³ *Šaknus* also appear often as witnesses of sales, which Simonetta Ponchia and Giovanni Lanfranchi suggest may be “probably also because in this way he acknowledges its content and shows *nihil obstat* on his part.”³²⁴ A *šaknu* is someone below a governor, and the definition of *ša ēkalli* implies that he was affiliated with the administration of the royal household; perhaps used as a categorization to distinguish that he responds directly to the crown rather than the provincial government. They seem to appear as mediators between the people and higher administrators both in managing military troops and judicial cases.³²⁵

The archive does, however, include a mixture of documents of both private and institutional economic interest. In the private domain, the archive holders record

³¹⁶ Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 30; Fales 2013b.

³¹⁷ *Marqasu* 8: r. 23–24.

³¹⁸ Groß 2020a, 7.

³¹⁹ Postgate 1980, 69.

³²⁰ Postgate 2007, 19.

³²¹ Groß 2020a, 204–205.

³²² Postgate 1976, 19.

³²³ Postgate 1980, 67.

³²⁴ Ponchia et al. 2024, 423.

³²⁵ On the military management role of the *šaknu* in particular, see Postgate 1980.

loans and purchases of land and people, and in the institutional domain administrative documents recording grain deliveries and responsibilities related to the military. The military presence in or near Ma'allānāte is also visible in the witness lists, frequented by military personnel such as charioteers. Loans from the "first fruits" of Adad and Ištar (which appear in the two later generations of the archive), may lie somewhere in between personal and institutional documents.

Despite the institutional connections, the archive is structured like a private archive, including judicial documents, conveyance texts and personal loans. The first two generations of archive holders, Handī and Harrānāiu, are father and son, both *šaknus*. The third generation is characterized by the archive holder Sēr-nūrī, whose relation to the previous archive holders is uncertain.³²⁶ The administrative documents among the private documents may relate to the management of the estate, but not much about their duties is revealed through the records. As a hypothesis, it may be suggested that the administration related to the management of the estate and the personal records were stored together in the same archive.

The archive includes not only documents in Aramaic and Neo-Assyrian, but also three Neo-Babylonian texts. Homès-Fredericq and Garelli suggest that these are related to deportations from southern Babylonia.³²⁷ The use of Aramaic in the Jazirah is to be expected, but the choices of to use that language, sometimes even in an institutional context, differ from the use of Aramaic in a clearly private economic domain at Dūr-Katlimmu. The archive of Ma'allānāte provides an interesting outlook on the penetration of West Semitic influence into the management of Assyrian institutions in the Jazirah. From a temporal perspective, the clearly divided generations of the archive demonstrate how the language situation and appropriateness of using Aramaic change between generations and persons.

The social setting of Ma'allānāte is defined by agricultural production and the Assyrian system of deportation. Homès-Fredericq and Garelli identify four categories among the attested people: Assyrian administration, Aramean local population, Aramean deportees from southern Babylonia, and deportees from other ethnic groups.³²⁸ While the number of West Semitic names in the corpus has been linked to the deportees and local population,³²⁹ distinguishing the "Assyrians" and "others" based on this criterion is not a valid means.³³⁰ As can already be seen from the names of the Assyrian administrators (Handī, WS; Sēr-nūrī, WS), the West Semitic influence in the onomasticon of 7th century Assyria is so widely spread that it cannot be used alone as a distinguishing marker to recognize non-Assyrians.

³²⁶ Sēr-nūrī's relationship to the previous generations is discussed further in sections 5.3.3 and 7.3.

³²⁷ Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 35.

³²⁸ Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 36.

³²⁹ See, for example, the study by Ponchia 2021, 118.

³³⁰ Fales 2017; Fales 2019b.

5.2. Description of the archive

The archive is divided among three generations: Handî, Harrānaiu and Sēr-nūrî. The first generation of documents, dated between 700 and 665, is characterized by the archive holder Handî, the *šaknu ša ēkalli*. The next generation (661–649) includes documents from Harrānāiu, *šaknu*, and his two sons, Harmāku and Sīn-nammir. The third generation (652–622*), which overlaps temporally with Harrānāiu, includes documents related to Sēr-nūrî's transactions. The three generations of archive holders and their archival practices as they relate to language choice are examined in section 5.3. The clear division between three generations offers an opportunity to observe the administrative habits transfer and change between generations. These habits in relation to language choice are observed below in relation to the social domain of institutional interest, genre divide, and external influences from the rest of the Assyrian empire.

Table 11 Number of text types from the Ma'allānāte archive in Akkadian or Aramaic.³³¹

	Akkadian	Aramaic
Loan of silver	6	6
Loan of barley	4	4
Loan of wheat	0	1
Loan of straw	0	3
Loan of donkeys	0	1
Loan of sheep and silver	0	1
Pledge	2	1
Sale of person	11	0
Sale of real estate	6	0
Judicial document	8	0
Letter	1	1
Receipt	2	2
Account of grain	3	0
Release of slave	1	0
Exchange of land	1	0
Contract of service	0	1
Contract		1

³³¹ ACP 70 is a join to ACP 20 and thus not counted as a separate entry.

	Akkadian	Aramaic
Delivery of straw	0	1
Uncertain	1	1
Total	46	24

The Aramaic documents from the archive are more diversified than those from Dūr-Katlimmu, but the division between conveyance documents in Akkadian and loans in Aramaic remains. Sales of slaves and real estate are exclusively documented in Akkadian. The judicial documents are also written in cuneiform rather than alphabetic script.³³² One sale of barley is recorded in Aramaic (ACP 45), which states that 20 shekels of silver were paid from a total of 35 shekels. The amount of barley is not stated. Lipiński concludes correctly that this is rather a receipt of a partial payment rather than a conveyance document.³³³

5.2.1. Loans in the Ma'allānāte archive

As Aramaic is particularly used for loans, they are the best represented case of Aramaic legal documents. Therefore, their formulation and characteristics between sites can be best compared. As loan documents or debt notes could be used for describing other transactions other than true loans as well, some discussion of their form and differences is necessary.

Table 12 Formulas of the Aramaic loans, table following the description given by Lipiński 2010, 256–257.

Grain type I	Grain type II	Silver
1. Object owed	1. Object owed	1. Object
2. Creditor (<i>l</i>)	2. Creditor (<i>zy</i>)	2. Amount
3. Debtor	3. Debtor	3. Creditor
4. Interest	4. Interest	4. Debtor (<i>qdm</i>)
		5. Interest

³³² While Lipiński (2010, 28–48) has categorized ACP 42 as a judicial document, I have categorized this document under silver loans following Fales (2000, 112–113). See the discussion of this in section 5.3.1.3.

³³³ *š'rn šlm . nb 'hđn . 'yr ksp. lḥdy 20 . byrḥ smn . l'm mngsr mn . qsh ksp . hwy zy . šqln 15 š'rn* [š]hd 'šrn wddnry w'dqr, “Nabû-ahhē-iddina has paid the barley. He transferred 20 (shekels of) silver to Handî in the month of Siwān, (of the) eponym Mannu-kī-šarri. From the total of the sum what we have weighed; 15 (shekels) are remaining. Witness: Iššaran, Dādi-nūri, Adqar.” Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 63.

Grain type I	Grain type II	Silver
5. Possible guarantors	5. Possible guarantors	6. Witnesses
6. Date	6. Date	7. Date
7. Witnesses	7. Witnesses	
8. Additional clauses	8. Additional clauses	

The loan documents from Ma'allānāte, while sealed, do not identify who the seal belongs to with the seal identifying phrase *htm* PN. The variation between the prepositions *l* and *zy* to introduce the creditor as identified by Röllig in the Dūr-Katlimmu documents also happens in the Ma'allānāte archive.³³⁴ The formula shows more variety at Ma'allānāte: the debtor can be introduced either with the preposition *l* ("debited to") or *l* ("for"), or *qdm* ("before, in front of"). Additional variation is brought out by the loans of silver from the first fruits of temples, where the owner of the silver is specified separately from the person doing the borrowing: for example in ACP 56: 1–3: *ksp rsh . lhdd/ zy ntn . šhrnwry/ 'l . 'mnn*, "silver, "first-fruits" belonging to Hadad, that Sēr-nūrī gave to Amnān."³³⁵ The order of date and witnesses can vary, and they can be followed by additional information. For example, in ACP 56: 12–13 after the witnesses the text includes information about the place of the transaction: *ksp ntn/ b'py*, "He gave the silver at Appaya."³³⁶ Lipiński states that a true loan is reflected by this formula: goods, owner, debited to or have been given to, obligation of repayment and interest.³³⁷ According to him, loans that appear interest-free may be "receipts formulated from the point of view of the payer," or included in the total sum given in the document.³³⁸

Loans of silver and barley are recorded in both Akkadian and Aramaic. Other types of loans, including loans of straw, wheat, and livestock are also recorded in Aramaic.

In some of the Aramaic loans, a guarantor clause is added. This is phrased with the formula PN *mḥ' yd*, "PN struck the hand."³³⁹ This clause is a direct but concise parallel to the Neo-Assyrian guarantor clause *qatāte ša* PN1 (debtor) PN2 (guarantor) *isse qatāte* PN3 (creditor) *ittahaša*.³⁴⁰ The guarantor is a separate person from the creditor and debtor.

³³⁴ See 4.2.2 for the loan formula utilized at Dūr-Katlimmu.

³³⁵ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 154.

³³⁶ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 155.

³³⁷ Lipiński 2010, 256.

³³⁸ Lipiński 2010, 257.

³³⁹ Lipiński 1998, 293.

³⁴⁰ Lipiński 2010, 75.

The Ma'allānāte archive includes one pledge of land in Aramaic (ACP 64). This document is discussed further in section 5.3.3.2. In this document, land in the amount of three homers is pledged against three shekels of silver.

The document begins with the term *rhn*, “pledge, mortgage,” and a description of the property, follows with the creditor and debtor, the amount of silver given in exchange, and the date of the transaction. Afterwards, further details on the location of the property are given by a short description of the surrounding land, followed by witnesses. The date of repayment is not given. The format mirrors Neo-Assyrian housing documents with the added detail of neighboring properties, but seal identification is again not given.

Three Aramaic documents cannot be attributed by name to any of the main archive protagonists, and may be related to loans from institutions. Two of these are loans. The first is a silver loan taken by Sēr-nūrī from the first fruits of Hadad (ACP 58). It does not mention the creditor, but Lipiński suggests the creditor could be the Busay mentioned in another loan from the first fruits of Hadad (ACP 63). Sēr-nūrī's loans from the first-fruits are discussed in more detail below in section 5.3.3.2. The second loan document omitting the creditor is the loan of barley to Rapān and Šayir discussed above, where Handī acts as a guarantor (ACP 47). Handī's position as *šaknu ša ēkalli* could mean that this loan was given not from his personal possessions, but from the granary of whatever administrative center he governed and had access to, while he acts as the guarantor as a private person. The third document which possibly relates to institutional rather than private economy is a delivery of straw (ACP 48). The buyer of the straw is not recorded, and while the amount of straw is not mentioned, its price of 5 minas of silver indicates that the amount was high. These three examples may indicate that Aramaic was also used in the administration of the temples or administrative offices in Ma'allānāte.

Additionally, there are three undated texts, two of which are written in Neo-Assyrian (ACP 40–41) and one uninscribed tablet (ACP 65). One of them is an administrative document recording the delivery of grain with an Aramaic epigraph *mn 'rd nny/lkny*, “From the slave Nanaya, of Kunāia.”³⁴¹ While the document cannot be associated directly with any archive generation, Harrānāiu may be the most likely one because Aramaic epigraphs otherwise appear only on documents dated to the dossier of him and his sons.

³⁴¹ Transliteration and translation adapted from Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 104–105.

5.3. Main protagonists

5.3.1. Handî (activity 700–665)

Handî is the earliest central figure in the Ma'allānāte archive. He bears the title *šaknu ša ēkalli*, “prefect of the palace.” A total of 21 texts can be attributed to Handî’s dossier based on his actions as the creditor, buyer, or recipient of a letter. An additional three texts are considered part of his dossier based on the dating or recurring witnesses.³⁴²

Table 13 Distribution of text types between Akkadian and Aramaic in documents of Handî’s generation.

	Akkadian	Aramaic
Sale of a person	8	0
Sale of real estate	3	0
Release of a slave	1	0
Loan of silver	3	2
Loan of barley	0	1
Loan of donkeys	0	1
Receipt	0	2
Letter	1	0
Exchange of real estate	1	0
Delivery of straw	0	1

The texts where he acts as the main protagonists are examined first. As can be seen from Table 13 above, his sales of land and slaves are recorded in Akkadian. As mentioned above in section 5.2, the sale of barley is rather a receipt of a transaction rather than a sale.

Handî’s loan documents are written in three scripts, and interestingly, all three silver loans in Handî’s dossier are written in different dialects or languages: one in Neo-Assyrian, one in Neo-Babylonian, one in Aramaic. The documents in different languages present in Handî’s dossier are treated separately in sections 5.3.1.1–.3 below, with notes on how the subject matter relates to the language choice.

5.3.1.1. The Neo-Babylonian documents

The three Neo-Babylonian documents in Handî’s dossier are a loan of silver (ACP 15), a release of a slave (ACP 9), and letter (ACP 18). Garelli and Homès-Fredericq

³⁴² Following the chronology as outlined in Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 22–24.

suggest that Neo-Babylonian relates to the Gambulean deportees in the area, a group deported from southern Mesopotamia and referred to in the letter.³⁴³ The Babylonian scribes of the legal documents, Eriba-Marduk and Bēl-ušallim, may have been transferred together with the deportees as part of the management.

The “release of a slave” dated to 680 is a document where a female servant is transferred to Handî. Francis Joannès notes that despite the verb *paṭāru*, “release”, the document still records the transfer of authority over the woman, whose social status is somewhere between slavery and dependance.³⁴⁴ The loan of silver, dated to 672, is from Handî to a person called Abdi-Salāmu, who sealed the document with his fingernail imprints. Despite the Neo-Babylonian format, the scribe uses the Assyrian eponym dating, unlike the release of slave dated by the 25th regnal year of Sennacherib. The silver loan is relatively large, 2/3 mina, which may also explain why the loan was recorded in cuneiform.

The third Neo-Babylonian document in Handî’s dossier is a letter addressed to him from a peer, Bēl-iqīša.³⁴⁵ In the letter, he follows up on an issue regarding people from Lahiru, Samma’unu, and Hiuru that Handî has previously written to him about. Bēl-iqīša reports that the people argue they have not instigated a rebellion, and not done anything to the Gambuleans, either:

10–13: *ki-i áš-pu-ra us-sa-ri-mu um-ma ti-bi ul ni-it-bi ù a-na UGU LÚ.gam-bu-la-a-a ul ni-iš-kun*

“As I wrote, they have contested thus: ‘we have not rebelled, and regarding the Gambuleans, we have not done (anything).’”³⁴⁶

The second issue Bēl-iqīša brings up is regarding a bow that Handî has requested and now has been sent to him. The third matter in the letter is regarding an inspection that will be performed, and once the *ērib bīti* (LÚ.KU₄.É, “temple clergy”) has taken oxen, sheep or slaves, Bēl-iqīša asks Handî to send a messenger to him. Surprisingly many things can be inferred about the tasks of Handî as a *šaknu ša ēkalli* from the letter. He is collaborating with Bēl-iqīša regarding the management of deportees and investigating chances of a rebellion among them. The matter of inspection shows that Handî in his official capacity is also providing (taxed?) things to the temple.

As the title of Bēl-iqīša is not mentioned, he cannot be securely identified with any other Bēl-iqīša attested between the reigns of Sargon II and Esarhaddon.

³⁴³ Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 35.

³⁴⁴ Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 63.

³⁴⁵ ACP 18. Bēl-iqīša (𐎶EN-BA-šá) is incorrectly read in the PNA as Bēl-bāni (𐎶EN-ba-ni). This attestation can be found as the third entry.

³⁴⁶ Transliteration and translation (adapted from French to English) from Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 74.

Garelli & Homès-Fredericq tentatively suggests he might be part of temple management, as he is requesting that Handî contact him after the temple clergy has taken the taxable goods from the estate.³⁴⁷ The main issue of deportees described in the letter would not be out of the professional domain of a priest, as priests also had judicial authority and collaborated with administrators in legal matters.³⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the matter of the temple clergy shows that Handî's responsibilities related to collaboration with the temple administration as well.

The language choice of the letter is obviously dependent on Bēl-iqīša. He was probably a person originally from southern Mesopotamia, much like the scribes of the other two Neo-Babylonian documents in Handî's dossier. These people could have been transferred to the Harrān area to participate in the management of the deportees. While it could be possible that these documents were be drafted in southern Mesopotamia, it seems unlikely. The scribe of the silver loan follows the Assyrian dating system, which shows that he was accustomed to the Assyrian scribal habits. While the slave transaction follows the Babylonian dating system and records the place of writing as Kapri-Ilkat (URU.ŠE-*il-kát*), this location is unknown, this could just reflect the scribe's education according to Babylonian norms. Secondly, Bēl-iqīša's letter to Handî seems to deal with matters within the reach of Handî's administrative authority, which would logically be the area surrounding Ma'allānāte. One of the Neo-Babylonian documents from Handî's dossier includes witnesses attested elsewhere in the archive (ACP 9).³⁴⁹ Despite the Neo-Babylonian form,³⁵⁰ this document includes some of the people from Handî's environment and thus may have been drafted in Ma'allānāte. Therefore, likely due to the deportees, Handî's administrative position in Ma'allānāte also included management of affairs in Neo-Babylonian.

5.3.1.2. The Neo-Assyrian documents in Handî's dossier

Neo-Assyrian in Handî's dossier is primarily used for recording sales of slaves and land. They follow the typical scheme of 7th century conveyances outlined by Postgate,³⁵¹ except for sometimes omitting the *issu pān* clause defining the owner of the sold possessions.³⁵² The penalty clause includes a fine to the temple in six instances: twice to Adad of Guzana, three times to Ištar of Nineveh, and once to Ištar of Arbela, but a pattern with the temple fine and the text type, price of purchase or the people involved is not apparent. The silver is sometimes given by the mina of

³⁴⁷ Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 76.

³⁴⁸ Zaia 2019.

³⁴⁹ PNA 2/1, 450: Hanānā (8–9) and PNA 2/II, 853: Nabû-na'id (9)

³⁵⁰ In addition to the script and vocabulary, the Neo-Babylonian features of the document include its shape, as it is written on a horizontal rectangular document typical for Neo-Babylonian conveyance documents.

³⁵¹ Postgate 1976, 12.

³⁵² ACP 1; 7–8; 12.

Karkemiš, sometimes by the royal mina; this may therefore be by the request of the seller.

The only silver loan (ACP 14) in Neo-Assyrian in Handîs dossier is debited to Nanî, who may be identical with Nanî the servant of the queen mentioned in ACP 21. The loan follows the standard Neo-Assyrian silver loan format beginning with the seal identification, object owed, creditor, debtor, day of repayment (1st day of Nisan), and a clause specifying 50% penalty if the debt is not paid by the date (ACP 14: 7–8: SUM-an šúm-ma la SUM-an a-na ½ GÍN-šú i-rab-bî). If Nanî is to be identified with the servant of the queen, this loan may have required documentation in a more formal register; hence the choice to record it in cuneiform. The amount of the loan alone, 42 shekels of silver, certainly warrants a formal register compared to the meager 1–3 shekel loans documented in Aramaic.

Two cuneiform documents not mentioning Handî by name are attributed to his dossier due to their dating. One is a silver loan recording a loan of 11 shekels of silver debited to Hanānā, son of Harrānāiu credited by Buzâ including an envelope with an Aramaic epigraph (ACP 16), reading [...] *'nn mn m lnh*, “[...] “Hanānā from Ma'allānāte.”³⁵³ Despite Lipiński's suggestion that Hanānā was the son of the same Harrānāiu from Handî's family, Garelli and Homès-Fredericq disagree with this due to the dating of this document to 665. The epigraph is further discussed below in section 5.3.2.3. The other cuneiform document from this generation not attributed to Handî is an exchange of field between Silim-Adad and Ahi-larîm, dated to 19-IX-665. The same Ahi-larîm appears as a witness for Handî in ACP 47 and 48,³⁵⁴ and may have belonged to Handî's inner circle or administration.

5.3.1.3. The Aramaic documents in Handî's dossier

Six Aramaic documents belong to Handî's dossier. These include two silver loans, one loan of donkeys, one loan of barley, a receipt for a partial payment of a barley loan, and one delivery of straw. Diverging from the conventions of Aramaic in seventh-century Assyria, one of the silver loans was categorized by Lipiński as a judicial document (ACP 42). As this would be highly unusual, the nature of the document is discussed below in detail.³⁵⁵ Lipiński considered it a court ruling about tin being insufficient payment for a horse. Fales suggested an alternative reading before the publication of the Aramaic documents and retained his opinion in the review of the Lipiński's edition.³⁵⁶ Part of the difficulty of this document is due to the seal impression placed in the middle of the inscription, and part is due to the formulation of the text. Lipiński's translation understands the first line as: *štmnh.ky*, “we sealed it thus.” As the 1st-person plural and the verb *štm* are

³⁵³ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 132. The name of the debtor ^m*ha-na-na* (ACP 16a: 3) in the cuneiform text suggests that the names Hanānā and 'Ānān are identical, thus the translation has been adapted to reflect this following the PNA spelling.

³⁵⁴ Ahi-larîm's appearances in the archive are discussed below in 5.3.1.4.

³⁵⁵ The editions quoted are by Lipiński 2010, 28–29 and Fales 2000, 112–113.

³⁵⁶ Fales 2000, 112–113; Fales 2013b, 208.

otherwise unattested in the Neo-Assyrian Aramaic, Fales instead reads the line as *šṭ<r> mnḥ. ky*, “document concerning a mina, thus: ...”³⁵⁷ The next, *l ḥdy . 'l qtlḥ*, is translated by Lipiński as “for Handî against Qittilāni,” and by Fales as “(it) belongs to Handî, (it is lent) to Qat-ilani.” I am inclined to follow the interpretation by Fales, as the terminology used here is typical of debt documents.³⁵⁸ Additionally, understanding this document as a loan instead of a judicial document aligns better with the general pattern of choosing Aramaic for loan documents.

Lipiński 2010, 29.	Fales 2000, 112–113.
1. <i>šṭmnḥ . ky</i>	1. <i>šṭ<r> mnḥ. ky</i>
2. <i>l ḥdy . 'l qtlḥ</i>	2. <i>lḥdy . 'l. qtlḥ</i>
3. <i>zk bdl</i>	3. <i>z kbdl</i>
4. <i>bs s. bšr . yhb</i>	4. <i>bssbšr. yhb</i>
5. <i>ksp' šhdn</i> (witnesses, date)	5. <i>ksp' šhdn</i> (witnesses, date)

Lines 3–5 were read by Lipiński as *zk bdl bss. bšr ksp'*, “Tin for a horse is insufficient. He shall give the silver,” with the initial *zk* as a demonstrative referring back to Qittilāni/Qāt-ilani on the second line. The word *bdl* is only attested in two other Aramaic texts,³⁵⁹ and Fales translates this sentence instead as “the latter, in substitution for Šamaš-abu-ušur, will give back the silver.” The reading by Fales is more careful, as the interpretation by Lipiński would introduce another word unattested in Neo-Assyrian Aramaic, *bšr*, “to be sufficient.” To conclude, the corpus of 7th-century Aramaic still does not include court rulings, and the Aramaic texts in Handî’s dossier belong in the category of either loan documents or receipts.

In ACP 47, the creditor of the barley loan is omitted, and Handî acts instead as the guarantor and possibly the deliverer of the loaned barley.

o.

1. *š'rn . 'l . rp' 'n'*
2. *wšyr 10 b 10+3+2*
3. *wḥdy mḥ' yd*

³⁵⁷ Fales later added that “Moreover, even admitting that in the crucial line 1 the previously proposed integration *šṭ<r>*, ‘deed’ is indeed hypothetical, an alternative solution is that *šṭ*, an Aramaic ponderal measure of fractional worth, known from a single Hamath weight inscription (DWSI, 1123), might be attested here: ‘One-... of a mina (*šṭ mnḥ*).’” in Fales 2013b, 208.

³⁵⁸ The reading *šṭr*, “document,” is also attested in Neo-Babylonian epigraphs (see section 1.2) and the use of *l* PN1 (creditor) *'l* PN2 (debtor) is familiar from the other loan documents in the archive.

³⁵⁹ ACP 53 discussed in section 5.3.2.2 and in a rectangular loan of silver from Til-Barsip, *Abr-Nahrain* 34 A, T11.

4. š‘ry’ hšhl
- r.
5. šhd [‘ḥ]lrm
6. wnn̄y
7. whšdn 3+3+1

“Barley for Rapan and Šayir: 10 into 10+3+2. And Handî struck the hand. He delivered the barley. Witness(es): [Ahi]-larīm and Nanî, and 7 reapers.”³⁶⁰

The omission of the creditor may indicate that this loan was given from an institutional source. This example also appears to include an additional harvester clause after the witnesses, stating that the debtors should provide seven reapers as part of the repayment. The clause 10 *b* 15 indicates the interest rate of the debt, where the borrowed amount of barley increases from 10 to 15 homers.

One of the documents which Lipiński classifies as a “sale of barley” (ACP 45) is essentially a receipt of a transaction that has been partially paid.³⁶¹ Fales has suggested an alternative translation for the first line š‘rn šlm, “Barley (seed): (judicial) settlement.”³⁶² whereas Lipiński reads it as part of the second line š‘rn šlm. nb‘ḥdn ., “Nabû ahhē-iddina has paid the barley.”³⁶³ Despite the disagreements, the document records a partial repayment of a debt and is classified here as a receipt. The amount of silver paid is relatively high (20 shekels), but as the debt is not fully paid yet, this document may have been intended for short-term archival storage until the rest of the silver is received. It is possible that Handî borrowed barley from the estate he was managing and guaranteed the transaction himself. The barley loans in his dossier are in Aramaic, as expected.

One Aramaic document not mentioning Handî is included in his dossier due to the names of the witnesses, including Ahi-larīm and Māšî (ACP 48). This is a contract for a delivery of straw which does not indicate any specifics about the transaction such as the client or the amount of straw, but only the people who sold the straw and the amount of silver given in return. Lipiński takes this to mean that the more specific contract would have been written on the scroll attached to the docket.³⁶⁴

³⁶⁰ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 83. The final letter *nun* on the first line is indicated in half-brackets, as based on the copy it is partially destroyed.

³⁶¹ Transliteration and translation given above in section 5.2.

³⁶² Transliteration and translation from Fales 2000, 112.

³⁶³ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 63.

³⁶⁴ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 88.

5.3.1.4. Handî's inner circle

Several people stand out as frequent witnesses in Handî's dossier. Their titles are not given, but many appear in both Aramaic and Assyrian documents.³⁶⁵ One problematic individual is Ahi-larîm, who according to the PNA entry is attested in all three archive generations.³⁶⁶

Table 14 Ahi-larîm's attestations in the archive.

Text number	Date/generation	Role
ACP 69	N/A/Sēr-nūrî	Witness
ACP 59	N/A/Sēr-nūrî	One of two witnesses
ACP 48	N/A/Handî	Witness together with Masî
ACP 33	639*	Witness
ACP 47	N/A/Handî	One of two witnesses
ACP 21	644 Harrānāiu	Witness
ACP 23	658 Harrānāiu	Only witness
ACP 25	655 Harrānāiu	One of two witnesses
ACP 22	644 Harrānāiu	Witness
ACP 13	665 Handî	Exchanging field

Ahi-larîm, if to be understood as the same individual as he is never given any patronym or title, appears in all three generations of the archive. He is always a witness, three times among only two witnesses listed and once as the sole witness. Lipiński concludes he must be among the inner circle of Handî. Four of the texts are undated, two of which belong to Handî's generation and two to Sēr-nūrî's generation. The rest of the dated texts range between 665 and 644. It is not possible to conclude, whether all attestations relate to the same Ahi-larîm, as the name is common, the dated texts range over a reasonably short span of time, and no titles are given. Nevertheless, at least one Ahi-larîm was in a position to store one of his documents in the archive.

When titles are attested in Handî's generation, they include military personnel (charioteers, *rab hanšê*) merchants, palace personnel (chief baker of the queen, tailor of the palace), administrators (mayor of Ma'allanate, scribes, *šanû* and *šaknu*), animal herders (shepherd, bird-catcher) and one priest. The priest Silim-Adad appears in the document exchanging land with Ahi-larîm, perhaps again

³⁶⁵ For example, Ammi-hadî (ACP 8; 12; 43) and Nanî (ACP6; 7; 14; 41; 47), although not all attestations of the latter may refer to the same individual, as there are several Nanîs in the corpus and this is a common name in the Neo-Assyrian period.

³⁶⁶ Ahi-larîm(2).

indicating that the Assyrian state administrators retained collaborative connections to the temple administration.

5.3.2. Harrānāiu and sons (activity 661–630*)

Table 15 Distribution of text types in the generation of documents of Harrānāiu and his sons.

	Akkadian	Aramaic
Sale of real estate	1	0
Sale of a person	0	0
Judicial document	5	0
Loan of silver	2	1
Loan of barley	4	2
Loan of wheat	0	1
Pledge of land	1	0
Pledge of a person	1	0
Receipt	2	0
Administrative document	2	0
Contract	0	1
Letter	0	1

The second dossier is centered on the son of Handî, Harrānāiu and the transactions of his two sons, Harmāku and Sîn-Nammir. Lipiński originally suggested that Harrānāiu had a third son Hanānā due to the mention of “Hanānā, son of Harrānāiu,” in ACP 16 and identified him with ‘Anan/’nn in the Aramaic documents.³⁶⁷ However, Homès-Fredericq and Garelli point out that this text is dated to 665 before the activity of Harrānāiu (661–644).³⁶⁸ I am not certain Hanānā should be dismissed as a son of another, homonymous Harrānāiu in the archive, as the dating is still close to the date range of Harrānāiu’s documents. Moreover, Hanānā is a debtor in this transaction, and the document should either be attributed to a creditor’s archive or as a debtor’s copy of the transaction stored in the family archive. The first two generations have a clear family connection. Harrānāiu likely inherited the lands and assets of Handî and consequently his archive as well. Harrānāiu is also referred to as the *šaknu* (“prefect”), continuing the family tradition in Assyrian administration. Presumably, despite the slightly different title, he continued managing the royal estate. The documents do not

³⁶⁷ Lipiński 2010, 16.

³⁶⁸ Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 19.

mention the professions of his sons. Three of the documents can be attributed to Harmāku, and one to Sīn-nammir. Fourteen belong to Harrānāiu's dossier. The full dossier of this family unit consists of 18 documents, and four texts have been attributed to this generation due to their dating or recurring personal names. The inclusion of administrative documents in the dossier suggests that the *šaknu* may have stored his personal documents in the same facilities with the institutional documents.

This dossier contains mainly loans and judicial documents but a greater diversity in document types recorded in Aramaic. Two of the more difficult Aramaic documents, a contract regarding a legal procedure (ACP 53) and letter (ACP 54), are treated in detail in section 5.3.2.2 below. As an intriguing deviation from the expected pattern observed in the previous generation, the dossier contains four loans of barley in cuneiform, all attributed to Harrānāiu.

5.3.2.1. The Neo-Assyrian documents in the generation of Harrānāiu and sons

There are two documents that record the transfer of real estate to Harrānāiu: one sale of an estate (ACP 20) and one pledge of land (ACP 21). His dossier also includes several cuneiform loan documents: four of barley (ACP 24; 23; 25; 66) and two of silver (ACP 26; 27). The loans of barley are written on triangular dockets with string holes, which indicates that these were, similarly to Aramaic dockets, tied to another scroll. Two of these include Aramaic epigraphs.³⁶⁹

Compared to the Aramaic dockets, the orientation of the text is rotated 90°. This means that to read the reverse side, the docket will still be rotated in the same direction as an Aramaic docket, instead of flipping it upside down like a rectangular cuneiform tablet. The writing orientation suggests that the use of Aramaic for this tablet shape was the norm. Therefore, the choice to use cuneiform for recording these transactions is out of the ordinary. The amount of barley in the cuneiform dockets is not higher than in the Aramaic dockets, ranging between 3 homers and 4 homers 5 *sūtu*, unless the total sums in the Aramaic dockets already include interest of 50% as suggested by Lipiński.³⁷⁰ In that case, the choice of using cuneiform in these loans could be explained by the larger amount borrowed. An alternative explanation may be the availability of scribes, but if the cuneiform dockets were attached to a scroll, the result would nevertheless be a bilingual document. Much like the Aramaic loans, all the loan documents in this dossier include very few witnesses, ranging between 1 and 3, and ACP 27 does not record any witnesses at all. One of the loans is also given from the “first fruits of Hadad” (ACP 27), given by Harmāku. These types of loans are discussed in more detail in section 5.3.3.2 regarding the “first fruits” loans of Sēr-nūrī, as they are more common in his dossier.

³⁶⁹ Discussed below in section 5.3.2.3.

³⁷⁰ Lipiński 2010, 116.

This dossier includes two judicial documents, one related to Harrānāiu's son Harmāku and one which records a dispute about a servant, including several military personnel. ACP 28 is a record of a judicial settlement, following Postgate's terminology, due to the phrase "peace between them, between Dalā and Harmāku."³⁷¹ Dalā was ordered to pay 7 shekels of silver to Harmāku as the result of a *dēni ša šinqāt* court process, which Joannès suggests relates to either proving the validity of a contract or transaction or the unidentified disputed object of the lawsuit.³⁷² The other judicial document, ACP 29, does not include Harrānāiu or his sons, and it is a dispute over a female servant between Hania, Illil-šarri (plaintiffs) and Bīr-Halbā (defendant). The question remains, why would this document be included in the archive? Military personnel are mentioned as witnesses, two charioteers and a charioteer of the king (LÚ GIŠ.GIGIR ša MAN), which may imply that one of the protagonists was involved with the military. We may therefore speculate that the documents were stored in the *šaknu* archive due to the military connection and ties to the administrative institution. Nevertheless, as is typical of cuneiform archives, this generation also includes documents that cannot be directly connected to central persons. Other examples of this are ACP 19, a pledge of a person to Māši,³⁷³ and ACP 29, a judicial document of Bīr-Halbā. Presumably, these documents are examples of people belonging to the same administrative department and/or the *šaknu*'s inner circle and storing their documents in their archive.

This generation includes two administrative documents related to deliveries of barley. ACP 30 is unclear about whether the barley is coming in or going out. It mentions the person responsible for transporting the grain (ACP 30: 15: EN *na-še-e*), and that the grain is from the harvest (ACP 30: 13: ŠE.BAR BURU₁₄-te).³⁷⁴ The first entry (ACP 30: 1–2: 2 ANŠE ŠE-PAD-MEŠ TA *qa-ni* SAG.DU ^{md}šá-maš-DINGIR-a-a) is read by Garelli and Homès-Fredericq as "2 imāru d'orge, en compensation? du capital de Šamaš-ilā'ī."³⁷⁵ This could indicate that the barley was given as a payment of a debt, but the direction of the barley is still unclear. A text concerning grain (ACP 17) is dated to the eponym of Nabû-šarru-ušur, which could be either 688 or 644, and therefore may belong to either Handī's or Harrānāiu's dossier. Joannès notes that the tablet should be considered part of Harrānāiu's dossier due to the mention of people from Qaštu and the other grain delivery note

³⁷¹ ACP 28: 5–7: *šúl-mu bir-ta-šu-nu bir-ti* ^{md}da-la-a *bir-ti* ^mhar-ma-ki. Transliteration and translation (adapted from French to English) from Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 88.

³⁷² Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 88.

³⁷³ The same Māši may also be attested in other documents within the archive: ACP 12; 19; 43; 48; 19.

³⁷⁴ Transliterations from Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 90–91.

³⁷⁵ Transliteration and translation from Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 91.

belonging to his dossier.³⁷⁶ This delivery note records incoming barley, so perhaps ACP 30 should be regarded as such too.

5.3.2.2. The Aramaic documents in the generation of Harrānāiu and sons

The number of Aramaic documents from this generation is relatively small. Four of the documents belong to the expected category of loans: two loans of barley (ACP 50–51), one loan of wheat (ACP 52) and one loan of silver (ACP 49). However, two of the Aramaic documents in Harrānāiu's dossier (ACP 53 and ACP 54) require a short summary and explanation, as they are not the usual loan documents expected in the Neo-Assyrian Aramaic corpus and more difficult to categorize.

Lipiński and Fales held opposing views also on the interpretation of ACP 53. Lipiński read this document as *hn 'l . kbdl/qdm . hdd . whm/rn 3+3+1 yšl/m bdl lhrn[y]/šhd . rdm 1/[symbol for uninscribed space]*, “If I bring some tin/ to Hadad, the tin/ will pay (the) 7 donkeys/ to Harrānāiu. Witness: Radīm.”³⁷⁷ The translation of Fales is instead “If I enter as substitute (in judgement) before Hadad, then the substituted person will settle the payment of 7 donkeys to Harrānāiu. Witness: Radīm the 1st. Four (further witnesses).”³⁷⁸

The first disagreement is again regarding *bdl*, which Lipiński again regards as “tin”, with a particle *k* “which has no strictly comparative function in O. 3672[ACP 53], but signifies an indeterminate quantity.”³⁷⁹ Fales understands this again as “substitute” (*bdl* in active participle), the preposition *k* signifying “as.” As Fales points out, this “entering before Hadad” is also paralleled in another text from the Ma'allānāte archive (ACP 67: 4 “They have appeared before Adad of Guzana”, *ina IGI dIM (ša) urugū-za-na iq-ṭar-bu*)³⁸⁰ and texts from Tell Shiukh Fawqani.³⁸¹ The second disagreement relates to the subject of *šlm*, and Fales is right in presuming that the subject should rather be the substituted person (*bdl* in passive participle) rather than the inanimate object tin. Finally, Fales suggests that the Radīm mentioned as the first witness may be the person making the promise to “enter judgement before Hadad” in exchange for settling his debts with Harrānāiu.³⁸² While I agree with his general reading of the text, the document makes it clear that Radīm is a witness, as his name is preceded by *šhd*. The symbol on the last line of the docket is per Lipiński signifying empty space, which is also paralleled in other documents from the archive,³⁸³ rather than four additional witnesses as suggested

³⁷⁶ In Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 73.

³⁷⁷ Lipiński 2010, 120.

³⁷⁸ Fales 2000, 113–114.

³⁷⁹ Lipiński 2010, 120.

³⁸⁰ Translation to English from the translation of Mary Frazer in Oracc (<http://oracc.org/atae/P522916/> accessed 20 Feb 2026).

³⁸¹ Fales 2000, 113 n. 139.

³⁸² Fales 2000, 114 n. 140.

³⁸³ Lipiński 2010, 123.

by Fales. Therefore, while it is problematic for using this document as legal proof of an obligation that the name of the subject is not mentioned on the text, I find it doubtful that it was Radīm himself. The name of the subject could have been included in the parchment attached to the docket.

A significant highlight of the corpus is an unsealed rectangular tablet (ACP 54), which Lipiński regards as a summary of a letter. Fales provides no alternative reading for this tablet due to the lack of photographs in the publication of the Aramaic documents, but expresses doubt regarding the contents as there are no parallels to this text type in the Neo-Assyrian corpus.³⁸⁴ Due to the shape, this document does not seem to belong to the category of loans and would not have been attached to a parchment. Lipiński's reading of the text is again dependent on several words that are otherwise unattested in Old Aramaic, which makes Fales' doubts reasonable.

Based on the copy, an alternative reading may be offered:

o.

1. 'nhdd
2. wmt'dd
3. btll zy qpn
4. ḥwr zy 'mr mn

r.

5. 'yr yd 'šḥr
6. šmh ydkn hlw
7. byt šlm bḥwrh

“(to) An-Hadad and Matī'-Adda/in Tilul of Qipan/Who is overseeing the washing (lit. ‘whitening’) of the wool?/The share of (that man), Eshor/his name (is equal to?) your share./Look, he has fulfilled his obligations to the estate in full by washing.”³⁸⁵

The name Matī'-Adda is also attested as the patronym of Amnan ('*mnn*) in two texts (ACP 55: 3 and ACP 56: 3–4), but it is uncertain whether this is the same Matī'-Adda as in the letter. The people mentioned in the beginning are not attested elsewhere in the archive. While Lipiński reads the first word of line 4 as the name of Harrānāiu (*ḥrn*), his name is typically spelled with a final yod, *ḥrny*. While Lipiński posits that his name could also be spelled without the final yod,³⁸⁶ the two other examples he gives from the corpus (ACP 50; 53) suggest otherwise. In ACP 53, the final yod could be written on the damaged right edge of the docket, and the

³⁸⁴ Fales 2013b, 210.

³⁸⁵ I am indebted to Michael Jursa for his insights on figuring out the contents of this letter.

³⁸⁶ Lipiński 2010, 36.

copy of ACP 50 reads clearly *ḥrny*, although it is not transliterated by Lipiński as such. Instead, Stephen Kaufman has suggested the reading *ḥwr zy 'mr*, “white of wool,” specifying the type of wool from goats, but notes that the reading is dubious.³⁸⁷ Lipiński read the line instead as *ḥrn zy 'md mn* as the same syntagm as in Biblical Hebrew with the meaning “to keep away, to finish,” and understands this together with *'yr* as “finish the transaction.” As the letters on the copy do not give away whether the word is to be read as *'mr* or *'md*, I prefer Kaufman’s reading due to the spelling issue with Harrānāiu’s name, but understand *ḥwr* as a verbal noun “whitening, washing.”³⁸⁸ This interpretation helps to explain the role of Eshor, who, unlike the addressees, has done his job processing the wool.

It seems that Lipiński was correct in categorizing this document as a letter. The document begins with personal names, which function as the addressees. The use of the second-person plural, clearly referring to these addressees, supports this theory, as does the use of *hlw*, also paralleled in the Assur Ostrakon.³⁸⁹ While the letter does not open with a clear greeting formula, these aspects make it certainly either a draft or an informal letter, which doubles the corpus of Neo-Assyrian Aramaic letters from one to two examples.

The loans from Harrānāiu’s dossier introduce the object first, followed by the creditor and the debtor. The order of the date (if noted) and witnesses varies. Two loans, one a loan of barley (ACP 51) and the other a loan of wheat (ACP 52)³⁹⁰ do not include a repayment date, interest rate or the word *zph*, “loan,” which could mean that these two are not “true loans” but perhaps delivery contracts in the form of a debt note. The amount of barley is specified as *šlš 3* and the amount of wheat is not given.

ACP 49 is a loan from the “first-fruits” of Ištār of Arbela, specifying Harrānāiu as the creditor providing the loan. While Lipiński considers these types of loans as evidence of managing temple funds,³⁹¹ it is not likely that the *šaknu* had access to temple funds directly. Rather, these loans are probably related to provisions to the temple that the local administrators in Ma’allānāte were obligated to provide. The silver “borrowed” is unlikely to originate from a temple treasury, but rather will end up there when the debt is paid. In other words, these documents may be obligations to pay the “first-fruits” to the temple and relate to the management of the estate by the *šaknu*. These “first-fruits” loans are discussed further in section 5.3.3.2 below

³⁸⁷ Kaufman on CAL,

https://cal.huc.edu/get_a_kwicchapter.php?file=14302&sub=14&cset=T&target=143021406 accessed 23 Dec 2024.

³⁸⁸ Parallels to this are found in Neo-Babylonian “laundry contracts”; see Still & Sonneveld 2020, 101–102; Waerzeggers 2006.

³⁸⁹ The Assur Ostrakon is discussed further in section 8.1.1.

³⁹⁰ ACP 52 is, according to Lipiński, a loan of wheat, as he reconstructs the word *[h]’n’ṭn* in the first line. As such, this would be the only currently known loan of wheat in Old Aramaic.

³⁹¹ Lipiński 2010, 103–104.

regarding similar loans in Sēr-nūrī's dossier. Harrānāiu's son Harmāku also provides a loan of 6 shekels of silver from the first fruits of Hadad (ACP 27), recorded in cuneiform rather than Aramaic. Perhaps the choice to record this in cuneiform relates to the larger amount of silver loaned.

In Harrānāiu's use of Aramaic, the language was predominantly used for small loans and memorandums, again pointing to informal use. The loan from the first fruits recorded in Aramaic is interesting, and repeats in the dossier of Sēr-nūrī. This may be another link between Harrānāiu and Sēr-nūrī, and indicates that they held similar positions in the administration. The record of the loan in Aramaic may imply that this was a personal transaction, but we will return to this question with Sēr-nūrī.

5.3.2.3. The Aramaic epigraphs in the generation of Harrānāiu and sons

Only four cuneiform documents from the Ma'allānāte archive bear Aramaic epigraphs (ACP 16; 23; 41; 66), all incised. Two of them (ACP 23 and 66) are associated with the generation of Harrānāiu and his sons in the chronology of Homès-Fredericq and Garelli to. One is an administrative document recording grain deliveries (ACP 41) which cannot be securely associated with any of the generations.³⁹² The last one is, as discussed above in the introduction to this section, is potentially attributed to another son of Harrānāiu.

The two epigraphs from Harrānāiu's dossier are on triangular dockets recording loans of barley (ACP 23 and 66). The documents are connected by the same debtor Adda-natan from Qaštu. On ACP 23 the epigraph is very concise and follows the standard formula *zy* + PN referring to the debtor of the document: *zy 'dntn* "concerning Adda-natan."³⁹³ The other epigraph is on a loan of barley debited to two debtors, one of them Adda-natan, and simply reads *qšt*, "Qaštu" (ACP 66). This use of epigraphs could imply that the archive holder associated these two texts with one another. While the epigraphs are worded in concise manner, they fulfill the purpose of an archival aid by giving distinctive information about the transaction to help the archive holder recall the contents of the transactions.

The document ACP 16 with an Aramaic epigraph is dated to the generation of Handī, but the transaction is debited to a certain Hanānā, son of Harrānāiu. The epigraph is incised on the edge of the envelope³⁹⁴ and reads "[Concerning/Debited to] Hanānā from Ma'lānā" (ACP 16b: e. 1–2: [...] *'nn mn/ m 'lnh*).³⁹⁵ The creditor of this document is Buzâ, and the epigraph follows the standard pattern of identifying

³⁹² Lipiński does suggest the letters of the epigraph are similar to letter forms in Handī's generation (Lipiński 2010, 95). Dating between the two subsequent generations based on the letter forms would in my opinion require more detailed discussion on the evolution of the sign forms during the seventh century.

³⁹³ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 131. The formulas of Aramaic epigraphs are discussed in section 2.2 and exemplified in 6.5 with the documents from Nineveh.

³⁹⁴ The publications do not specify whether it is the left or right edge.

³⁹⁵ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 132.

the debtor rather than the creditor. Either this document comes from another archive held by the creditor Buzâ, or another copy of the document was given to the debtor as a reminder of the debt. If the latter scenario is true and this document indeed comes from the same archive as the rest of the documents, Hanânâ should be accepted as the son of the same Harrânâiu, not the son of a homonymous individual.

The final document with an Aramaic epigraph on the edge is a horizontal rectangular tablet recording a delivery of barley. It reads “From the servant Nanî, belonging to Kunaia” (ACP 41: e. 1–2: *mn ‘rd nny/lkny*).³⁹⁶ The cuneiform text records two deliveries made by two servants of Kunaia, the first of them is Nanî. He is given the title “camel driver” (LÚ.UŠ-*gam-mal*), while the second person does not have a title. This order may signify a hierarchical difference between the two servants, and why Nanî is also recorded in the epigraph.

5.3.2.4. Harrânâiu’s inner circle

Ahi-larîm appears in four documents from Harrânâiu’s period, always as a witness. In ACP 23 he is the only witness, and in ACP 25 one of two witnesses. As mentioned, his title is not given. Two other prominent people are Nûrânu and Hanûnu. The name Nûrânu appears in four documents. He is attested first as an owner of land bordering Qarhâia’s field bought by Harrânâiu (ACP 20) and then pledging land he has inherited to Harrânâiu (ACP 21). The name Nûrânu is also attested as a recipient of barley in an administrative document (ACP 30) and as a witness in a loan of barley (ACP 51), perhaps referring to the same individual. Qarhâia, son of Adda-rahîmu is also mentioned as the last witness in a judicial document regarding a settlement about an estate (ACP 22). According to the PNA, Hanûnu appears in three documents,³⁹⁷ but the entry does not take into account that ACP 21 and ACP 22 record different Hanûnu’s, as one is the son of Purattâiu and one is the son of Bûrê. One Hanûnu without a patronym is also mentioned in a record of grain deliveries as the master of a servant.

The people attested in Harrânâiu’s circle belong, among others, to the professional groups of security and intelligence personnel,³⁹⁸ administrative roles,³⁹⁹ people related to food production,⁴⁰⁰ and owners of land.⁴⁰¹ ACP 21 records among the first witnesses three servants of the royal family: two “servants of the queen” (ACP 21: 27–28: ÌR ša MÍ-É-GAL), and a “servant of the crown prince” (ACP

³⁹⁶ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 96.

³⁹⁷ PNA 2/I, 458: Hanûnu (11).

³⁹⁸ PNA 1/I, 16: Abu-ilāī (7) ša-šēpe (guard); PNA 2/II, 698: Mannu-kī-šarri (10) ša-šēpe, PNA 3/I, 1029: Rahîmi-Dādi (3) ša-qurbûte; PNA 2/II, 927: Nanî (50) ša-qurbûte.

³⁹⁹ PNA 3/II, 1368: Ubru-Nergal (10) ša-qurbûte; PNA 1/I, 47: Adda-immê (9) “Official of the Adad temple in Guzana”; PNA 3/II, 1317: Tarik-šarrûtu (1) village manager.

⁴⁰⁰ PNA 1/I, 46: Adda-hāti (5) a fowler; PNA 2/I, 63: Kumurî (1) shepherd.

⁴⁰¹ PNA 3/I, 1008: Qarhâia (5); PNA 2/II, 968: Nûrânu (7); PNA 2/I, 641: Kur-ilāī (14); PNA 1/I, 64: Ahi-larîm (2).

21: 29: ÌR šá DUMU MAN).⁴⁰² They are specifically counted in a total of seven witnesses from Ma'allānāte (ACP 21: 32: PAP 7 IGI-MEŠ URU.*ma-al-na-a-te*).⁴⁰³ This indicates that the royal household retained ties to Ma'allanate during his time. Otherwise, the professional groups attested in his social network mirror those of his father's.

5.3.3. Sēr-nūrī (activity 652–622*)

The third and last main protagonist of the archive is Sēr-nūrī (*šhrnwry*). None of the documents give a title for him. No family relationship between the previous generations and Sēr-nūrī is implied, and as he is not attested together with Harrānāiu, we may infer that he may have been the one following in his position as a *šaknu*. Based on the “first fruits” loans from the temple of Hadad where he receives at a lower interest-rate and gives out at an exorbitant interest-rate, Lipiński suggested that he was acting on behalf of the temple.⁴⁰⁴ But as discussed below in section 5.3.3.2 and seen in Harrānāiu's dossier, the first-fruits loans were not necessarily given by temple functionaries. His dossier includes 16 texts: eight in Neo-Assyrian and eight in Aramaic, and five texts associated with his generation based on their dating or persons mentioned. One of these is a judicial document mentioning Sīn-nammir (ACP 36), presumably the son of Harrānāiu, but is treated here to stay consistent with the categorization provided in the publication of the cuneiform texts.

Table 16 Distribution of text types in the generation of Sēr-nūrī.

	Akkadian	Aramaic
Sale of a person	3	0
Sale of real estate	1	0
Pledge of land	0	1
Judicial document	6	0
Loan of silver	0	3
Loan of straw	0	3
Loan of sheep and silver	0	1
Loan of barley	0	1
Contract	0	1

⁴⁰² Transliterations from Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 80–81.

⁴⁰³ Transliteration from Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 80–81.

⁴⁰⁴ Lipiński 2010, 145.

5.3.3.1. Neo-Assyrian texts in Sēr-nūrī's dossier

The Neo-Assyrian documents in Sēr-nūrī's generation include six judicial documents, one sale of land and three sales of slaves. All these documents suggest a level of formality, which may explain their documentation in cuneiform.

From his dossier, some information on the status of Sēr-nūrī can be gathered. One of the judicial documents (ACP 39) recounts a debt of 1 mina of silver intended for hiring workers, but as the transaction could not be completed, the loan was paid back five years later with interest. The witnesses in this deed include a *šaknu*, a *rab kišri*, a guard (LÚ *ša* GÌR.2) and a third man of the queen (LÚ 3-šú MÍ-É-GAL), implying contact with Assyrian officials. There is one court order to Sēr-nūrī to bring another person, Sagību, to court to settle a disagreement regarding a debt (ACP 35). The relationship between Sagību and Sēr-nūrī is unclear, but due to the order it is possible that Sēr-nūrī has a responsibility for him. One document states that a goldsmith, Padūwa guarantees that Il-iādi' will come to work for Sēr-nūrī (ACP 37). This contract specifies that Il-iādi' should be at Sēr-nūrī's disposal when the latter returns from "the enemy country" (*ina ŠÀ-bi UD-mu [ša] ^mse-e ¹-ri-ZÁLAG TA KUR KÚR [i-tu-ru-ni]*, "[when] Sēr-nūrī [returns] from the enemy country").⁴⁰⁵ Sēr-nūrī's business in the enemy country could relate to trade or possibly military affairs, but nevertheless this text hints at a profession requiring mobility. Another hint of Sēr-nūrī's mobility is given in a record of a judicial fine that Sēr-nūrī paid following a lawsuit about a slave (ACP 67). The document specifies that Sēr-nūrī paid the fine in Nineveh.⁴⁰⁶

ACP 36 is dated to Sēr-nūrī's time period (631*), but mentions Sīn-nammir, son of Harrānāiu. Although the PNA entries of Sēr-nūrī and Sīn-nammir suggest that these two names could refer to the same person, this seems unlikely.⁴⁰⁷ First, as Lipiński argues, Sēr-nūrī is never referred to as "son of Harrānāiu," as Sīn-nammir is.⁴⁰⁸ Second, Sēr-nūrī's name in the cuneiform documents is often spelled syllabically, which rules out the option that Sīn-nammir would be simply another spelling of Sēr-nūrī's name.⁴⁰⁹ Third, their social circles overlap by only one person.⁴¹⁰ While Sīn-nammir and Sēr-nūrī are not attested together, presumably the people attested together with them would include the same people. Of course,

⁴⁰⁵ Transliteration and translation adapted from the French translation from Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 100–101.

⁴⁰⁶ Jas suggested that this toponym to refer to a local settlement near Guzana in Jas 1996, 23. However, Garelli and Homès-Fredericq point out that the patronym Ubru-Ninua among the witnesses (ACP 67: 18.) indicates that this must refer to the capital instead (Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 110).

⁴⁰⁷ PNA 3/I, 1139: Sīn-nammir (2); PNA 3/1, 1105: Sēr-nūrī (4).

⁴⁰⁸ Lipiński 2010, 18.

⁴⁰⁹ Sēr-nūrī's name is written as ^mse-er-nu-ri in ACP 32: 7., or ^mse-er-ZÁLAG-i (ACP 33: 6.) or ^mte-e-ZÁLAG (ACP 35: 1).

⁴¹⁰ Discussed further in chapter 7 on network approaches.

Sîn-nammir is named in only two documents, which makes the dataset small. Nevertheless, considering all three reasons, they are unlikely to be the same individual. In this document, a certain Ammi-rāmu is ordered to bring eight soldiers, seven Gurraeans and one “shield-bearing third man” (ACP 36: 9–10: LÚ 3-šú *a-ri-te*), to Nineveh and hand them over to Sîn-nammir, son of Harrānāiu.⁴¹¹ This document attests to both the connections between Nineveh and Ma'allānāte and shows that Sîn-nammir, probably as a representative of the estate, had responsibilities in Nineveh. Many of the witnesses in the document are military personnel, further demonstrating the military connections of the site.

One sale of slaves (ACP 69) is associated with Sēr-nūrī's generation although he is not a protagonist in the transaction; instead, he appears as a witness. The buyer is Adad-issē'a, who is also attested in three other documents from Sēr-nūrī's dossier.⁴¹² Therefore, the inclusion in the archive can be attributed to a relationship between the archive holder and Adad-issē'a.

5.3.3.2. Aramaic texts in Sēr-nūrī's dossier

Sēr-nūrī's Aramaic documents are, as expected, mostly loans. There is only one loan of barley, which follows the standard formula and specifies an interest rate (ACP 57). The two loans of silver are loans from the first fruits of Hadad. One of them omits the name of the creditor, and simply attributes the silver to Hadad (ACP 58): *ksp . šql[n...]/lhdd l/šhrnwry/rbh/brb'h/yrh 'sn*, “Silver, [...] shekel[s] belonging to Hadad, debited to Sēr-nūrī. Its interest (amounts) to its quarter. Month of (N)isān.”⁴¹³ The omission of the creditor would imply that the archivist would know it anyway. Also noteworthy is the low interest rate compared to the other first fruits loans, where the interest rate is 100%. For example, in ACP 56 where Sēr-nūrī acts as the creditor himself:

- 0.
1. *ksp rsh . lhdd*
2. *zy ntn . šhrnwry*
3. *'l . 'mnn . br*
4. *mt'dd . mn .*
5. *m'lnh ksp*
6. *šqln 3*
7. *rbh*
- r.
8. *bkplh y'rḥ' <sm>*
9. *smnh l['m dd]y*

⁴¹¹ Gurraeans, like Itu'aans, are troops in the service of the Assyrian empire named after nomadic troops, see Luukko 2019.

⁴¹² ACP 32; 33; 67.

⁴¹³ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 150.

10. mšn . [šhdn . bl]bn
11. nbwš[zb . š]nzqp
12. ddy . ksp ntn
13. b'py

“Silver, ‘first fruits’ belonging to Hadad that Sēr-nūrī gave to Amnan, son of Matī-Adda from Ma‘alānā: silver, 3 shekels, its interest (amounts) to its double. Month Eight. Epo[nymate of Dād]î, the herald. [Witnesses: Bêl-]bāni/ibni, Nabû-ušē[zib, Sî]n-zāqip, Dādî. He gave the silver in Appaya.”⁴¹⁴

This document is also much more detailed, specifying that the loan is from the *rēšāti* (*rsh*), “first fruits” of Hadad, but also includes a note on where the silver was given. Lipiński has noted that in comparison to the first fruit loan of Harrānāiu, Sēr-nūrī is not defined as the owner of the silver.⁴¹⁵

The *rēšāti* -loans are also recorded in cuneiform in a similar format, introducing the source of the funds (the deity/temple) first and the creditor second. For example, in SAA 6 214: 1–4: “Two talents of copper, first fruits of Ištar of Arbela, (*rēšāti ša Issar ša Arbail*) belonging to Mannu-kī-Arbail (*ša Mannu-kī-Arbail*), at the disposal of Šamaš-ahhē-šallim (*ina pān Šamaš-ahhe-šallim*).”⁴¹⁶ It is not always easy to determine whether debt notes were issued by an individual acting in an official capacity or as a private moneylender.⁴¹⁷ These loans could be understood as part of the temple economy, but they are not given by temple professionals; for example, Mannu-kī-Arbail in the example above is a cohort commander.⁴¹⁸ Martti Nissinen and Raija Mattila suggest as an alternative explanation that the silver is borrowed for the debtor to fulfill the obligation of first-fruits to the temple.⁴¹⁹ Alternatively, the first-fruits loans could be loans from the funds the creditor has allocated to the temple. Nevertheless, the attestations of first fruits make it clear that there is a connection to the temple economy. For example, a text from Marqasu is a first fruit loan given from funds intended for the *qarītu*-festival of Ištar of Arbela.⁴²⁰ A list of Aššur temple offerings (SAA 7 212: r. 12–13) concludes with the statement “from the offerings of first-fruits, which the king imposed on Akkad” (*issu libbi rēšāti ša muhhu māt-akkadi šarru ukīnūni*).⁴²¹ The

⁴¹⁴ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 154.

⁴¹⁵ Lipiński 1985, 344.

⁴¹⁶ Translation from Kwasman & Parpola 1991, 172.

⁴¹⁷ See, for example, Postgate on the fines paid by Bêl-tarši-ilūma in the Governor’s palace (Postgate 1973, 17–18).

⁴¹⁸ Other examples include Kišir-Aššūr, also documented as the creditor of a first fruits loan in SAA 14 28.

⁴¹⁹ Nissinen & Mattila 2021, 162.

⁴²⁰ Marqasu 25.

⁴²¹ Translation from Fales and Postgate 1992, 199.

first-fruit offerings were clearly mandatory for officials, which may again be a hint at the status of Sēr-nūrī as a *šaknu* like his predecessors Handī and Harrānāiu.

As for the loan documents, one of them (ACP 59) appears to be a contract for providing harvesters in exchange for sheep: *qn 2 zy/šhrnwry/š'h 1/w'mr 1/'l hddšw/ry/šwpm 3+1/hn ḥṣd/ḥṣdn 5/hwh šlm/whn lh/ṣd špy' /yšlm* “2 rams of Sēr-nūrī, 1 ewe, and 1 lamb, for Hadad-šūri. 4 white sheep. If he lets reap, 5 reapers, he will have paid off. And if he does not let reap, the white sheep he will have to pay.”⁴²² Recording this in Aramaic may relate to the domain of herding and the short duration of the contract, implied by the harvester clause that suggests conclusion of the transaction by the next harvest. The other three are loans of straw (*tbn*). Hadad-šūri also takes a debt of straw (ACP 60).

Two Aramaic documents not directly related to Sēr-nūrī but associated with his archival generation are a loan of silver from the first-fruits of Hadad, where the creditor is Bušay (ACP 63) and a pledge of land to 'Ānān (ACP 64). 'Ānān, who initially was thought to be Sīn-nammir's brother, takes land from Abnatan as a pledge for a debt of three shekels of silver. The pledge mirrors the format of Neo-Assyrian land sales by defining the neighboring plots. Lipiński notes that two of the witnesses in this document (ACP 64) could be identical with two of the Gurraean soldiers mentioned in ACP 36, Īn-ili (ACP 64: r. 8: *ḥn 'l*)⁴²³ and Il-abad (*'l'bd*).

Recording a pledge in Aramaic is unconventional but not out of the question. This document (ACP 64) is also a rectangular shape instead of a docket,⁴²⁴ so it should stand alone as a legal document. The sealing and witnesses imply that it is legally valid.

u.e.

1. *rh n'*

o.

2. *'r' . byt šlš*

3. *lqh . 'nn . mn*

4. *'bntn bksp šlšh*

5. *šqln . byrh . tmz .*

6. *ḥd . 'zrdd . ṭh b*

lo.e.

7. *rh n whṣt'*

r.

8. *šhdn . ḥn'l*

⁴²² Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 166–167.

⁴²³ The name is incorrectly transliterated on Oracc (<http://oracc.org/atae/P522913/>, accessed on 4. Feb 2026) as *'n'l*, but according to the drawing in Lipiński 2010, 134 the reading *ḥn 'l* is correct.

⁴²⁴ The metadata on Oracc (<http://oracc.org/atae/P522913/>, accessed on 4. Feb 2026) misleadingly identifies this document as a “bulla”, which Oracc uses to refer to a triangular docket. However, as indicated in Lipiński 2010, 131–134 the text is a horizontal rectangular tablet.

9. whddšlm wklby

10. 'w' 'bd' w' l' bd

“Mortgage. A land of three (*se'ah*) contents 'Ānān has taken from Abi-natan for silver, three shekels, in the month of Tammuz, (day) one. Idri-Adda adjoins the mortgaged (estate), and the pasturages. Witnesses: Īn-ili, Adad-šallim, Kalbāia, Abdā, and Il-abad.”⁴²⁵

The first word of the document appears to be a title, as it is in determined state and cannot therefore be connected to 'r' syntactically. It is written on the top edge, possibly as an archival aid to source the tablet if it was stored with the top visible, for example in a jar. When compared to the typical placement of Aramaic epigraphs in cuneiform tablets, this would correspond with the left edge of a rectangular document. Much like the spine of a book, this side would be visible when sourcing the archive during its period of use.

This is not the only Assyrian Aramaic document recording a pledge of real estate. In a silver loan with a pledged house from Dūr-Katlimmu (BATSH 17 D22 l: 3 *byth . rhn . hlp . ksp*), “his house he has pledged in exchange for the silver”),⁴²⁶ *rhn* is instead a verb in pe'al form. Unlike ACP 64, this document from Dūr-Katlimmu is triangular, unsealed, and likely originally attached to a scroll – atypical of pledge documents in Aramaic. The rectangular shape of ACP 64 is more typical of pledge documents in Aramaic.⁴²⁷

This main part of the text is then followed by witnesses. Unlike the pledge document from Ma'allānāte, this docket does not give any information about the whereabouts of the house, and the document is unsealed. The format of ACP 64 is more closely paralleled by the cuneiform pledge of land ACP 21 from the same archive and other examples from the Neo-Assyrian corpus. ACP 21 is also of the *egirtu* shape, sealed, and begins with the area of the estate (line 3: É 50 ANŠE A-ŠÀ *ina* ^{giš}BAN 10 *qa*) and defining the location (beginning with line 4; SUHUR A-ŠÀ *ša* ^m*qar-ha-a*, “next to the field of Qarhāia”),⁴²⁸ followed by four more lines of neighbors.

The cuneiform pledge of land is much more detailed and includes not only a description of all the parts of the estate included in the transaction, but also the second archival protagonist Harrānāiu as the creditor. These aspects point towards more formality in comparison to the Aramaic document ACP 64. The similarities between the two texts relate to the format; ACP 64 begins with information on the

⁴²⁵ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 134.

⁴²⁶ Transliteration and translation translated from German to English from Röllig 2014, 64.

⁴²⁷ See section 8.3 regarding pledges in Aramaic loan documents.

⁴²⁸ Transliteration and translation adapted from French to English from Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 80–81.

pledge, followed by the debtor and the creditor, and then the amount of silver given in exchange and the date of the exchange. There are several aspects of ACP 64 which imply that its format is based on the Neo-Assyrian equivalents. For one, the area of the field is specified, which is similar to the Neo-Assyrian conveyance documents.⁴²⁹ Second, the verb *lqh* corresponds to the use of *leqû* in Neo-Assyrian loans. The next clause seems to provide information on the location of the field, using the preposition *ṭh* much like Neo-Assyrian sales of real estate which specify the neighboring locales with *ṭīhi* (sign SUHUR). The *ḥṣt*’ seems to be part of this *ṭīhi*-expression, which could be derived either from the root *ḥṣd* “harvest” and refer to a type of field, or as Lipiński suggests, *hūṣōt*, “pasturage” in Biblical Hebrew.⁴³⁰ Unexpectedly for such a high-value document, the date of repayment is not given, which Lipiński suggests is due to the creditor reaping the profits from the field.⁴³¹

The similarities to Neo-Assyrian conveyance documents and loans with pledges suggest that this document type is primarily recorded in cuneiform. The borrowing of the format and terminology from Neo-Assyrian is apparent, and the choice to record the transaction in Aramaic is unorthodox but not unparalleled. The document represents an odd middle ground of adapting the Assyrian format to Aramaic, extending to the shape, format, and sealing of the document. However, the lack of detail and brevity in comparison to the cuneiform examples suggests some lack of formality. Perhaps this may be related to the creditor ‘Ānān, if both traditions of recording pledges in cuneiform and Aramaic seem to have been used simultaneously at Ma’allānāte.

Sēr-nūrī’s period overlaps slightly with Harrānāiu’s. There are clearly connections between him and the family of Handī, but the exact relationship is unclear. The texts of his generation deviate from the expected division of Aramaic for loans and Akkadian for sales. While this still remains the norm, the pledge of land recorded in Aramaic and the loans of silver from the silver of Adad of Guzana may show a shift towards the appropriateness of using Aramaic for more transactions requiring more formality in the second half of the 7th century.

5.3.3.3. Sēr-nūrī’s inner circle

Certain witnesses are attested in both the dossiers of Sēr-nūrī and Harrānāiu, further indicating that the two came from the same social circles. Kur-ilā’i is mentioned as owning a field next to the land pledged by Nūrānu to Harrānāiu (ACP 21) and as a frequent witness for Sēr-nūrī, probably also identical with the witness *krly* in a loan from Adad’s first fruits to Sēr-nūrī (ACP 58). Other notable witnesses are Dādi-nūrī (ACP 37; 55) who is attested selling land to Sēr-nūrī and may be

⁴²⁹ Postgate 1976, 23.

⁴³⁰ Lipiński 2010, 138.

⁴³¹ Lipiński 2010, 138. Instead of the day of payment, Kaufman reads *ḥd* in line 6. instead as a qualifier of Ezra-Adad, “a certain Ezra-Adad”, which is also plausible, but does not really change the meaning of the document. In CAL, <https://cal.huc.edu/comment.php?coord=143021606> accessed on 23 Dec 2024.

identical with the Dādi-nūrī in the settled lawsuit against Sēr-nūrī about the dispute over slave girl, and Īn-ili, who may also be identical to the Gurraean soldier mentioned in ACP 36.

Sēr-nūrī's social circle includes primarily military personnel, but also professions associated with the temple of Adad, people associated with the royal household and administration, much like the previous archive generations. Both the documentation of Sēr-nūrī and the social setting appear similar to the previous generations, and he presumably held an administrative position. As the dossiers of the previous *šaknu*s were retained in his care, he may have been a *šaknu* as well, even if the title is not used in his dossier.

5.4. Conclusions on the use of Aramaic in the Ma'allānāte archive

To conclude this chapter, I discuss the use of Aramaic in the Ma'allānāte archive as part of the archival process: what kind of work processes it supported or was used for, and what the format and shape of documents inform us about the standardization (or lack thereof) of Aramaic legal documents in the archive.

The mental image of Aramaic as the language of grain and agricultural production strengthens with the Ma'allānāte archive. This relates partially to the bias of archival documents concerning transactions, but nevertheless Aramaic seems to relate to the private and mundane domain of economy. It is noteworthy that the accounts recording multiple grain deliveries were written in cuneiform, and singular transactions in Aramaic. Accounts of barley deliveries could be stored for a longer period than individual loans with a short-term storage period. The barley loans recorded in cuneiform during the second generation of the archive are not exceptional in the grand scale of Neo-Assyrian archives, but their presence in the archive that otherwise shows a preference for recording these transactions in Aramaic suggests that this was a conscious choice. The reason may relate to the amount of grain borrowed, as the date and participants of the transaction seem to be unrelated to the language choice. Aramaic is primarily used for transactions of lower value, which suggests a level of informality associated with these transactions. The format of the triangular barley loans in the cuneiform tablets implies that the primary use for this format of tablet was to write Aramaic, as the reading direction suggests. Another aspect to remember is that despite recording these transactions in cuneiform, their triangular docket format and string holes suggests that they were attached to a scroll written in alphabetic script, implying that in their original form these documents were bilingual.

The Aramaic dockets in their concise format do not record the titles of the people, but as with the Dūr-Katlimmu archive, the recurring names suggest that the people involved in witnessing are also attested in the cuneiform documents. Of course, individuation between the names recorded in Aramaic documents and the

cuneiform documents is uncertain. Nevertheless, the lack of titulary in Aramaic documents is another aspect of the informal nature of the documents. As the dockets were attached to parchment scrolls, this observation can only relate to the dockets themselves; the scroll attached may have included more information and a more rigid structure. The dockets function as a middle ground between the cuneiform tradition of sealing loans in a clay envelope and the alphabetic tradition of writing on perishable materials, as the clay docket permits the sealing of the document much like the envelope would. Like the cuneiform envelopes, the docket should include the full information written on the parchment, but due to the omission of relevant information such as lack of creditor of the loan, Lipiński suggests that the Aramaic inscription was abridged.⁴³² The rectangular document formats suggest that Aramaic clay tablets also functioned as stand-alone records, not just only as attachments to scrolls.

The irregularity in format of the Aramaic documents and their wider variety compared to Dūr-Katlimmu may relate to the distance of Ma'allānāte from the heartland of Assyria. Despite the Assyrian administrators and the allusions to retained connections to the royal household and the capital, this site was mostly defined by connections to the nearby small settlements.⁴³³ Diverging from the standardized use of Aramaic may suggest local traditions. For example, the format beginning with the object borrowed may be used as a type of archival aid: starting the document with the object it deals with helps to locate the correct one. This may explain why the scribes in Ma'allānāte do not opt for the use of seal identification. Despite the lack of seal identification, many of the Aramaic documents were sealed. The sealing instruments used vary from cylinder seals to stamp seals, fingernails, seashells and in one instance, hair. As unsealed cuneiform legal documents are regarded as copies,⁴³⁴ Lipiński questions whether unsealed tablets should be regarded as copies.⁴³⁵ As there is no evidence on duplicates and copies of Aramaic documents so far, I find this unlikely, and would rather associate it with informality.

Another aspect that may either relate to the variation in format or the function of the documents relates to the omission of creditors. Lipiński suggested that the creditor could be omitted from the docket, because the docket was stored in his archive.⁴³⁶ Lipiński may be right to think that the creditor was implicit in the document, but the lack of the creditor could imply that the loans were provided from institutional rather than private funds, possibly from the granary or funds of the managed estate.

⁴³² Lipiński 2010, 250.

⁴³³ Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 32.

⁴³⁴ Radner 1997, 40.

⁴³⁵ Lipiński 2010, 252.

⁴³⁶ Lipiński 2010, 250.

As a final note, the number of Aramaic epigraphs in the archive is relatively low compared to the Dūr-Katlimmu archive. Additionally, compared to the archive of Šulmu-šarri and wider Assyrian evidence, their format is more concise and irregular. In stark contrast to the other Aramaic epigraphs from the 7th century, the epigraphs in the Ma'allānāte archive do not contain the typical labels *'grt* or *dnt*. Neither of these words is attested in the whole archive. This is yet another example of the regional variation present in the archive.

6 Nineveh archives

In this chapter, I focus on the legal documents found in the Southwest Palace and the North Palace at Nineveh. The capital of the Assyrian empire was moved to Nineveh from Kalhu by Sennacherib and remained there until the fall of Nineveh in 612. The Southwest Palace was built by Sennacherib and the North Palace was the primary residence of Assurbanipal. The North Palace is also referred to as the “Succession palace” (*bīt redūti*), as it was the residence of the crown prince.

In addition to the legal documents, the palace archives include a variety of archival and library documents. An overview of the archival documents is given below in section 6.1. The focal point of this chapter is legal documents, as the use of Aramaic is primarily restricted to this text type.

In comparison to the archives discussed in previous chapters, the Nineveh archives represent a significantly different situation in almost every aspect. In terms of find context, we are dealing with a mix of approximations based on hints left behind in the reports of the mid 19th-century archaeologists – more than what can be said of Ma'allānāte, but less than the find contexts known from Dūr-Katlimmu. As for the socio-cultural setting, the archives in focus come from an institutional setting, from palatial archives in the capital of the empire. Thus, the private archives represent the widespread economic investments and ventures of the highest of the Assyrian elite. In comparison, Ma'allānāte and Dūr-Katlimmu represent a much smaller social world, restricted mainly to the management of the immediately surrounding areas of their archive holders. Perhaps the most marked difference relates to the internal structure and size of the Nineveh archives; altogether including ca. 6000 archival texts. The use of Aramaic within this corpus is mainly restricted to the legal documents, which still amounts to over 804 documents, roughly twice the number of documents from Dūr-Katlimmu and about eight times the number of documents from Ma'allānāte.

In the following chapter, I give an overview of the find context and reconstruction of the archives, followed by an analysis of the use of Aramaic within these archives. As the use of Aramaic among the legal dossiers is particularly splintered, this chapter cannot follow the same structure and approach as the previous ones. Despite the apparently informal and unsystematized role of Aramaic in the private documents from Nineveh, the documents demonstrate the spread of Aramaic to the administration of the Assyrian heartland particularly in transactions regarding barley. Last, I discuss the indirect evidence for the use of Aramaic in the state administration to demonstrate (or speculate) what could have been if Aramaic was not primarily recorded on perishable materials.

6.1. Find context and reconstruction of the archives

The main mound of Nineveh was excavated between 1845 and 1932. The texts found during these excavations, which can be roughly divided into the three categories of

royal inscriptions, literary texts and archival texts, now make up the Kuyunjik collection of over 30,000 tablets. While the collection is named after the main mound on the site, several of the tablets labeled under it come from other sites due to mislabeling and problems with transport.⁴³⁷ As no exact findspots or dates of excavation were recorded for most texts, based on the excavation dates of some of the recorded finds and the chronology of texts, the findspots can be roughly estimated.⁴³⁸ Many dossiers were likely from the Southwest Palace (Mannu-kī-Arbail, Sē'-ma'ādī), although some were also found as stray finds on the citadel and outside it.⁴³⁹ The majority of the texts date to the seventh century, but dates range between the mid-eighth century and the fall of Nineveh in 612.

The Kuyunjik collection includes the well-known “Library of Assurbanipal,” coined as such soon after the discovery, with which ca. 10,000 library texts are associated,⁴⁴⁰ many of them marked by Assurbanipal colophons. Unfortunately, Aramaic was evidently not the language chosen to record any of this higher knowledge,⁴⁴¹ and this portion of the records is markedly written in Standard Babylonian. As Radner has argued, this genre was reserved mainly for the “high language” or dialect of Standard Babylonian.⁴⁴² Instead, Aramaic is only present in the archival texts. This portion of the collection includes approximately 6000 archival texts published and re-edited most recently in the State Archives of Assyria (SAA) series. Among the archival texts there are ca. 3000 Neo-Assyrian letters, 1000 Neo-Babylonian letters, 500 astrological reports, 350 queries to Šamaš, 500 administrative texts, and 804 legal documents.⁴⁴³

Most of the legal documents are estimated to be from Sennacherib’s Southwest Palace and Assurbanipal’s North Palace. Another batch of legal documents was found by Iraqi archaeologists from a secondary context in a clay pot north of the Šamaš gate, possibly originally stored in a private house.⁴⁴⁴ These private documents are significantly different from the ones stored in the palace archives, as they also include several conveyance documents related to familial relationships, such as marriage documents and adoption documents.⁴⁴⁵

Theodore Kwasman estimated, based on the central persons of the legal documents that they come from 200 “archives,” out of which 150 feature just one

⁴³⁷ Reade 1986; Parpola 1986, 225 n. 13.

⁴³⁸ Reade 1986; Parpola 1986.

⁴³⁹ Kwasman & Parpola 1991, xvi.

⁴⁴⁰ Using this term broadly as defined by Pedersén to refer to ritual texts, omen series, medical texts, lexical lists, and literature such as epics and hymns.

⁴⁴¹ Unless this genre was written in Aramaic on writing boards, now lost. For a brief discussion of writing boards, see section 6.7 in this chapter.

⁴⁴² Radner 2021.

⁴⁴³ See Pedersén 1998, 158–165 for an overview of the Nineveh archives.

⁴⁴⁴ Pedersén 1998. The documents were first published in Postgate & Ismail 1993. They are also included in the SAA 14 volume.

⁴⁴⁵ SAA 14 437; 442–43; 450.

text.⁴⁴⁶ Kwasman considers this one of the most important features of the Nineveh archives, and attributes it to either archaeological accident or individuals with only one written business or legal document. An alternative explanation for these “single document dossiers” could be that many documents could be “satellite archives” and part of some of the larger dossiers.⁴⁴⁷ Other alternatives include trade in secondary debt by some of the central persons or a collection of documents by the palatial administration for an unknown reason. As Kwasman has outlined, the most significant characteristics of the legal documents are the “single document archives,” documents drafted outside of Nineveh, and their “provincial character” due to this.⁴⁴⁸ A significant item to add to this list would be the presence of copies drafted by a group of scribes, detected by an empty seal space and the neat Ninevite scribe handwriting.⁴⁴⁹ It seems that the copies were made of selected legal documents, which probably originally stemmed from private archives, but were copied and stored for the purpose of an unknown administrative process in the palace. This process may also be one explanation for the single document dossiers.

The administrative documents from Nineveh were edited in SAA 7 and 11 by Fales and Postgate.⁴⁵⁰ As with most archival documents, the administrative documents dated to the reign of Sargon II presumably came from the North Palace and the records from the reigns of the succeeding kings from the Southwest Palace. The documents consist of ration lists, workforce, residence lists, land grants and lists of properties in provinces (the Harran Census list), and obligations to provide goods.⁴⁵¹ The administrative documents essentially record the transfer of goods to and from the palace through different specialized managers,⁴⁵² but the intricacies of the system are largely opaque as the administrative process was likely based on oral instructions.⁴⁵³

The administrative documents are relevant regarding the archival reconstruction in part due to residence lists, which sometimes list the location where certain officials were staying. Some of the central persons of the legal documents, such as Rēmanni-Adad, are listed in these documents. Groß suggests these lists were recorded “presumably in the context of a temporary stay in Nineveh,”⁴⁵⁴ which seems like a reasonable conclusion; these documents were drafted for a short-term purpose. For example, the attestation of the charioteer

⁴⁴⁶ Kwasman 1986, 238.

⁴⁴⁷ See the discussion of *satellite archives* in section 3.2.1.

⁴⁴⁸ Kwasman 1986, 240.

⁴⁴⁹ Radner 1997, 40–47.

⁴⁵⁰ Fales & Postgate 1992; Fales & Postgate 1995.

⁴⁵¹ For the general typology, keywords used to classify and distinguish between the documents and the administrative process, see most recently Groß 2020a, 13–18.

⁴⁵² Groß 2020b. For a thorough study on the management of the palace and the positions involved in it, see Groß 2020a.

⁴⁵³ Postgate 2007.

⁴⁵⁴ Groß 2020b, 46.

Rēmānni-Adad in one of these lists does not imply a permanent residence in the palace and does not explain why his legal documents were deposited there.

To summarize, many of the hypothetical private dossiers among the state archives likely came originally from different private archives and were deposited in the palace due to an administrative change. This administrative change may have been related to rebellions, confiscation of property, managing taxation duties of elite officers, or many other unknown reasons. Some, such as the *šakintu* dossiers, were likely originally stored in the palace (see below in section 6.2). Many others, such as the dossiers of the charioteers, raise questions about the storage and archival logic of the Nineveh archives.⁴⁵⁵ By archive I am referring to the hypothetical original archiving place and text group where texts were deposited in.⁴⁵⁶ The Nineveh material was most likely dispersed between several archives, although their bounds can only be approximated. As we do not know the system by which the archives were organized, assumptions must be made based on the dating, contents, and central persons present in the texts. Therefore, it is more prudent to stick to the term dossier. By dossier here I refer to reconstructed files within the archives, text groups that are grouped together by modern scholars based on the central person (in terms of legal documents, usually the presumed archive holder, e.g. the creditor or the buyer) of the text.

6.2. Overview of the legal documents

The legal documents excavated at Nineveh were most recently published and edited in the SAA volumes 6 by Kwasman and Parpola (reigns of Tiglath-Pileser III through Esarhaddon)⁴⁵⁷ and 14 by Mattila (reigns of Assurbanipal through Sin-šarru-iškun with addenda to SAA 6).⁴⁵⁸ SAA 14 also includes the corpus of private archives from Nineveh published by Postgate and Ismail.⁴⁵⁹ The legal documents are organized in dossiers of identifiable central persons and/or professions within these two volumes. The categories of professions outlined by the editors are royal charioteers, village managers, harem governesses (*šakintu*)⁴⁶⁰ and other royal

⁴⁵⁵ Kwasman & Parpola suggested that these documents represent royal control over the charioteers and other wealthy and influential elite (Kwasman & Parpola 1991, xx–xxi). Other alternative scenarios, such as managing assets by the state after the passing of an elite individual were suggested by Fales 2003, 225. The exact scenario remains uncertain, but some kind of centralized control of the wealth of the elite is nevertheless indicated by the archive process here.

⁴⁵⁶ See the discussion of archival analysis and reconstruction in section 3.2.1.

⁴⁵⁷ Kwasman & Parpola 1991.

⁴⁵⁸ Mattila 2002.

⁴⁵⁹ Postgate & Ismail 1993.

⁴⁶⁰ “Harem governess” is now an outdated translation for the high-ranking female administrator *šakintu* in charge of the queen’s household in Neo-Assyrian palaces across the empire, see Svärd 2015, 91–105. Archiving the documents of the *šakintus* in the palace seems intuitive as it functioned as their main location of administration, and *šakintu* archives are also found in other palaces, such as the Review palace in Kalhu; see Svärd 2015, 97.

women, other prominent officials, royal officials, and the crown prince's household.⁴⁶¹ In addition to identifiable protagonists, there are also fragmentary texts that cannot be associated with any individual.

Table 17 Typology of documents in SAA 6 and 14. Loan documents with a preserved inner tablet and an envelope are counted as one. "Duplicates" indicates number of copies with a preserved original.

Document type	SAA 6	SAA 14	Add. SAA 6
Conveyance documents	229	271	12
Loan documents	78	73	1
Court decisions	6	20	1
Varia	3	2	0
Fragmentary/unclassified	13	86	4
Duplicates	17	0	0

The Aramaic material in the Kuyunjik collection was most recently discussed in detail by Fales in *Aramaic Epigraphs on Clay Tablets of the Neo-Assyrian Period* (AECT, texts 1–42).⁴⁶² Among these are 35 Aramaic epigraphs on cuneiform tablets, two fully bilingual documents, and 5 monolinguals. One additional Aramaic document recorded as coming from Nineveh is known in the Baghdad collection.⁴⁶³ These texts are dispersed among several dossiers, and for most archival holders the use of Aramaic in archival documents appears to be an anomaly rather than the norm. The following dossiers (discounting "dossiers" of only one text) include Aramaic epigraphs and/or monolinguals:

Table 18 Dossiers of more than one text which include Aramaic material.

Name	Title	Number of texts	Epigraphs	Bilinguals
Rēmānni-Adad	Charioteer of Assurbanipal	55	1	0
Sē'-ma'ādī	Village manager of the Crown Prince	4	1	0

⁴⁶¹ See the division by central persons and their titles in Kwasman & Parpola 1991, xxi; Mattila 2002, xvii.

⁴⁶² Fales 1986.

⁴⁶³ "NinU 4", published in Hug 1993, 19. Also included in NTA 1*.

Name	Title	Number of texts	Epigraphs	Bilinguals
Mannu-kī-Arbail	Cohort Commander	20	2	0
Nīnuāiu	King's eunuch	8	2	0
Kakkullānu	Cohort Commander of the crown prince	25	4	0
Kiṣir-Aššūr	Cohort Commander of the crown prince	6	1	0
Lūqu	Cohort Commander of the crown prince	3	1	0
Taqūnu	deputy	2	0	2
<i>Šakintu</i> and other royal women ⁴⁶⁴	<i>šakintu</i>	42	1	0

As can be seen from Table 18, the number of epigraphs is dispersed among different dossiers and their use can hardly be associated systematically with any individual protagonist. The exception to this may be Taqūnu, whose “mini dossier” of two documents deals with barley loans from the crown prince, and he appears as the middleman in these transactions. These are discussed below in section 6.3, which ties to section 6.4 on the four monolingual Aramaic documents, two of which deal with barley loans from the crown prince.

The lack of Aramaic monolinguals attributed to the major protagonists may relate to their archival context; if many dossiers of legal documents in the palatial archives are only selections from larger private archives, their grain loans (the primary text type written in Aramaic) were probably not of interest to the palace administration. However, most grain loans found at Nineveh were recorded on triangular dockets in cuneiform. The majority of these belong to the dossier of Bahiānu, discussed further below in section 6.6. While his dossier probably relates to grain loans from an institutional source, the private archives found at Nineveh

⁴⁶⁴ This number includes all the documents associated with the *šakintu* and the royal women in SAA volumes 6 and 14. Although the office was held by several individuals, the *šakintu* in the document with the Aramaic epigraph is not named. I have therefore considered this as one “archival unit” or a dossier relating to the queen’s household here.

attest to the use of cuneiform in grain loans. These documents, due to their shape and string holes, were most likely attached to scrolls written in Aramaic and duplicate their contents. Therefore, they point towards the archival use of Aramaic at Nineveh, although significantly different from the evidence from archives from the provincial private archives from Ma'allānāte and Dūr-Katlimmu discussed in previous chapters.

The relatively low numbers of epigraphs may also relate to the number of copies in the archives. None of the copies have Aramaic epigraphs, while the originals they were copied from very well could have included them. The Ninevite scribes employed by the palace, probably some of the most competent scribes in the Assyrian empire, clearly did not need alphabetic archival aids.

6.3. Aramaic-Akkadian fully bilingual documents

The documents from Nineveh contain two documents which are fully bilingual, with the same text repeated in Neo-Assyrian/cuneiform on one side and Aramaic/alphabetic script on the other.⁴⁶⁵ Both are barley loans and are written on triangular clay dockets originally attached to a parchment scroll.

SAA 14 98/AECT 3

1. 5 ANŠE ŠE.PAD.MEŠ
2. ša DUMU-MAN ŠU.2
3. mta-qu-u-ni LÚ.2-u
4. ina IGI mha-ma-tu-tu
5. ša URU.ha-an-du-a-te
6. ŠE.PAD.MEŠ a-na 1 ANŠÉ 5 BÁN-šá
7. tar-GAL-bi ITI.DUL
8. lim-mu mdPA-MAN-PAB
9. 5 LÚ.ŠE.KIN.KUD.MEŠ

r.

1. š'rn . snh . zy
2. br . mlk' . 'l
3. ḥmṭṭ . mn . ḥdwh
4. 5 b 7.5

⁴⁶⁵ Fales has also maintained that AECT 7 may be a fragment of a bilingual document, but no signs remain on the other side of the tablet.

5. ḥṣdn 5
6. l'm . rbsrs
7. nbsrṣr

Obverse: “Five homers of barley belonging to the crown prince under the control of Taqūnu, deputy, at the disposal of Hamaṭutu from the city of Handuāte. The barley shall increase 5 seahs per homer. Month Tishri (VII), eponym of Nabû-šarru-uṣur. 5 harvesters.”

Reverse: “Barley – the ‘deputy’ of the crown prince (has debited) to Hamaṭutu from Haduwā. 5 (*homers*) to 7.5 (*homers*). 5 harvesters. Eponymy of the chief-eunuch (*rāb-ša-rēši*) Nabû-šarri-uṣur.”⁴⁶⁶

The brevity of the harvester clause in the Neo-Assyrian text, added after the dating, mirrors the brevity of the harvester clauses in the Aramaic documents. As in the documents from Ma'allānāte, both versions begin with the borrowed object, much like a title of the document. While the Neo-Assyrian portion makes it clear that the barley belonged to the crown prince, the Aramaic version is more subtle. The inclusion of the title in the formulation seems to imply that the loan was given by Taqūnu in an official capacity, as a deputy working for the crown prince's estate, rather than from his private estate.

The interest rate in the Aramaic portion is expressed with the expression N1 b N1+ interest. Mattila reads this line as 5 b 7 w, Fales as 5 b 6.5. As Fales suggests, the two z-shaped signs following the numeral on the edge indicate the *sūtu*.⁴⁶⁷ However, following the interest rate as expressed on the Neo-Assyrian side, the borrowed amount plus interest should be 7.5. The surface of the tablet is slightly broken after the first vertical stroke, leaving space for another one – it is thus possible that the tablet originally recorded seven vertical strokes.⁴⁶⁸ Other divergences in the Aramaic portion include the omission of the month of lending and the title of the eponym date, *rbsrs* corresponding to *rāb-ša-rēši*, chief eunuch.

If one side is to be referred to as the “translation of the original,” this should be the Neo-Assyrian side, which includes less information than the Aramaic part. Aramaic in this document appears to take the leading role, also because the docket was attached to a scroll. As in the cuneiform barley loans from Ma'allānāte,⁴⁶⁹ this document is rotated along the y-axis instead of the x-axis as cuneiform documents

⁴⁶⁶ Transliteration and translation of the Akkadian text from Mattila 2002, 88. Transliteration and translation of the Aramaic text adapted from Fales 1986, 136. For the modifications made to the expression of the interest rate in line 4, see the discussion.

⁴⁶⁷ Fales 1986, 138.

⁴⁶⁸ Collated.

⁴⁶⁹ See section 5.3.2.1 on the dockets from Ma'allānāte.

would usually be rotated, thus following the reading direction of the alphabetic script. Despite the seal impression on the upper edge of the docket, the format does not include a seal identification but rather begins with the object owed. Also, the rest of the Neo-Assyrian portion follows the Aramaic loan format rather than the Neo-Assyrian loan format.

Assuming that the document was translated from Aramaic to Neo-Assyrian, the audience of the text was not bilingual and able to understand both scripts. This would be probably more plausible, if the roles of translation/original were reversed; but it seems unlikely that someone in the Neo-Assyrian empire was versed in reading cuneiform but not the alphabetic script. Second, similar transactions dealing with barley of the crown prince are recorded in Aramaic alone (see section 6.4 below). While many barley loans are recorded in cuneiform both on triangular dockets and on rectangular *egirtu*-type tablets,⁴⁷⁰ only one of them is credited by the crown prince.⁴⁷¹ The middleman of this transaction is Bēl-dūrī, perhaps a predecessor of Taqūnu as the document is dated to 658. Perhaps the use of Aramaic in Taqūnu's dossier is to be attributed to the later date or simply to Taqūnu himself.

Another bilingual from the same dossier (SAA 14 99) is unfortunately fragmentary on the Aramaic side. The same conditions of the rotational axis apply to this document.

o.

1. 3 ANŠE *ina* IGI ^m[iá-a-a-si]
2. 2 ANŠE 8 BÁN *ina* IGI [^m*gab-bu*-DINGIR.MEŠ]
3. PAB 5 ANŠE 8 BÁN ŠE.[PAD.MEŠ]
4. ša DUMU-MAN ša
5. ^m*ta-qu-u-ni* L[Ú.2-u]
6. *ina* IGI ^miá-a-a-si
7. *ina* IGI ^m*gab-bu*-DINGIR.MEŠ
8. ^{URU}*han-du-a-t*[a-a-a]
9. ŠE.PAD.MEŠ *a-na* 1 ANŠE [x *tar*-GAL-bi]
10. [x L]Ú.ŠE.KIN.KUD.MEŠ

r.

1. š'rn . [snh . zy]
2. br . [mlk' . 'l y'š]
3. w'[l gb'ln mn]

⁴⁷⁰ Cuneiform barley loans from Nineveh are discussed further in section 6.6 and equivalents from Kalhu in section 8.1.3.

⁴⁷¹ Loan of barley and an ox (SAA 14 23).

4. ḥ[dwh]

[space for 4–5 additional lines]

Obverse: “3 homer(s of barley), at the disposal of [Iaḫsu and 2 homers and 8 seahs, at the disposal of [Gabbu-ilāni], a total of 5 homers 8 seahs of bar[ley] belonging to the crown prince (under the control) of Taqūni, [deputy], at the disposal of Iaḫsu and at the disposal of Gabbu-ilāni (from) Handuāte. The barley [will increase to x seah] per 1 homer. [X number of] harvesters.”

Reverse: “Barley [the ‘deputy’ of the] crown [prince (debited) to Iaḫsu] and t[o Gabbu-ilāni from] H[anduāte]. ...”⁴⁷²

The format of this text correlates with its parallel SAA 14 98 and deals with a transaction with individuals from Handuāte. Due to their similarities, the texts were likely drafted by the same scribe, especially as these are the only two known examples of “full bilinguals” in the Neo-Assyrian Aramaic legal corpus. While the Aramaic side is mostly destroyed, the beginning of the document seems to follow the same format as the fully preserved one and likely included similar contents. While the document is not dated, it was probably drafted around the same time as the other bilingual.

These two documents probably represent an administrative habit specific to either the context (loans from the royal elite during the middle seventh century), or the scribe, perhaps both. More could have been drafted, but due to the short lifespan of loan documents they are more susceptible to being destroyed. Their inclusion in the palatial archives indicates, that these loans were not paid. As they deal with loans from the crown prince, their presence in the archives is not unexpected. The connecting factor between these two documents is Taqūnu and the location of the loan (Handuāte). Taqūnu is only known from these two documents, but the information that can be gathered about him based on them is that he dealt with loans from the granary of the crown prince and that he was a deputy (*šanû*), second-in-command of an office.⁴⁷³

These documents are very likely proof of a bilingual administrative scribe who drafted the document, most likely not the only one. As to *whom* he wrote a translation for, it is unlikely that many if any of the people employed in seventh-century Nineveh would have been literate in cuneiform but not the alphabetic

⁴⁷² Transliteration and translation of the Akkadian side from Mattila 2002, 88. Transliteration and translation of the Aramaic side from Fales 1986, 146–147. I chose to follow the transliteration by Fales due to his reconstruction of the title of Taqūni (“deputy” AECT 3: r. 1 [*snh*]), which is legible in the other bilingual document AECT 3/SAA 14 98 discussed above.

⁴⁷³ See Groß 2020a, 567 on the hierarchies within administrative offices.

script. Perhaps the cuneiform was written for the purpose of internal administration of the crown prince's incoming and outgoing barley, such as compiling tallies of outstanding obligations. Such documents could have been written in cuneiform for long-term storage. The choice of also writing the contents in Aramaic, mirroring the inner document, were then possibly written for a non-cuneiform literate person, perhaps Taqūnu himself. Based on the remaining evidence, the use of cuneiform even for triangular dockets seems to be more normal in the Nineveh administration, which is mirrored in the palatial and temple administration at Kalhu.⁴⁷⁴ The choice of including the Aramaic side is exceptional, and most likely associated with the middleman Taqūnu.

6.4. Aramaic monolinguals

I have classified six texts as Aramaic monolinguals.⁴⁷⁵ The monolinguals have not been included in the SAA series but have been edited in AECT. Four of the monolinguals are discussed below in detail; the fifth is an unintelligible fragment (AECT 12). The number of monolinguals is small compared to the Ma'allānāte and Dūr-Katlimmu archives discussed in previous chapters. Therefore, I will not attempt to reconstruct the normal format of Aramaic loans at Nineveh.

The first two monolinguals are triangular barley loan dockets, AECT 7 and 9. Like the bilinguals discussed above, these two are also loans from the crown prince. Of 30 loans of barley from the Nineveh archives,⁴⁷⁶ only four are written in Aramaic. All four contracts deal with loans from the same source, suggesting that they were likely archived together and written around the same time.

The date of AECT 7 is broken but based on the prosopography Fales estimates the date to be ca. 680.⁴⁷⁷ The fragment was a piece of a triangular docket and bears three lines in alphabetic script. As Fales notes,⁴⁷⁸ this piece is a flake of one side of a tablet and could have been part of a bilingual tablet.

1. [š]ʿrn . ʿzʿy br
2. [mlkʿ] ʿʿʿl ʿrbldr
3. [...] x x [...]

(broken)

⁴⁷⁴ For the discussion of cuneiform grain loan dockets at Kalhu, see section 8.1.3.

⁴⁷⁵ AECT 7; 9; 11; 12; 13 and NTA 1*.

⁴⁷⁶ Including one loan of barley and silver (SAA 6 221) and one loan of barley and animals (SAA 14 23).

⁴⁷⁷ Fales 1986, 121.

⁴⁷⁸ Fales 1986, 147.

“[b]arley belonging to the crown [prince] debited to Arbail-dūri(?)”⁴⁷⁹

If the reconstruction of *br* [*mlk*'] is correct it is possible that this docket would also belong to the category of bilinguals introduced above, but as seen in AECT 9 discussed below, barley loans from the crown prince were also written as monolinguals. This monolingual follows the same formula as the bilinguals discussed above (1. object 2. creditor 3. debtor).

The last of the Aramaic barley loans, AECT 9, is both sealed and has fingernail impressions. It is dated to 674, eponym of Šarru-nūri. The form of the document is unorthodox, because the writing on the reverse turns 90 degrees, beginning from the top left corner of the reverse. This writing decision was possibly due to the brevity of the document and was done to fill space.

1. š'rn . zy br
 2. mlk' . 'l . nbzrbn
 3. mn . 'y²/z²rn 5
 4. b 6
- r.
5. whšdn 5
 6. lm . šrnwy

“Barley, of the crown prince, (debited) to Nabû-zēri-ibni, from (the town) Y²/Z²RN. Five (*homers*) against six, plus five harvesters (as interest). Eponym of Šarru-nūri.”⁴⁸⁰

The middleman of the transaction is not recorded, and the owner of the barley is simply stated as the crown prince. The format otherwise follows the other examples above, beginning with object, creditor, debtor, interest and harvesters, and the date by eponym year.

The Aramaic barley loans from the Nineveh archives are not witnessed, which is unusual compared to the cuneiform barley loans from Nineveh and the Aramaic barley loans in other contexts. The reason may lie in their institutional context; perhaps the middleman between these loans serves as the implied witness, although his name is not noted in the two monolingual loans. All are dockets, so it is possible that witnesses would have been recorded on the now lost scroll. However, as dockets from other contexts include witnesses, while fewer of them, their omission from the dockets from Nineveh is odd. By contrast, some of the cuneiform grain

⁴⁷⁹ Transliteration and translation from Fales 1986, 147.

⁴⁸⁰ Transliteration and translation from Fales 1986, 151.

loans from the palatial archives, such as SAA 14 72 of Nabû-dūri, include witnesses as well.

Two of the Aramaic monolinguals are most likely originally from private dossiers, although their central persons cannot be securely connected to any of the people known from the cuneiform records. They are both witnessed contracts. AECT 11 is a fragment of a rectangular tablet, possibly from the reverse due to the witness list. Stephen Lieberman dates this document to 670 on paleographic grounds.⁴⁸¹

1. [x] 'rq [x x x x]
2. [x] hb' . lm² [x x x]
3. [] šhd . mrd²g'
4. [x] 'x¹ 'šly² . m[
5. [] w² m² [

Lo.e.

6. w² y² [x] . q²ll²⁴⁸²

The contents are too fragmentary for a translation, but the shape of the tablet and 'rq on the first line point towards a document dealing with a transaction regarding land, perhaps a pledge as seen in the other archives.⁴⁸³ Unlike the other documents discussed so far, this appears to be witnessed as seen by *šhd* in line 3 and the (albeit uncertain in reading) predicative element 'šly (possibly *-uṣalli* as suggested by Fales)⁴⁸⁴ and *qll*, which may be a personal name Qalaliu/Qullulu. There may also be a *limmu*-date in line two, but the script is difficult to read, and the *mem* written by the scribe is very similar to *nun*.

The final monolingual alphabetic document, AECT 13, is a pledge of a person for seven shekels of silver. The triangular docket is lightly inscribed, which makes its reading uncertain.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸¹ Liebermann 1968, 27.

⁴⁸² Transliteration from Fales 1986, 155.

⁴⁸³ On pledge documents in the dossier of Šulmu-šarri from the Red House archive at Dūr-Katlimmu section 4.3.2, and at Ma'allānāte section 5.3.3.2.

⁴⁸⁴ Fales 1986, 155.

⁴⁸⁵ There is only a photograph of the obverse of the document on the British Museum website, so the reading relies on the copy from Fales 1986, Pl. V. Fig 13.

o.

1. [ḥ]nny[?]m[?]/w[?] w[?] m[?] z[?]r
2. rḥnw . l[?] m[?]/š[?]rḥm
3. lš[[?]]n[?]g[?]h bksp
4. šqln 7
5. bywmy 30[?]
6. ksp[?]

r.

7. [O]y[?] x[x x (?)] x x x x
8. š[?][hdn] ‘z[?] wḥ[?]q[?]l[?]by
9. wns[?]ḥ[?][[?]]my
10. wnškly
11. w[?]bz[?]qy
12. wmwdd

R.e.

13. w[?]zrn
14. ‘l

“[Ḥ]NNYM/W and ‘M‘ZR pledged ‘M/ŠRḤM to Š[‘]NGH (Sīn-naqī?)

for 7 shekels of silver.⁴⁸⁶ Within 30 (?) days(?), the silver ...
W[itnesses(?)]: ‘Z[?] (Azī?) and ḤQBY, NSḤ[‘]MY, NŠKLY (Nušku-lē’i),
‘BZ[?]QY (Abi-zaqī?), MWDD (Mudādi?), ‘ZRN ‘L.”⁴⁸⁷

In line 5, while the numeral 30 is typically written with three horizontal lines, this one appears to be three horizontal signs connected by a vertical line, shaped like the letter “E” in the Latin alphabet. Some of the personal names in the witness list are also known from the cuneiform corpus, such as Mudadi and the elements -rahīm and -ngh are known from elsewhere.⁴⁸⁸ Nušku-lē’i is a frequent witness for Šilim-Aššūr (dossier of 18 texts, dated between 680 to 670), whose name could possibly be read as the creditor of the document (In line 3: lš[l]m ‘sr . bksp), but this cannot be confirmed without collation.

⁴⁸⁶ The translation by Fales reads “6 shekels,” but the transliteration and the copy records the number seven (AECT 13: 4: šqln 7), and I have modified the translation here accordingly.

⁴⁸⁷ Transliteration and translation from Fales 1986, 158.

⁴⁸⁸ Fales 1986, 158–160.

This text is another example of a pledge of a person for a debt of silver, a total of seven shekels in this case, as shown by the verbal form *rhnw* (3mpl) in line 2. The document is similar in shape and terminology to the silver loan with pledge from Dūr-Katlimmu (D22), which both of which use the verb *rhn*, “to pledge” to refer to the person/object pledged for the loan. At Dūr-Katlimmu, the preposition used is *hlp ksp* (D22: 3.) “in exchange for silver” vs. *bksp* “for silver” here (AECT 13: 3.). Unlike the other loans from the Nineveh archives, this document begins with the debtors and identification of the pledged person before the creditor and the object borrowed. This pledge document gives conditions for the repayment of the debt unlike the barley loans, which is probably due to the pledge; stakes for the repayment are higher.

The previous four documents, all from the Kuyunjik collection, are accompanied by one additional document from the Iraq Museum in Baghdad (NTA 1*). Originally published by Volker Hug without a copy or a photograph,⁴⁸⁹ it was also included among the documents edited by Lemaire.⁴⁹⁰ It is a triangular docket recording a transaction of barley, written in a very abridged form “Barley, took Hanel from Kenî from L’N, in the month of Kanun: 60 (homers)”, *š’rn lqh hn’l mn . kny mn . l’n byrx/ knn š’rn 60*.⁴⁹¹ The topic of the document is unsurprisingly barley, but as the document does not record an interest rate or witnesses, this may be an administrative record of some kind rather than a loan document.⁴⁹²

The few examples of monolinguals from the Nineveh archives attest to two types of use of Aramaic at Nineveh. The first type represented by AECT 7 and 9 is related to the bilingual barley loans, which clearly belong to the same office in the palatial complex that dealt with barley loans from the crown prince and used Aramaic as the language of barley. The second type is exemplified by AECT 11 and 13, which were most likely part of “private” dossiers stored in the palace. The same may apply to the document NTA 1*. While these monolinguals cannot be directly associated with any of the known dossiers, they should be considered as part of the same phenomenon that resulted in the storage of private documents of the Ninevite elite in the archives. They are either from private archives of people who resided in the palace or held their office there or deposited in palatial archives as part of the administrative shift that took place when many of the documents were copied. However, as none of the Aramaic documents from the Nineveh archives appear to be copies but bear seal impressions, the first option seems to be more likely.

⁴⁸⁹ Text “NinU 4” in Hug 1993, 19.

⁴⁹⁰ Lemaire 2001, 120.

⁴⁹¹ Transliteration and translation (adapted from French to English) from Lemaire 2001, 120.

⁴⁹² See discussion on the lack of witnesses in the dossier of Bahiānu below in 6.6.

6.5. Aramaic epigraphs in the Nineveh archives

There are 32 Aramaic epigraphs in the documents from Nineveh. The epigraphs are dispersed between 21 dossiers, and appear repeatedly in only four dossiers (Amurrî, Mannu-kî-Arbail, Nīnuāiu and Kakkullānu), see Table 19. Some of these dossiers are large enough that an appearance of a singular Aramaic epigraph within them seems like an anomaly; for example, the dossier of Rēmanni-Adad consists of 55 texts but includes only one Aramaic epigraph. In these cases, the Aramaic epigraphs indicate the use of archival aids in the place where the document was drafted, often not Nineveh.⁴⁹³ The dispersed appearance of epigraphs in the dossiers demonstrates a constellation of use of Aramaic archival aids across the empire, as will be shown below.

Table 19 SAA numbers of texts with Aramaic epigraphs.

Central person	Number of epigraphs in dossier	Text ids
Dilīl-Issār	1	SAA 6 154
Marduk(...)	1	SAA 6 59
[...]ni	1	SAA 6 196
Sē'-ma'ādī	1	SAA 6 111
Šarī	1	SAA 14 219
Nabû'a	1	SAA 6 284
Nabû-dūri	1	SAA 14 72
Rēmanni-Adad	1	SAA 6 334
Lūqu	1	SAA 14 24
Nabû-šumu-iddina?	1	SAA 14 86
Abi-rahî	1	SAA 6 250
Amurrî	2	SAA 14 94+95, 96
Mannu-kî-Arbail	2	SAA 6 213; 217
Nīnuāiu	2	SAA 14 16; 19
[Šalmu]-ahhē	1	SAA 14 116
Kiṣir-Aššūr	1	SAA 14 29
Bēl-uballit	1	SAA 14 119+120
Mu[...]	1	SAA 14 227

⁴⁹³ This was suggested by Kwasman already in Kwasman 1986, 240.

Central person	Number of epigraphs in dossier	Text ids
Kakkullānu	4	SAA 14 38–39; 41; 47
Iatâ	1	SAA 14 126
[...]-Marduk	1	SAA 14 172
šakintu	1	SAA 14 12
appointment query	1	SAA 4 162
uncertain	6	SAA 14 139; 152; 237; 324; 386; 398
Total	35	

The general structure of and the information contained in the Nineveh epigraphs was outlined by Fales.⁴⁹⁴ Typically, they tend to begin with what Fales describes as “a label,” either a noun describing the document type *dnt* or *grt*, or the preposition *l* “concerning” followed by information about the object transferred or other details about the transaction. This is demonstrated in Table 20. Most commonly the documents include a short description of the object transferred and the name of the seller/debtor. In one conveyance document, the epigraph also includes name of the buyer (SAA 14 24), and in one marriage document the name of the groom (SAA 14 38). In the case of the marriage contract, the presumed archive holder Kakkullānu buys a woman (the bride) for his servant, and the epigraph probably reflects his needs as the archive holder. This document is discussed further below.

Table 20 The placement of epigraphs, their distribution among genres and their contents.

Legend for the column “Genre”: S = Sale; RE = Real estate; P = People; App. query; = Appointment query; L = Loan; B = Barley; S = Silver; E = Exchange.

SAA	Date	Loc	Placement	Genre	Label	Object	Seller	Buyer
6 154	687	Nineveh	right edge	S:RE			x	
6 59	684	Nineveh	left edge	S:P		x		
6 196	681	N/A	left edge	S:P	<i>dnt</i>	x		
6 111	680	N/A	upper edge to left edge	S:P	<i>dnt</i>	x	x	
4 162	Esarhaddon	N/A	lower edge to left edge	App. query				
14 219	680 670?	N/A	left edge	S:RE	<i>dnt</i>	x	x	
6 284	671	N/A	middle	S:P	<i>dnt</i>		x	

⁴⁹⁴ Fales 1986, 6–14.

SAA	Date	Loc	Placement	Genre	Label	Object	Seller	Buyer
14 72	665	Nineveh or Maganiši	left edge	L:B	<i>mqrn</i>	x		
6 334	671	Rab Šaqa Province	right edge	S:RE	<i>d[nt]</i>	x	x	
14 24	659	N/A	right edge	S:P	<i>dnt</i>	x	x	x
14 139	653	Nur beti	left edge	S:RE	<i>[dnt]</i>	x	x	
14 86	652	N/A	left edge	S:?	<i>dnt</i>			
14 94	646	N/A	reverse	L:S	<i>'grt</i>	x	x	
14 96	646?	N/A	left edge	S:?	<i>l</i>			
14 16	639	N/A	left edge	S:P	<i>[d]nt</i>	x		
14 19	646?	N/A	left edge	S:P	<i>[dnt?]</i>	x		
14 116	post 648?	N/A	lower edge	S:?	<i>[dn]t</i>		x	
14 29	636*	N/A	left edge	S:P	<i>dnt</i>	x		
14 119	631*	N/A	left edge	L:S	<i>l</i>	x	x	
14 227	post 648?	N/A	left edge	S:RE		x	x	
14 38	629*	N/A	left edge	S:P	<i>'št š</i>			x
14 39	625*	N/A	left edge	E:P	<i>dnt</i>	x		
14 41	625*	N/A	left edge	S:RE	<i>dnt</i>	x		
14 47	617*	Nineveh	lower edge	S:RE			x	
14 12	621*?	N/A	left edge	S:P				
14 237	post 648?	N/A	left edge	L:S	<i>'grt</i>			
14 386	post 648?	N/A	(fragment)	?				
14 324	post 648?	N/A	top edge	Delivery				
14 152	665?	N/A	middle	?				
6 250	650?	N/A	left edge	S:P	<i>l</i>		x	
6 217	646?	Hamê	left edge	S:RE	<i>dnt</i>		x	
6 213	676?	N/A	lower edge	S:RE				

As the Assyrians did not usually record the place of writing, locating the place where the document was drafted can be difficult or impossible. While Kwasman has suggested that the “the use of Aramaic words and partly the employment of Aramaic captions” in the dossier of Rēmānni-Adad are provincial influences,⁴⁹⁵ this cannot be applied as a rule to all Aramaic epigraphs on the legal documents from Nineveh. Two sales of real estate in Nineveh are accompanied by an Aramaic epigraph, and it would be logical that these transactions were completed and recorded in the city (SAA 6 154; SAA 14 47). Documents with witnesses of mainly temple and palace personnel are probably also from Nineveh, although they could be drafted in any major city of Assyria (for example SAA 6 59). Evidence to the contrary can be seen in one loan of barley with an Aramaic epigraph, which specifies in the cuneiform

⁴⁹⁵ Kwasman 1986, 240.

text that the borrowed barley should be paid back in Nineveh (SAA 14 72: 9–r. 3), and it seems that such a clause would only be necessary if the document was not written in Nineveh, but the debtor and creditor were expected to appear there. While many of the documents were likely drafted elsewhere, these examples along with the monolingual dockets regarding loans from the crown prince also attest to the use of Aramaic in the Assyrian heartland.

Epigraphs appear on documents dated between 687–617*, but more so in the documents dated to the second half of the seventh century. This seems to be an accurate reflection on the normalization of Aramaic in archival use. Typically, the epigraph is placed on the left edge of the document, but as the exceptions to this show, the archival aid was placed wherever space allowed. The placement of the epigraphs suggests that they were not formal parts of the document, but rather informal archival aids intended for the archive holder.

As discussed in the introduction, the Nineveh archives included copies of legal documents drafted by a group of Ninevite scribes.⁴⁹⁶ Aramaic epigraphs appear only on sealed “originals,” as far as is known from the documents with preserved seal space. One conveyance document (SAA 6 284) from the dossier of Nabû’a appears at first to be an exception to this rule: the seal space on the tablet appears to be empty, but the obverse is partially eroded. However, Radner has pointed out that two faint stamp seal impressions can be seen and felt on the surface.⁴⁹⁷ The lack of Aramaic epigraphs on the copies implies that their use as archival aids was not an established practice in the process supported by these copies.

Aramaic epigraphs are most common on conveyance documents, and the documents from Nineveh are no exception. The few examples of epigraphs on loan documents are on envelopes, which is an intuitive placement for an archival aid.⁴⁹⁸ The one archival document outside the legal genre is an appointment query to Šamaš (SAA 4 162). The epigraph on the appointment query is written on the lower edge of the tablet, continuing to the left edge. The epigraph records the names of two of Esarhaddon’s diviners, *nwšlm* and *’q[r’]*, Nabû-šallim and Aqarâ.⁴⁹⁹ Presumably, this appointment query was performed by these two diviners. This is the only known epigraph in the divination query corpus, and the use of Aramaic archival aids on queries was clearly not the norm. The use of Aramaic in the context of queries is attested in second-hand evidence: queries record writing on

⁴⁹⁶ Radner 1997, 40–47.

⁴⁹⁷ Radner 1997, 42.

⁴⁹⁸ An exception to this is a triangular barley loan docket SAA 14 72, which includes an Aramaic epigraph on the “left edge” from the perspective of the writing direction of the text. This document is discussed further below in section 6.5.

⁴⁹⁹ Nabû-šallim and Aqarâ are well attested as diviners at Esarhaddon’s court (PNA 1/I, 121: Aqar-Aia (2), and PNA 2/II, 869: Nabû-šallim (8), but this is the only time these two are attested together.

papyrus/parchment in the process of divination,⁵⁰⁰ possibly because the medium can be disposed of by burning unlike clay. This epigraph is an example of the bilingualism of the scribal elite, and a curious insight into the people behind divination.⁵⁰¹

Only four dossiers include Aramaic epigraphs in several documents. The first of these is the dossier of Kakkullānu, cohort commander of the crown prince (LÚ.GAL-*ki-šir*), active during the late reign of Assurbanipal and after. His dossier includes 25 texts, mostly conveyance documents.⁵⁰² Four of these have Aramaic epigraphs.

Two of these documents with epigraphs, SAA 14 39 (dated 20-IX-625*) and SAA 14 41 (3-X-625*), were written by the same scribe, Šumāia, who is mentioned in both among the final witnesses. In both documents, the epigraph is written on the left edge of the tablet, although this was a usual placing for an epigraph. The place of writing is not mentioned in either of the documents. SAA 14 39 is a deed recording the exchange of a woman for a man, and the epigraph labels the document after the name of the man received by Kakkullānu in the exchange: *dnt šrdṛ q' l*, “deed of Issār-dūr-qalli”.⁵⁰³ In the other text (SAA 14 41) written by Šumāia, Kakkullānu leases 20 hectares of a field. The epigraph reads *dnt ḥql* “deed concerning land”.⁵⁰⁴ These epigraphs follow the already established pattern of epigraphs of the type *dnt* + the object transferred.

In SAA 14 38 (19-I-629*), Kakkullānu buys a woman for his servant, but the epigraph on the left edge reveals that this is a marriage contract: *’št š ’rdnb’w*.⁵⁰⁵ Fales notes that this is an example of writing Assyrian in alphabetic script, as the epigraph can be understood as *issūtu ša Urdu-nabû*; *’št* corresponding to reconstructed *issūtu*, “marriage”, and *š* corresponding to the relative particle *ša*.⁵⁰⁶ The Neo-Assyrian marriage documents can be concealed this way to appear as normal sales of slaves. The use of alphabetic script for the archival aid mediates between the opaque Neo-Assyrian formula and offers an explanation of the actual topic of the document to the reader. The intended audience of the document probably spoke Neo-Assyrian but was more proficient in reading alphabetic script. Due to the use of Neo-Assyrian language in both scripts there are even stronger

⁵⁰⁰ SAA 4 129; 130; 131; 132; 134; 150; and many more.

⁵⁰¹ For another example of the Aramaic bilingualism among diviners, see Valk & Svärd 2024.

⁵⁰² One is a fragment of a witness list, SAA 14 55.

⁵⁰³ Transliteration and translation from Mattila 2002, 44.

⁵⁰⁴ Transliteration and translation from Mattila 2002, 47.

⁵⁰⁵ Also in the cuneiform, lines 10–12: *ú-piš-ma m^hkak-kul-la-nu/ [ina ŠÀ-b]i ½ MA.NA KUG.UD/[a-na m^hARAD-^dPA] ARAD-šu it-ti-din*, “Kakkullānu has contracted her [fo]r half a mina of silver and given her [to Urdu-Nabû], his servant.” Transliteration and translation from Mattila 2002, 43.

⁵⁰⁶ Fales 1986, 204.

grounds for presuming that the same person wrote both the archival aid and the full document; The scribe was proficient in both alphabetic and cuneiform script.

One document records Kakkullānu⁵⁰⁷ buying a house in the *best part* of Nineveh (SAA 14 47: 7: É *ina* SAG URU.NINA.KI). This document bears an epigraph on the lower edge of the tablet: *pqn 'rb 'l/ sr 'š*, “Upāqa-ana-Arbail and Šar-Issār,” names of the sellers.⁵⁰⁸ Both epigraphs and the ones written by Šumāia are written from Kakkullānu’s perspective and they would be useful for him as the archive holder.

The other three dossiers include only two Aramaic epigraphs each. The two epigraphs in Mannu-kī-Arbail’s dossier are on two conveyance texts, dealing with the sale of a garden (SAA 6 213) and an estate in Hamê (SAA 6 217). In Nīnuāiu’s dossier the epigraphs are on two sales of slaves (SAA 14 16 and 19), both purchases from Huddāia, son of Mušurāiu. While the place of transaction is not recorded, these two documents were probably drafted in the same place due to the same seller. In the dossiers of Mannu-kī-Arbail (20 texts in total) and Nīnuāiu (eight texts), the Aramaic epigraphs are probably related to the drafting place of the document, rather than the preferences and archival habits of the archive holder himself. Only two transactions are attributed to Amurrî,⁵⁰⁹ and with a dossier so small it is difficult to draw conclusions on his language use.

As with epigraphs from the dossier of Kakkullānu, the ones that are legible are also written from the buyer’s perspective. For example, in a document from Mannu-kī-Arbail’s dossier, in neat handwriting on the left edge of a sale of an estate in Hamê (SAA 6 217), the epigraph reads “deed of Il-malak of the land of Hamê” (*dnt. 'lmlk . zy . 'rq . ḥm*).⁵¹⁰ This epigraph specifies the object transferred and the seller of the land, but not the buyer Mannu-kī-Arbail. In the same fashion, the epigraph on the left edge of the envelope of a silver loan from Amurrî (SAA 14 94a) reads “Contract of the silver which is at the disposal of Zabīnu” (*'grt ksp' zy 'l zbn*).⁵¹¹

One of the Aramaic epigraphs is interesting due its placement and contents. The epigraph is inscribed on a barley loan on a triangular docket (SAA 14 72). The transaction is otherwise written in cuneiform but bears an Aramaic epigraph partially on the seal impression and on the “left edge” from the perspective of the cuneiform writing. Compared to other dockets discussed in sections 5.3 and 5.4, the text is tilted 90° to the left. The “left edge,” which appears more like the top edge, is therefore also the one with a string hole and the Aramaic epigraph.

⁵⁰⁷ Kakkullānu’s name in the document is spelled as *Kul-kul-a-a*, but the witnesses include some of his repeat witnesses: Hirişayu and Ubru-Nabû.

⁵⁰⁸ Transliteration and translation from Mattila 2002, 54.

⁵⁰⁹ SAA 14 94+ envelope 95; 96.

⁵¹⁰ Transliteration and translation from Kwasman & Parpola 1991, 175.

⁵¹¹ Transliteration and translation from Mattila 2002, 86.

1. m²qšrn (/ : 30 qšrn)
2. š' r
3. y'
4. zy 'l nbdry

“Attached: (30 homers of) barley *belonging to* Nabû-dūri.”⁵¹²

The last line of the Aramaic notation continues above the seal due to lack of space. Due to a scribal error, it states “debited to Nabû-dūri,” who is in fact the creditor of the loan as seen from the cuneiform inscription.⁵¹³

The term introduced as the first word of the document is tied to the discussion on the function of the dockets. Fales suggests that both the readings *mqšrn* or *30 qšrn* are possible in the first line, as the first sign (three diagonal lines) could be read either as a mem or the 30.⁵¹⁴ If read as *mqšrn*, this would be passive participle of the redoubled stem of *qšr*, “to tie, join”; *qšrn* would then be the simple passive participle. While Fales suggested this may be referring to the physical container of barley to which the docket was attached to, his alternative suggestion that it may be related to *geṭ m^equššar* “a sealed document” known from rabbinic commentaries.⁵¹⁵ As most of the epigraphs begin with either *dnt* or *'grt* and refer to the document they are inscribed on, contextually *mqšrn* could be understood as the document type sealed by the dockets. The number 30 is typically written with horizontal lines,⁵¹⁶ but a parallel to this diagonally written 30 may be seen in another docket from Nineveh, although the reading is uncertain.⁵¹⁷ If understood as the number 30, this is an irregular variant of the numeral, as tens are generally indicated with horizontal lines. Additionally, as specific amounts of borrowed goods are rarely indicated in Aramaic epigraphs, *mqšrn* seems like a more likely reading, but either option seems possible.

Unlike most other examples, this docket has only one hole in the middle instead of two holes on the corners of the top edge. This may indicate that the docket was tied differently and perhaps to a different object, such as a sack or a container as Fales suggests, but this is difficult to tell based on the hole alone. Other examples of Aramaic epigraphs on cuneiform barley loan dockets are known from Ma'allānāte, but they do not use the same terminology and are therefore not helpful in

⁵¹² Transliteration and translation from Fales 1986, 167. Transliteration formatted to correspond with the line change in the middle of the word š'ry' in lines 3–4.

⁵¹³ See Fales 1986, 170.

⁵¹⁴ Fales 1986, 168.

⁵¹⁵ Fales 1986, 169 n. 57.

⁵¹⁶ See for example BATSH 17 D44:4.

⁵¹⁷ AECT 13: 5: *bywmy* 30¹², “Within 30 (?) days”, transliteration and translation from Fales 1986, 157–158. Discussed above in section 5.4.

deciphering the meaning of *m/qšrn*.⁵¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is curious that the term is otherwise unattested in Neo-Assyrian Aramaic and opted for instead of the expected *'grt* formulation.

To summarize the use of epigraphs in documents from Nineveh, they appear primarily on conveyance documents and are unevenly distributed among several dossiers. Out of the individual central persons discussed here, only Kakkullānu may have preferred the use of Aramaic archival aids in his archive. The dossier of his transactions is small, so this conclusion is speculative at best. The distribution of epigraphs tied together with what is known about the general archive situation indicates that many of the documents with Aramaic epigraphs represent scribal practices local to the transaction, rather than to Nineveh where the documents were eventually archived. The lack of Aramaic epigraphs on the copies adds to this conclusion.

Despite this, the practice of using the same terminology (*dnt*, *'grt*, etc.) appears all over the empire, as shown already by Fales regarding Kalhu, Assur, and Nineveh,⁵¹⁹ and as discussed regarding the archives from Dūr-Katlimmu (see section 4.2.3) and Tell Shiukh Fawqani (section 8.2.3) discovered later. Another consistent aspect of this practice is that the epigraphs are also almost always written from the perspective of the buyer/creditor who would be archiving the document. The reason for this “standardization” of epigraphs may simply be that it is an intuitive way of describing the contents of a document, or it could be an indication of scribal habits transmitted across the empire as a result of the administrative machinery of the Assyrians.

6.6. Cuneiform grain loan dockets from the dossier of Bahiānu

Additional evidence on the use of Aramaic in the archival context of Nineveh can be inferred from cuneiform grain loans. Many of these are written on triangular dockets, shaped like their Aramaic equivalents. The string holes at the top of the docket, often in the upper corners or in the middle of the top edge, indicate that these documents were attached to a scroll.⁵²⁰

Most of the grain loans from Nineveh belong to the dossier of Bahiānu, the village manager of the *lahhenutu*.⁵²¹ The *lahhenutu* was a female financial officer at

⁵¹⁸ In ACP 66 *qšt* (“Qaštu”); and ACP 22 *zy 'd ntn* (“regarding Ad-Natan”), discussed in 5.3.2.1.

⁵¹⁹ In Fales 1986.

⁵²⁰ See the discussion of this document shape in section 2.2. For more on the cuneiform grain loans from Kalhu see section 8.1.3.

⁵²¹ *lú GAL-URU.MEŠ ša mīlāh-hi-ni-te*, in SAA 6 66: 2.

the queen's court working under the supervision of the *šakintu*.⁵²² His dossier of 21 texts, dated between 704 and 682, includes 13 grain loans, of which most if not all are written on triangular dockets.⁵²³ The other documents include redemptions of people (SAA 6 61; 66), loans of copper (SAA 6 63; 64), a loan of silver (SAA 6 80) and one purchase of land and people. (SAA 6 65). Bahiānu's dossier contains no duplicates, perhaps because barley loans were not part of the copying process applied by the Ninevite scribes,⁵²⁴ but more likely because it was originally archived in the palace where he held his office.

One of the loans is accompanied by a receipt of payment (SAA 6 70, dated 29-VI-686 and SAA 6 72, dated VII-685). The loan included three debtors, and the receipt records that two of them have paid the debt a year after the transaction. The receipt is written on a more oval, almond-shaped docket, which was also presumably attached to a scroll due to the string hole on the top edge. Bahiānu's debtors often borrowed in groups. Three other barley loans include several debtors following a similar format, where the first debtor's borrowed sum is indicated with a full sentence and the rest in abbreviated format. For example, in SAA 6 70:

1. 2 ANŠE ŠE.PAD-MEŠ
2. ^{md}PA-ZÁLAG-*nam-mir*
3. 1 :. ^mla-TÉŠ-*a-ni*-DINGIR
4. 1 :. ^mšab-*ta-a-nu*
5. ša ^mba-*hi-a-ni*
6. *ina pa-ni-šú-nu*
7. *ina pu-u-hi it-ta-šu*

r.

1. ITI.KIN UD 29-KÁM
(cylinder seal impression)
2. *lim-mu* ^mEN-IGI-*a-ni*
3. LÚ.tur-*tan-nu*

“Two homers of barley – Nabû-nūru-nammir; one ditto – La-tubašanni-
ilu; one ditto – Šabutanu; (barley) belonging to Bahiānu, at their

⁵²² This title is translated in the SAA series as “temple stewardess” but due to their involvement in the queen's administrative staff a more general translation is appropriate, as argued by Svärd 2015, 123.

⁵²³ SAA 6 60; 62: 67; 69–79. The shape of SAA 6 69 is unclear as photos were not available at the time of writing. Probably also SAA 14 68, dated to 667, where Bahiānu loans barley to a priestess.

⁵²⁴ Note that while SAA 6 68 is labeled in the publication as a duplicate of SAA 6 67, this is not possible since both tablets are sealed, one with a stamp seal and the other with a cylinder seal.

disposal. They have taken it as a loan. Month Elul (6), 29th day, (cylinder seal impression) eponym year of Bēl-emuranni, commander-in-chief.”⁵²⁵

In general, there is little variation to the format of the documents, which can be generalized to two types. The difference between the types is the order of the creditor and the debtor. Type one introduces the creditor first, with the *ša* particle. The format can be generalized as follows:

1. Object owed (X ANŠE ŠE.PAD-MEŠ)
2. Creditor (*ša* PN₁)
3. Debtor (*ina pān* PN₂)
4. Transaction (*ina pūhi ittiši*)
5. Arrangements for payment: interest rate
(ana X :. 5[BÁN]-A.A *i-rab-bi*)
(date of payment *ina adri* in SAA 6 67)
6. (Harvester clause, in SAA 6 75)
7. Date

The second type identifies the debtor before the creditor:

1. Object owed (X ANŠE ŠE.PAD-MEŠ)
2. Debtor (PN₁)
3. Creditor (TA IGI PN₂)
4. Transaction (*ina pūhi ittiši*)
5. Date

This type is represented by only two transactions (SAA 6 60; 62), neither of which records an interest rate. The lack of interest rate is another parallel to many Aramaic dockets, as is visible in documents from Ma'allānāte.⁵²⁶ In the case of Aramaic interest-free loans, Lipiński has suggested that the interest is already included in the borrowed amount.⁵²⁷ The transactions do not specify the repayment date, except for one document (SAA 6 67), which specifies that the barley will only

⁵²⁵ Transliteration and translation from Kwasman & Parpola 1991, 64–65.

⁵²⁶ For the Ma'allānāte loan formula see 5.2.1.

⁵²⁷ Lipiński 2010, 257.

accrue interest if not paid on the threshing floor.⁵²⁸ This seems to be an exceptional clause within his dossier and does not necessarily mean that all of the loans were expected to be paid during harvest (although this would be the expected norm), or that the loans are always interest-free. As seen above, the debt of several debtors was paid to Bahiānu a full year later. This document is also special in that it does not include the *ina pūhi* clause closing the transaction, which has been used by Postgate to determine a “true loan” as opposed to another type of transaction recorded in the form of a loan document.⁵²⁹

The transactions are defined by two features: none of them are witnessed and none of them include any identifiers (patronyms, titles, localizations) of the participants. The lack of witnesses, like the grain loans attributed to Taqūnu crediting loans from the barley of the Crown Prince,⁵³⁰ suggests that these loans were associated with the department administered by Bahiānu and not provided from his personal possessions. While he is not identified by his title in any of the documents, this is not abnormal in barley loans. The lack of titulary suggests a level of informality, as does the mundane subject matter. As these documents were originally drafted in both cuneiform (on the docket) and alphabetic script (on the scroll, as implied by the string holes of the docket), these dockets may be considered as an example of the use of Aramaic in institutional loans from the granary of the department he managed. A similar situation can be observed in grain loans from Kalhu.⁵³¹ The use of Aramaic for loans of barley in institutional context relates to the short time span of archival use, expected to be disposed of after the debt was paid. The use of cuneiform dockets may relate to internal administrative processes: if the grain loans were tallied in cuneiform by the administrators of the department, such documents were probably preserved for a longer period and thus chosen to be recorded in cuneiform. Other types of loans in Bahiānu’s dossier, such as copper loans,⁵³² were recorded on regular *egirtu*-type documents, and the domain of the transaction is clearly relevant in this aspect.

One of the documents includes a short additional notation on the left edge of the docket, partially broken: SAA 6 78: s. 1: [x x x x x n]*a-as-ha-at*, “withdrawn.”⁵³³ Due to its location on the left edge, it may be an archival aid comparable to the Aramaic equivalents used in Bahiānu’s management of the archive. As such, cuneiform literacy in the palace administration was clearly more prevalent.

⁵²⁸ SAA 6 67: 4-6: *ina ad-ri a-na SAG-DU-ša šum-ma la SUM-ni a-na ANŠE 5(BÁN)-ša*, “(He shall pay) its capital at the threshing floor. If he does not pay, (it shall) increase 5 seahs per homer.” Transliteration and translation from Kwasman & Parpola 1991, 64.

⁵²⁹ This clause and its validity as an identifier of a true loan is discussed in section 2.1.

⁵³⁰ See section 5.3 above.

⁵³¹ Section 8.1.3.

⁵³² E.g., SAA 6 63 and 64, both witnessed and preceding by a seal identification.

⁵³³ Transliteration and translation from Kwasman & Parpola 1991, 68.

However, the use of dockets suggests that Aramaic had found its place already in the early seventh century as the language of grain loans within the capital city.

Most strikingly, like the barley loans of the crown prince in the dossier of Taqūni, the barley loans debited by Bahiānu are unwitnessed. The lack of witnesses indicates that these loans are different from barley loans encountered in other archives. As the creditors are associated with the royal estates of the crown prince and the queen suggests that these barley loans may come from an institutional source. The institutional domain may explain why their creditors require no witnesses to back their claims. Alternatively, the lack of witnesses may suggest that these contracts may not be loans at all, but contracts recording obligations to provide the barley. Some of the contracts are dated to the months just before harvest,⁵³⁴ when grain supplies may run low, but some are dated to the middle of the year.⁵³⁵ Notably, many of Bahiānu's barley loans are debited to several people, sometimes as many as 12 debtors.⁵³⁶ Contracts like this may be between the *lahhenutu* Bahiānu was serving and farmers of villages under her jurisdiction. At any rate, the lack of witnesses indicates that these were not regular loan documents.

6.7. Indirect evidence for the use of Aramaic in administration in Nineveh

While the remaining Aramaic documents from Nineveh are limited to legal documents, except for the one Aramaic epigraph on the oracle query, other evidence points towards the use of Aramaic in the administrative records of the palace. References to documents drawn up on perishable materials are mainly about papyrus (*niāru*) and leather (*mašku*). Papyrus is mentioned in numerous divination queries as the writing medium as part of the divination ritual, particularly in appointment queries; the name of the person being appointed was written on a piece of papyrus.⁵³⁷ Papyrus is also attested in a letter recording distribution of audience gifts to the palace.⁵³⁸ Although there is no evidence of using leather as the medium of letters, there are references to using it for drawing a plan of a fort.⁵³⁹ As

⁵³⁴ Nisan (I) in SAA 6 60; 71; 75; Iyyar (II) SAA 6 76; 77.

⁵³⁵ For example, SAA 6 67 (Tammuz IV); 72 (Tishri VIIth month); 73 (Sivan IIIrd month); 74 (Kislev IXth month).

⁵³⁶ SAA 6 77: three debtors; 28: twelve debtors; 79: six debtors

⁵³⁷ As attested in SAA 4 129; 130; 131; 132; 134; 150.

⁵³⁸ SAA 1 34 r. 19: 1 MA.NA KUG.UD 1 TÚG.šad-din 2 ki-ir-ki ni-a-ri LÚ.A.BA-KUR, "one mina of silver, one toga, 2 scrolls of papyrus: the Scribe of the Palace." Transliteration and translation from Parpola 1987, 36.

⁵³⁹ SAA 15 136: r. 15–18: [an-nu-rig] li-ṭi ša URU.bir-ti [ina UGU] maš-ki e-te-ši-ir [a-na] LUGAL be-li-ia [ú] še-bi-la, "[Now then] I have drawn a sketch of the fort [on] leather and am herewith sending it [to] the king, my lord." Transliteration and translation from Fuchs & Parpola 2001, 136. Note also the fragmentary reference in a letter regarding a military camp in SAA 5 160: 10 [x x x x]

such, leather was recognized as a suitable material for drafting documents and may well have been one of the mediums Aramaic was written on.

Another possible medium for Aramaic, particularly in short-term records of administration, is writing boards (*lē'u*) made of ivory and wood (examples found at Kalhu), but the only legible inscription on the remnants of wax is recorded in cuneiform and is a colophon from the omen series *Enuma Anu Enlil*.⁵⁴⁰ Writing boards are often referenced as the medium for administrative lists and inventories.⁵⁴¹ Groß suggests based on the letter SAA 15 9 referencing writing boards in Arrapha that due to the duties of the *rab ekalli* (“palace manager”) mentioned in the letter, these were also used for everyday records of managing goods.⁵⁴² For example, Esarhaddon instructs the recipient of the letter SAA 16 5 to write a report on a writing board about an agricultural inspection.⁵⁴³ Nevertheless, writing boards represent yet another perishable writing medium on which many documents related to administration were written on and which could have been some of the tools of the trade of the alphabetic scribes.

Aramaic scribes are also clearly present among the regular staff of the palace. As discussed in section 1.3, they appear particularly in administrative duties. At Nineveh, they are mentioned as witnesses among other scribes, officials and military personnel, one as the personal scribe of the crown prince,⁵⁴⁴ and they are listed among palace staff after Assyrian scribes in an extispicy query of Esarhaddon (SAA 14 205). Aramaic was undoubtedly part of the state administration at Nineveh, although the language is mainly visible through the private legal documents. There may even have been female Aramaic scribes, as suggested by Nissinen based on a list of female administrative staff from Nineveh.⁵⁴⁵

a-na še-er maš-ki [x x x], “...on leather...”, transliteration and translation from Lanfranchi & Parpola 1990, 120.

⁵⁴⁰ Wiseman 1955.

⁵⁴¹ Cf. CAD L, 157. for Neo-Assyrian attestations of *lē'u*. For more recent listing for the attestations, see Oracc in Korp 2024 with the baseform *lē'u*. Oracc in Korp 2024 by Sahala 2025.

⁵⁴² Groß 2020a, 56.

⁵⁴³ SAA 16 5, lines o.16–21: UDU.NÍTA.MEŠ *a-šur*: [GIŠ.ERIN.BAD-MEŠ KUR-RU x x x] *ad-ri ša LÚ.NU.GIŠ.SAR-MEŠ a-mur ina ŠĀ-bi GIŠ.LI.U₈.UM šu-tur ina ŠU.2 mIM.4-i še-bi-la*; “Review the rams, deposit *šupuhru*-cedar! Inspect the threshing floors of the gardeners, write (a report) on a writing-board and send it to me via Amurri!” Transliteration and translation from Luukko & Van Buylaere 2002, 6.

⁵⁴⁴ As witnesses: SAA 6 127; 314; SAA 14 205; 318; 153. In one short document, SAA 14 75, an alphabetic scribe is borrowing sheep and silver.

⁵⁴⁵ Nissinen 2013, 38 n. 59. While the reading is uncertain (SAA 7 24: r.2. 6 mⁱA.BA-MEŠ *ár-ʿx¹+ [x x (x x)]*, “6 female ... [...] scribes”), context supports this interpretation as Aramean women are listed on two of the previous lines (SAA 7 24: 1, 21). Transliteration and translation from Fales & Postgate 1992, 32–34.

6.8. Conclusions on the use of Aramaic in Nineveh archives

The Aramaic material from Nineveh is inconsistent in number, distribution, and form. However, along with the Aramaic material from other prominent centers of Assyria (Kalhu and Assur), it defined the “norms” of Neo-Assyrian Aramaic in archival use as outlined originally by Fales in 1986. These rules on the content of epigraphs, their formatting, and typical topics for Aramaic can still be applied to material from sites excavated later, such as Dūr-Katlimmu and Burmarina.

From the sporadic appearance of Aramaic texts and epigraphs in different dossiers, no systematized use of Aramaic at Nineveh can be detected. This indicates that most central persons from Nineveh archives did not use Aramaic archival aids in their archives, and their appearance relates to the scribal practices all over the empire. The Nineveh archives represent the final deposit of documents drafted in different parts of the empire, for and by different people, and eventually brought to Nineveh. Some of these documents were eventually copied by the Ninevite scribes for an unknown administrative purpose. As the copies never include Aramaic epigraphs, it may be presumed that the palace archives did not make use of this archival aid system.

Despite the lack of systematized use of Aramaic in the archives of Nineveh, it is clear from the indirect evidence that alphabetic scribes and Aramaic were utilized in seventh century administration. Most of their work remains invisible to us. Their presence is usually tied to cuneiform scribes, and Aramaic scribes almost never appear alone when mentioned. This makes the bilingual barley loans particularly interesting. If these bilingual documents were written by the same scribe, familiar with the formulation of both Aramaic and Neo-Assyrian loan documents, was he the only scribe able to do that? Probably not, so why the need for administrative scribes specialized in two writing systems and mediums? These questions are tied to the Aramaic epigraphs as well; the archives and their users in Nineveh did not make use of them.

As the archival evidence from Nineveh consists of many dossiers, archive holders, central protagonists, and products of both Ninevite and provincial scribes, the answers to the question *who writes what language to whom and when* are almost unlimited. First, the use of Aramaic cannot be only attributed just to provincial scribes. Indeed, the scribes of the legal documents with Aramaic epigraphs are in most cases scribes from outside of Nineveh who drafted the documents and added the archival aid according to their local customs. It is also apparent that copies of these legal documents produced by Ninevite scribes did not include Aramaic epigraphs. However, the bilingual and monolingual documents associated with loans of grain are clear indicators of local scribes engaging with Aramaic.

The answer to “what languages” were used, Aramaic and Akkadian were used both separately and together. In addition to the typical Aramaic and Akkadian monolinguals and Aramaic archival aids, the fully bilingual documents from Nineveh imply that there were many different levels of cuneiform and alphabetic literacy. Defining “to whom” the texts were aimed is difficult, as the evidence is dispersed across many dossiers. The grain loans written on monolingual Aramaic documents, fully bilingual documents and monolingual Neo-Assyrian documents emerge as a highlight here, as they reflect three different audiences in what appears to be institutional administration of grain. The bilingual documents imply that despite the lack of consistent use of Aramaic archival aids, some archive holders were not functionally literate in cuneiform and required translations. The use of cuneiform dockets implies that there was a need to process these transactions in cuneiform, while the option of using Aramaic was available. To conclude, the answer to “when” is Aramaic is particularly prevalent here in transactions of grain, also those related to institutional offices.

7 Social Network Analysis Approach to Bilingual Archives

In this chapter I discuss the use of Social Network Analysis (SNA) for the study of bilingual archives.⁵⁴⁶ The implications of social networks on language choice in multilingual communities are discussed on a conceptual level in section 3.2.3. The idea of social networks also frames my reasoning in the discussion of social circles of the archive protagonists in previous chapters and how it contextualizes the use of Aramaic within their archives. In this chapter, these social networks are modeled and explored as network graphs.⁵⁴⁷

SNA was initially the main methodology of this dissertation but took a smaller role towards the end of this study. Data preparation and cleaning was time consuming, and the results were not serving the main research question on the social domains of Aramaic, as it became increasingly clear that the people participating in the transactions were attested in both alphabetic and cuneiform parts of the corpus. Thus, language choice between Aramaic and Akkadian was not exclusive to any groups of people in the data. Eventually, SNA became more a tool to organize and explore the archives rather than process the data with network measures or to apply network theory. This approach is referred to as exploratory network analysis, based on exploratory data analysis.⁵⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the SNA process led to some results that support conclusions from the previous chapters. This chapter collects some observations encountered during this study on the application of SNA to archival analysis and particularly in the context of multilingual archives. I also provide visual depictions of the archives and their main people to illustrate the archive structures for the more network-oriented readers.

The chapter is structured as follows: In section 7.1 I begin with an overview of SNA application in Assyriology and in studying cuneiform archives. As archives are relational and Assyriologists often rely on prosopography for organizing archives, SNA has gained popularity in recent years in the study of cuneiform archives. In section 7.2 I explain the data collection process and what I deemed as relevant information for understanding the data. Section 7.3 illustrates issues of disambiguation in multilingual archives with cases from the Dūr-Katlimmu and Ma'allānāte datasets. I then provide sections 7.4–7.6 on network-based

⁵⁴⁶ The Dūr-Katlimmu, Ma'allānāte, and Nineveh datasets are available online in Zenodo (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17291905>). The datasets used are based on the PNA-dataset by Jauhainen & Alstola 2022. The process of extracting and updating these datasets is explained in the sections 7.4–7.6 below and in the Zenodo repository.

⁵⁴⁷ The figures of this study are also available in the supplementary Zenodo repository (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17291905>).

⁵⁴⁸ This approach is particularly suitable for describing and understanding the internal structure of network data; see Brughmans & Peeples 2023.

observations from the three case studies of Aramaic in the archives from Dūr-Katlimmu, Ma'allānāte, and Nineveh. Each section begins with a data description and depicts the archive structure. In each case, the Akkadian and Aramaic portions of the corpora are integrated in the archive structure and are not related to separate groups of people. Section 7.4 is based on the Dūr-Katlimmu dataset. The Dūr-Katlimmu network is centered on one archive protagonist, Šulmu-šarri, to whom the archive found in the Red House is attributed. I illustrate how his language choices are related to his inner circle. Section 7.5 demonstrates with the Ma'allānāte dataset how the archive is separated into different generations by utilizing visual network analysis. Section 7.6 tests the use of network measures to organize the Nineveh dataset into dossiers, and concluding thoughts are provided in section 7.7.

The program utilized for depiction and network measurements in this chapter is Gephi, an open-source SNA tool which functions well, particularly for depicting of large datasets.⁵⁴⁹ Gephi offers several different layout tools for making the network structure visible. I used the layout ForceAtlas2, which functions by pulling closer nodes that are connected to each other and pushing further away nodes that are not tied together.⁵⁵⁰

7.1. Social Network Analysis of cuneiform archives

SNA is a methodology which stems from social sciences and borrows much of its quantitative measures from mathematics and physics. With SNA, social structures can be studied in both smaller and larger scale by presenting them as networks. SNA has been applied in the study of cuneiform archives in growing numbers for the past decade. Some of the benchmark studies have been the introduction to the method by Waerzeggers,⁵⁵¹ and the proof of concept on the Murašû Archive by Allon Wagner et al.⁵⁵² These have been followed by monograph studies adapting network analysis and/or network theory to cuneiform archives,⁵⁵³ and inventive ways of utilizing available digital corpora for building network datasets,⁵⁵⁴ and studies exploring structures of cuneiform archives with network measures.⁵⁵⁵

The basic units of networks are *nodes* and *edges*, which can model relationships between any actors.⁵⁵⁶ Nodes are the actors, represented visually by points, and edges are the relations connecting nodes together, indicated by lines (see Picture 3

⁵⁴⁹ Bastian, Heymann, & Jacomy 2009.

⁵⁵⁰ Jacomy et al. 2014.

⁵⁵¹ Waerzeggers 2014b.

⁵⁵² Wagner et al. 2013.

⁵⁵³ For example, Waerzeggers 2014a; Still 2019. The first Assyriological monograph to utilize networks beyond concepts and applying network measures was the dissertation of Anderson 2017.

⁵⁵⁴ See, for example Alstola et al. 2019.

⁵⁵⁵ Jones 2023; King & Pirngruber 2022.

⁵⁵⁶ For a good overview of the basic foundations and terminology of SNA, see, for example, Borgatti, Everett & Johnson 2013; Collar et al. 2015.

below, where “A”, “X” and “B” are nodes, and the lines connecting them are edges.) The relationships can be anything from kinship to exchange relationships to co-attestation. In the context of Assyriology, *co-occurrence networks* are the most common. This type of network is built by drawing a connection between two texts if the same person appears in both, or vice versa: between both persons if they appear in the same text. There are two benefits to co-occurrence networks in modeling cuneiform archives. For one, they are usually possible to create at least somewhat automatically from available datasets.⁵⁵⁷ More importantly, the Assyriological tradition of organizing archives around central persons is drawing relationships between texts based on the people attested in them.⁵⁵⁸ This type of network is therefore already utilizing the type of thinking Assyriologists are engaged in when structuring archives. The downside of co-occurrence networks is that they do not include information about the nature of social ties between people. For example, a co-occurrence network based on sales of real estate would create ties between people who may have never met, such as witnesses and people who are mentioned as neighbours of the sold property.

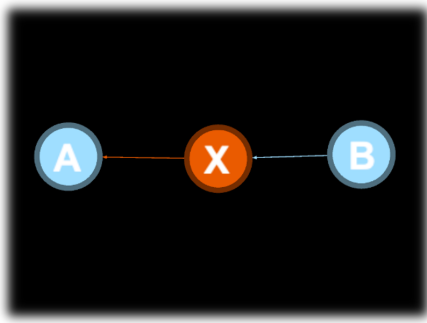
There are several different ways to classify network structures, but I provide an overview on only those relevant for understanding the following case studies. Networks are divided based on the structure of the network model. Here, the two types of networks discussed are *monomodal* and *bimodal* networks.⁵⁵⁹ Monomodal networks have only one types of nodes/actors in them. For example, a network presenting a relationship between persons A and B is monomodal. Bimodal networks have two types of actors, such as texts and people. The same types of nodes cannot be connected directly, i.e., a text will never have an edge to another text without a person node in between. Bimodal networks can be “collapsed” or simplified to monomodal networks. In this process, one of the node types is abstracted away into an edge between the remaining node type. For example: in a bimodal network Person A and Person B are both connected to a Text X (Picture 3), because they both appear in this text. When the network is collapsed into a monomodal network, the Text X node “disappears,” and it is represented by a tie between Person A and Person B (Picture 4). The resulting network is a co-occurrence network. The issue of collapsing networks is that further abstraction of the model may make it more difficult to remember or understand what the true connection between the different actors in the network is in the primary sources.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁷ For example, the PNA dataset utilized as the base for my network models is based on the *Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*. The creation process is detailed in Jauhiainen & Alstola 2022.

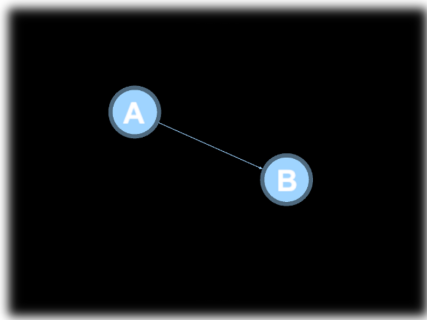
⁵⁵⁸ Discussed in section 3.2.1 on archival analysis.

⁵⁵⁹ A great overview of network analysis and a glossary of network terminology is provided in Collar et al. 2015.

⁵⁶⁰ Borgatti & Everett 1997, 246.



Picture 3 A representation of a bimodal network of three nodes. Nodes “A” and “B” are of the same type. Node “X” is of a different type.



Picture 4 A representation of a monomodal network of two nodes. Nodes “A” and “B” are of the same type.

Instead of looking at full networks, it is also possible to focus on a singular node and its connections. The node in focus is referred to as an *ego*, and the network of nodes connected to the ego is referred to as an *ego-network*.⁵⁶¹ Private dossiers may be thought of as types of ego-networks: Each text is connected to the central protagonist, the ego. For the analysis of private archives in particular, the ego-centric approach may therefore be more suitable.

When texts or the people attested within them are organized as network datasets, there are multiple ways of processing and analyzing the data using network theory. *Centrality measures* are a basic component of the network analytical toolset, as these measures are usually intuitive to understand and provide provable information about the main features of the dataset.⁵⁶² Centrality measures

⁵⁶¹ For an overview of ego-networks and their analysis see, for example, chapter 15 “Ego-networks” in Borgatti, Everett & Johnson 2013.

⁵⁶² For a description on the use of the centrality measures for SNA see chapter 10 “Centrality” in Borgatti, Everett & Johnson 2013.

aim to rank which node is the most central or important in a network from different perspectives. For example, *degree centrality* ranks nodes based on highest *degree*, a count of how many connections a node has. *Betweenness centrality* ranks nodes based on how many times a node appears on the *shortest path* between other nodes. Shortest path refers to the lowest number of edges required to travel between two nodes. Use of centrality measures is well exemplified by Rhyne King and Reinhard Pirngruber in a case study on the dossier of Rībat from the Murašû archive and shows how different centrality types can be used to identify social rank and position in a business network.⁵⁶³

7.2. Data collection principles

This chapter utilizes three datasets based on the archives from Dūr-Katlimmu, Ma'allānāte, and Nineveh. The datasets are collected with the same rule of principles and criteria outlined here.⁵⁶⁴ While all three datasets are based on the PNA dataset by Jauhiainen and Alstola,⁵⁶⁵ I have made additions to the Dūr-Katlimmu and Ma'allānāte datasets based on their publications.⁵⁶⁶

As most of the people attested in the cuneiform documents were already included in the PNA dataset, the networks could be built from the bimodal *edge list*.⁵⁶⁷ The following criteria were applied when adding the missing texts and personal names to the dataset: 1. For missing texts, more than one personal name had to be legible. If only one name was attested, including the text in the network would only result to an isolated node. Therefore, when the network data is utilized as an archive exploration tool the data is incomplete and does not represent the whole known corpus. 2. Missing names were added if more than one sign of the spelling was preserved. If possible, the missing names were connected to an existing ID-number of a person in the PNA-data (e.g. “Šulmu-šarri_19) or given a new ID distinguishable from the system used in the PNA data (e.g. “Iddin-ahhē_c”). The names which were absent from the PNA-data were disambiguated following the commentary and name indices of the publications. As a guiding principle, without a patronym or other likely cause, names were assumed to refer to different people. As the PNA dataset includes patronyms as individual nodes, I have followed the same principle when adding names not included in the PNA. This should be taken to account when the data is utilized.

The following workflow was followed for the datasets based on the Dūr-Katlimmu and Ma'allānāte archives: The PNA network dataset includes a bimodal

⁵⁶³ King & Pirngruber 2022.

⁵⁶⁴ The dataset descriptions are available online in the Zenodo data repository (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17291905>).

⁵⁶⁵ Jauhiainen & Alstola 2022.

⁵⁶⁶ See dataset descriptions.

⁵⁶⁷ The bimodal edge list refers to a part of the network data that lists attestations of people in each text as connections between texts and people.

edge list of all the texts and people from the PNA. In the bimodal PNA network, an edge represents attestation of a person in a text. From the bimodal edge list, I extracted only the texts from the archives and the people appearing in them. Then, I made a separate node list with all the unique texts and people from the edge list. For the attributes of the person-type nodes in the Ma'allānāte network, I retrieved the attributes matching the label of each person from the node list in the PNA network data (gender, namelanguage, origin, place, profession, start date, end date, time). I did not do this for the Dūr-Katlimmu network, as there were so many people who had to be manually added to the network. After retrieving the attributes, I made some corrections to the data based on the editions of the archives, such as joining text nodes that were concluded to be fragments of a single text, joining person nodes that represented the same individual, and adding people who were not included in the PNA. In the data, this is indicated in the label of the node; for example, the label of Harrānāiu in the bimodal Ma'allānāte network is "Harrānāiu_8 and Harrānāiu_9 and Harrānāiu_13."

The Dūr-Katlimmu dataset also includes also a more complex version of the network, where each edge in the bimodal network records the *role* of the individual in the text which they were attested in.⁵⁶⁸ These roles involve the central protagonists of the documented event: the buyer and the seller, the debtor and the creditor, and the plaintiff and the defendant. Other roles included are, for example, witnesses, harvesters, and neighbors of a sold property.⁵⁶⁹ While scribes were often listed as the last witness of the document, I assigned their role as "scribe" instead of witness. If the scribe is not explicitly named, I have not considered the last witness as a scribe, as there are several cases where additional witnesses are listed after the scribe. As mentioned, patronyms are also included, and they are labeled as such in the network data.

The collection of a more complex dataset allows for more ways to filter and explore the network data and lessens the number of times the primary sources must be reconsulted to understand the relationships between people. For example, this type of network enables the researcher to query all the buyers in an archive to identify the number of possible archive holders, or to see the roles in which a given individual appears. However, collecting this information manually is time-consuming and laborious. As it seems that the roles are not relevant for language choice beyond the archive holders and the scribes, this process was not repeated for the datasets based on the corpora from Ma'allānāte and Nineveh.

The following section exemplifies disambiguation issues caused by the spelling differences between the alphabetic and cuneiform corpora. These issues are inherent in the data, either related to the conventions of spelling or the format of

⁵⁶⁸ See also the significance of roles in the process of disambiguation in Pearce et al. in preparation.

⁵⁶⁹ The roles are defined based on the primary sources by the author and explained further in the dataset description on Zenodo.

documents. As such, they also reveal information about the primary sources and the processes that surround them and led to their creation.

7.3. Disambiguation and onomastic problems at Dūr-Katlimmu and Ma'allānāte

The collection of the Dūr-Katlimmu dataset led to two types of issues in disambiguation of individuals between the cuneiform and alphabetic texts. The first type is not exclusive to alphabetic documents but more common in them than in cuneiform documents: lack of titles and patronyms. The second issue is inherent in and unique to the two writing systems used in the archives: some of the names encountered in cuneiform texts are written in unexpected ways in the alphabetic script. This issue may be paralleled in the Ma'allānāte archive, and I explore this possibility via network means below. Both cases can be problematic in terms of disambiguation, but also reveal information about the language situation, as will be shown below.

Due to the shorter form of the Aramaic texts, they rarely include a patronym or a title for documented individuals. In some cases, however, disambiguation is more likely due to recurring witness groups.⁵⁷⁰ For example, in the Aramaic text BATSH 17 D60, four witnesses named Iddin-ahhē, Nabû-šarru-ušur, Nabû-šumu-iddina, and Nabû-mār-šarri-ušur also appear in the witness list of the cuneiform text BATSH 6 67. Therefore, it is likely that these names refer to the same individuals. In these cases, I have assigned the same IDs to the names and considered them as the same people. This does not negate the issue that the lack of titular and patronyms in Aramaic documents makes disambiguation more difficult, and mostly only people who are well attested in the cuneiform records can be securely identified. However, this phenomenon calls attention to the informality of the Aramaic corpus: these people were most likely more familiar to the archive holders. It was not necessary to refer to them by full name and title.

Another more peculiar issue with the Aramaic texts is the phenomenon of dual names or translated names.⁵⁷¹ In some of the cuneiform documents bearing Aramaic epigraphs, there are inconsistencies between the names written in cuneiform and the names written in the alphabetic script. In the cuneiform text BATSH 6 53, the name of the person selling a slave is written as [m]^dMAŠ.MAŠ-MAN-P[AP] DUMU ^{md}UTU-PAP-PAP, rendered as Nergal-šarru-ušur, son of Šamaš-ahu-ušur. However, in the Aramaic epigraph his name is written *'ṯhrsršr br ssḥšr*, 'Athar-šarru-ušur, son of Šamaš-ahu-ušur. The expected reading of the

⁵⁷⁰ A similar approach was taken by Fales in identifying documents that belonged to the dossier of Rēmanni-Adad in Fales 1987.

⁵⁷¹ This phenomenon of spelling differences between cuneiform and alphabetic script in the Neo-Assyrian period is also briefly noted with examples from Assur in Leonhardt 2024, 681–682.

logograms in the theophoric element ^dMAŠ.MAŠ would be Nergal, not 'Athar. In this case the Aramaic reading could represent the accurate way to read the person's name phonetically. The same person appears in the cuneiform document BATSH 6 54, again with the spelling 'Athar-šarru-ušur in the Aramaic epigraph.⁵⁷² In this document, the name of the sold slave also differs between the cuneiform and the alphabetic epigraph. In the cuneiform, the slave's name is written ^mDINGIR-*i*-BA, "Ilu-iqīša" in Akkadian, and is written as 'lyhb, "El-Yahab" in Aramaic. This is either a direct translation of the name into Aramaic, or another case of writing the name phonetically in alphabetic script. The latter option would require that the cuneiform sign "i" was used as an equivalent of *yod*. The reverse is well attested at Dūr-Katlimmu: *yod* is used for writing -ī in the middle and at the end of words, for example, in *byt* = *bīt* and *tšry* = Tišri, as demonstrated with examples by Röllig.⁵⁷³ While this does not necessarily mean that the same rule could be applied to cuneiform, it does demonstrate that scribes were trying to find equivalencies between the two writing systems.

Another example of a translated name (or perhaps rather phonetic reading of the name) is attested in the cuneiform document BATSH 6 94 where the patronym of the seller is spelled as [^m]GIN-DI-*man*, read in Akkadian as Mukin-Salmānu, and is written in the alphabetic epigraph as 'bršlmn, Ubru-Salmānu.⁵⁷⁴ Röllig suggests Ubru-Salmānu may be the true reading of the name,⁵⁷⁵ based on the root 'br "to be strong."⁵⁷⁶ As the epigraphs often record the name of the seller,⁵⁷⁷ [^m]GIN-DI-*man* is the most likely name written here alphabetically. Additionally, the epigraph is inscribed rather than inked, so it is unlikely that it mentions a person outside the transaction, as the epigraph was written when the clay was still wet. What makes this problematic is that the sign GIN (*kānu*, "to be permanent, firm, true") is typically read as *Mukin-* at the beginning of names. Whether this is an anomaly or whether GIN could be read as *abāru* is uncertain and remains to be seen in future research.

In the three cases explained above this variance may be due to the different writing systems: the same name written unconventionally with logograms and spelled more phonetically accurately alphabetically. However, in two other cases, the alphabetic spelling differs significantly from the cuneiform spelling. In the cuneiform document BATSH 6 26, the name of the woman being transferred is

⁵⁷² Using the logogram ^dMAŠ.MAŠ to write 'Athar is unusual; Fales has suggested 'thr is a loanword from Akk. word *ithuru* "emblem, standard", in reference to Nergal's connection to the standard (Fales 2007, 110 n. 67).

⁵⁷³ Röllig 2014, 16.

⁵⁷⁴ The transcription of the name here follows the edition of BATSH 6 94, presumably reading 'br as an Akkadian adjective, thus translated as "Salmānu is strong".

⁵⁷⁵ In Radner 2002, 136.

⁵⁷⁶ Akkadian "abāru B," "strength" in CAD A/1, 38.

⁵⁷⁷ As seen in the evidence from Nineveh in Fales 1986, 7. This phenomenon is in alignment with the evidence from Dūr-Katlimmu as seen in section 4.2.3.

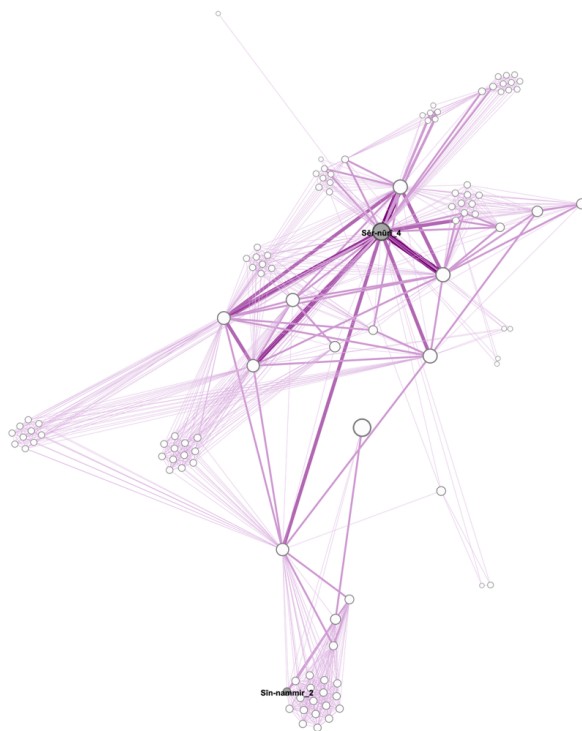
written as *ḥa-[a]t-tu-ša*, Hattuša. The epigraph reads [*ḡ*]*r*¹*t* [*z*]*r*¹*y*¹ *ḥmy*, “Document about Ḥammaya.” Radner and Röllig suggest, that the Aramaic name might have been a nickname of the woman.⁵⁷⁸ As the epigraph is incised and must have been written when the clay was still moist, it is likely that both names Ḥammaya and Hattuša refer to the same woman. In the cuneiform document BATSH 6 47, the name of the seller is written as *ṁIM-PAP-AŠ A ṁu-za-bu-ru-un-du*, “Adad-ahu-iddina, son of Uzaburundu.” The epigraph is read *ḡrt n²z²r² br [...]*, “document of Nazira², son of [...].” In this case, the epigraph is written in ink; potentially added after the clay was already dry. Therefore, it is possible that the deed was obtained later by Nazira², and he is otherwise unrelated to the original transaction. The same explanation may be offered for the name *ḡldy²br yxm/nn[...]*, Apladdi son of Iaman(?), in the inked epigraph of the cuneiform document BATSH 6 65. Apladdi is not otherwise mentioned in the text, and the name of the seller *ṁid-ra-u-nu A ṁtu-u-ru-ba-al-te* does not seem to be connected to the epigraph. As the slave in the document is sold to the archive holder Šulmušarri, this epigraph cannot be connected to a later transaction either. The first witness of the document is a prefect, Apladad-dannu (*ṁA.10-KALAG-nu LÚ.GAR-nu*), of which Apladdi could be a hypocoristic form. Why the epigraph would refer to the first witness is unclear, as epigraphs usually identify the document by the name of someone involved in the transaction. Perhaps the writer of this epigraph remembered the transaction particularly by the presence of the prefect witnessing the transaction?

While these six cases do not necessarily account for the use of dual names at Dūr-Katlimmu, they prove that spellings of names in the Aramaic monolingual documents are difficult to trace back to their spellings in cuneiform. It is possible that the same phenomenon hides behind other logographically written names. Therefore, it is even more likely that certain individuals are logged in the data several times, resulting in a sparser and larger reconstruction of the social network.

The issue regarding disambiguation questions of cuneiform and alphabetic spellings of different names has also been raised regarding one of the archive protagonists from the Ma'allānāte archive, Sēr-nūrī. As discussed in section 0, Sēr-nūrī has been suggested to be identical with Sīn-nammir, the son of the previous archive holder Harrānāiu. This possibility can also be explored via network means. On the one hand, Sīn-nammir and Sēr-nūrī are never attested together in the same texts, which means that it is possible that these names refer to the same person. On the other hand, only one person is attested in both of their ego-networks (depicted in Picture 5 below), Īn-ili. He is one of the frequent witnesses of Sēr-nūrī, attested

⁵⁷⁸ The name is likely not related to the city of Hattuša, destroyed already half a millennium before the writing of the text.

in altogether five texts (*ḥn 'l* in Aramaic texts ACP 59; 64).⁵⁷⁹ A stronger overlap of social circles would be expected if these names would refer to the same individual, although the data surely displays only a fraction of the social interactions of the central persons. Therefore, in the absence of strong evidence, either scenario is possible, but it is in the light of this evidence more likely that they are not the same person. Both options are nevertheless possible, as the dataset is small; the name would be a direct translation from Akkadian to Aramaic, and these professions/titles could be hereditary.

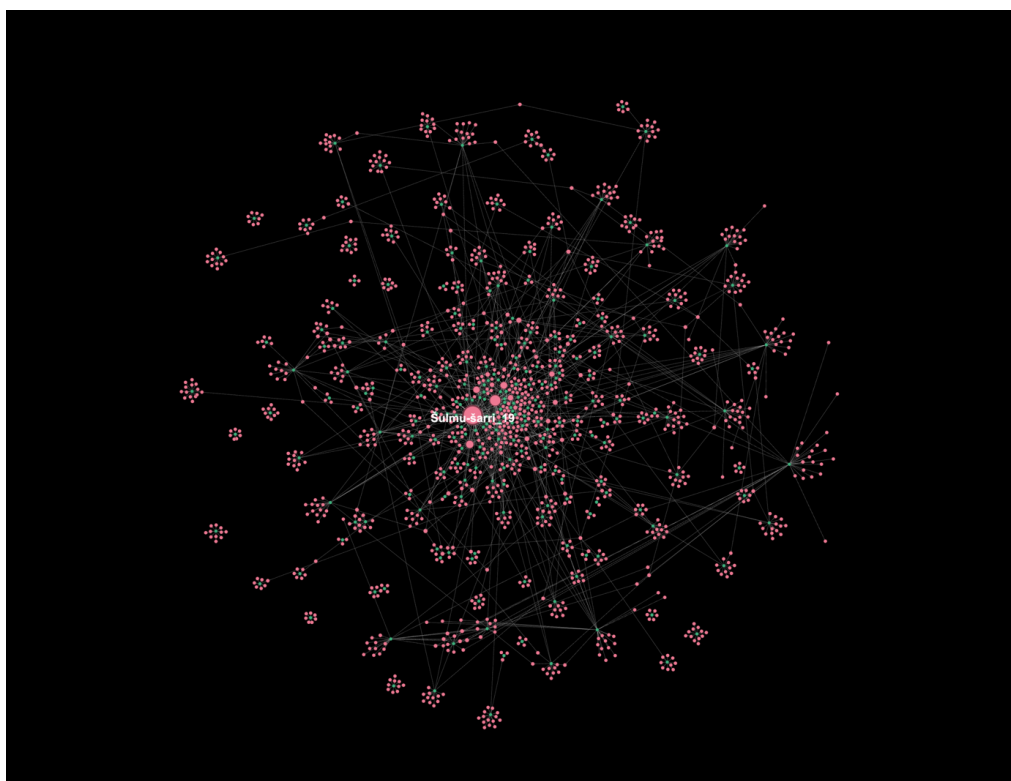


Picture 5 The ego-networks of Sēr-nūrī and Sīn-nammir (colored in dark grey), high-lighting their different social circles. The rest of the nodes are colored in white.

⁵⁷⁹ Although read as *'n 'l* in both ACP 59 and 64 in the transliterations on Oracc (ACP 59: <http://oracc.org/atac/P522908/>; ACP 64 <http://oracc.org/atac/P522913/>, accessed 9. Feb 2026), I follow here the transliterations and drawings in Lipiński 2010, 134; 166.

7.4. Dūr-Katlimmu network structure and the inner circle of Šulmu-šarri

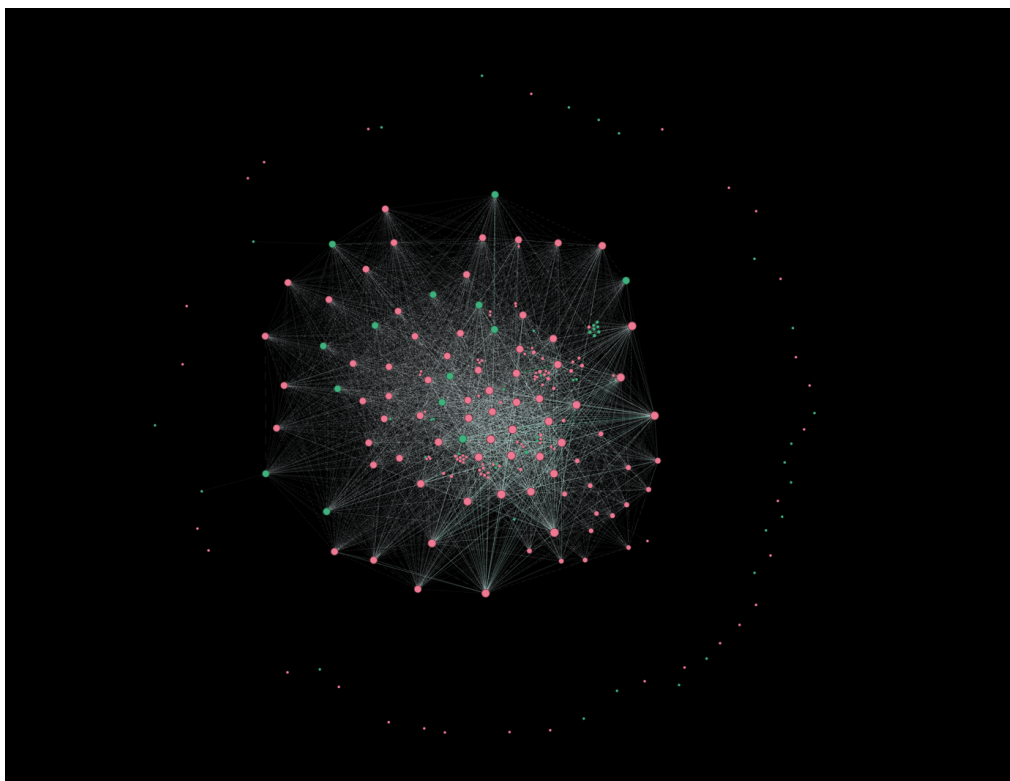
This section deals with the structure of the Dūr-Katlimmu network. This network does not represent all documents from Dūr-Katlimmu, but includes only those with more than one legible name. From the network structure alone, it is possible to see two features of the sources from Dūr-Katlimmu: 1. Most of the documents come from the Red House from the archive of Šulmu-šarri, a wealthy *ša-qurbūte* and his descendants, and 2. The same people are attested in both the cuneiform and alphabetic portions of the corpus. After demonstrating this, I discuss the inner circle of Šulmu-šarri as it is visible in the network.



Picture 6 The bimodal Dūr-Katlimmu network. Colors representing type of node: Red = person, Green = text. The hubs disconnected from the main component on the periphery of the graph are the texts with people who do not appear in the rest of the corpus. The node of Šulmu-šarri, the central protagonist of the Red House archive, is labeled in the graph.

As a bimodal network of both texts and people attested in the texts, the network consists of 223 texts and 1393 persons. The network has 51 components: this means that there are numerous of texts which cannot be connected to the rest

of the network based on the individuals attested in them. Several potential reasons could explain the disconnect between the components. For example, the disconnected texts predate the active phase of the Red House and therefore do not include the same people, or the unconnected texts are from another archival context than the Red House. It is also possible that there are still duplicates of individuals in the network data, which would leave certain texts disconnected from the main component. Some of these texts may also represent documents obtained from another person or archive, for example, in the process of buying real estate. As portrayed in Picture 6, the archive is centered on the figure Šulmu-šarri. The size of his node corresponds to his *degree centrality*, i.e., how many texts name him.



Picture 7 The Dūr-Katlimmu corpus displayed as a monomodal network of texts. Aramaic texts are represented by the green nodes, and the Neo-Assyrian texts are represented by the red nodes. The size of the node correlates with the number of connections each node has.

The Aramaic texts are generally well connected to the rest of the network, as shown in Picture 7. Of the 59 Aramaic texts included in the network data, 37 are connected to the main component of the network, meaning that the language was utilized in the context of both the central persons and their inner circles. In comparison, of the 173 Neo-Assyrian texts, 144 are connected to the main component.

The network is clearly structured around the actions of Šulmu-šarri. The top 15 most frequently attested individuals belong mostly to the inner circles of Šulmu-šarri:

Table 21 The person nodes by highest degree in the bimodal network.

ID-number	Degree
Šulmu-šarri_19	76
Iddin-ahhē_c	38
Šamši, Šamsi, Šamšia_4	22
Mannu-kī-Arbail_26	19
Nabû-mār-šarri-ušur_a	17
Nabû-šarru-ušur_a	12
Huzīru_a	11
Hazālu_1	10
Mušēzib-Issār_b	9
Rahīmi-il or Rahīmi-Il_2	8
Ahu-tabši_a	7
Nušku-šarru-ušur_4_5	7
Salmānu-abu-ušur_1	7
Salmānu-idrī_1	6
Ah-abû_a	5

In Table 21 the degree represents the total number of text nodes connected to the person node, in other words, how many texts the person is attested in. Therefore, these are the most often attested individuals in the texts from Dūr-Katlimmu.

The other central protagonists/potential archive holders⁵⁸⁰ included in this list (Table 22) are Iddin-ahhē and Rahīmi-il. Both had small dossiers in the Red House, and Iddin-ahhē is one of the repeat witnesses of Šulmu-šarri. Radner associates 11 texts with the dossier of Rahīmi-il and only three may be attributed to the dossier of Iddin-ahhē.⁵⁸¹ The others in the list are attested often because of their

⁵⁸⁰ Following the column *Archivherr* in the table by Radner based on whose archival interests the text belongs to (Radner 2002, 225–229).

⁵⁸¹ In addition to BATSH 6 117 and 118 attributed to Iddin-ahhē by Radner, I have included in this count the text BATSH 6 184 despite the broken patronym. Due to the archive context and

involvement with Šulmu-šarri, not because they have their own dossiers. Many of them are his trusted witnesses, likely collaborators, employees or friends, or others often around and available when a witness is needed. These people are discussed in more detail in section 4.3.3, as they relate to Šulmu-šarri's social context.

Table 22 Top 15 texts from the monomodal text network comparing the degree and betweenness centrality scores.

ID	Language	Archive holder	Degree	Betweenness centrality
BATSH 6 60	Neo-Assyrian	Šulmu-šarri	88	721.78
BATSH 6 17	Neo-Assyrian	Šulmu-šarri	79	609.64
BATSH 6 55	Neo-Assyrian	Šulmu-šarri	98	596.81
BATSH 6 66	Neo-Assyrian	Šulmu-šarri <i>ša-qurbūte</i>	79	548.31
BATSH 6 43	Neo-Assyrian	[Šulmu-šarri]	100	502.97
BATSH 6 31	Neo-Assyrian	Šulmu-šarri	99	498.13
BATSH 6 106	Neo-Assyrian	[Šulmu-šarri]	40	497.39
BATSH 6 91	Neo-Assyrian	Šulmu-šarri	100	495.91
BATSH 6 62	Neo-Assyrian	Šulmu-šarri <i>ša-qurbūte</i>	104	493.47
BATSH 6 41	Neo-Assyrian	Šulmu-šarri	87	476.37
BATSH 6 64	Neo-Assyrian	Šulmu-šarri <i>ša-qurbūte</i>	103	471.42

prominence of Iddin-ahhē in Šulmu-šarri's network, it is likely that he is attested in this document as well.

ID	Language	Archive holder	Degree	Betweenness centrality
BATSH 6 22	Neo-Assyrian	N/A	15	462.31
BATSH 6 37	Neo-Assyrian	Adad-aplu-iddina	8	428.03
BATSH 6 8	Neo-Assyrian	Bēl-ahhēšu	79	395.35
BATSH 6 133	Neo-Assyrian	N/A	14	363.44

Comparing the betweenness centrality scores to the degree centrality scores of texts from the monomodal text network highlights some aspects of the connections between the Aramaic and Neo-Assyrian portions. As can be seen from (Table 22), particularly the cuneiform texts attributed to Šulmu-šarri's dossier connect texts that would otherwise be more or completely disconnected from the network. This also pertains to the Aramaic texts (Table 23 below); one probable reason for the high betweenness centrality for texts from Šulmu-šarri's dossier is that the people attested in his texts are confidently identifiable in the alphabetic corpus. He is the connecting factor between most of the texts, and by extension, most people. The lack of Aramaic documents in the top 15 texts ranked by betweenness centrality is probably to be associated with their fewer witnesses. This corresponds to fewer connections to people and thus fewer connections to other texts. The five highest ranking Aramaic texts from the corpus (Table 23) are ranked higher due to the appearance of more than two people who are also attested in the cuneiform corpus.

Table 23 Five highest ranking Aramaic texts by betweenness centrality score in the monomodal text network.

ID	Language	Archive holder	Degree	Betweenness centrality
D8*	Aramaic	Šulmu-šarri	83	304.42
D36	Aramaic	N/A	85	214.79
D6	Aramaic	Šulmu- [šarri]	76	179.00
D11	Aramaic	N/A	76	179.00
D31	Aramaic	Aširāya	22	178.99

Another noteworthy individual connecting the alphabetic corpus to the cuneiform corpus is Huzīru_a, who is attested in eight Aramaic texts and two cuneiform texts.⁵⁸² Out of the eight Aramaic texts, four were excavated in the Red House room JW, and four are unprovenanced – perhaps also looted from room JW. The preserved creditors/buyers in the texts are Barruqu, Šulmu-šarri, and Salmānu-nāšir – the creditors of five texts are not legible. The high betweenness score of Huzīru (Table 24) shows that the same individuals took part in both the transactions of borrowing silver and selling real estate, even though the language choice in recording these transactions varied.

Table 24 The 15 highest ranking individuals in the network by betweenness centrality scores, with comparison to their degree centrality scores.

ID	Degree	Betweenness Centrality
Šulmu-šarri_19	76	361665.85
Iddin-ahhē_c	38	118382.98
Šamši, Šamsi, Šamšia_4	22	63522.95
Mas'āiu_2	3	35300.29
Hazālu_1	10	34488.71
Urdu-Issar_38	5	33449.06
Mannu-kī-Arbail_26	19	31509.31
Rahīmi-il or Rahīmi-Il_2	8	28863.17
Nabû-mār-šarri-ušur_a	17	22825.73
Adad-balliṭ_a	3	22692.53
Nabû-šarru-ušur_a	12	20021.42
Gabbu-ilāni-ēreš_a	2	19686.00
Mušēzib-Issār_b	9	18871.07
Huzīru_a	11	17751.00
Ah-abû_a	5	17473.26

The network accentuates the reach of Šulmu-šarri outside the Red House, as he and his frequent witnesses connect the rest of the corpus together. In general, the network approach shows how connected the corpus is, both locally and

⁵⁸² BATSH 6 31; 125 and BATSH 17: D15; D19; D39; D42; D3*; D5*, D7*, D8*. A homonymous Huzīru is attested as the last witness of D19 where Huzīru acts as a debtor – there is, therefore, a possibility that some of these texts should be associated with Huzīru_b rather than Huzīru_a.

linguistically despite the two languages used. The network approach highlights the frequent witnesses of Šulmu-šarri, in other words, his inner circle.

7.5. Ma'allānāte network structure and archive generations

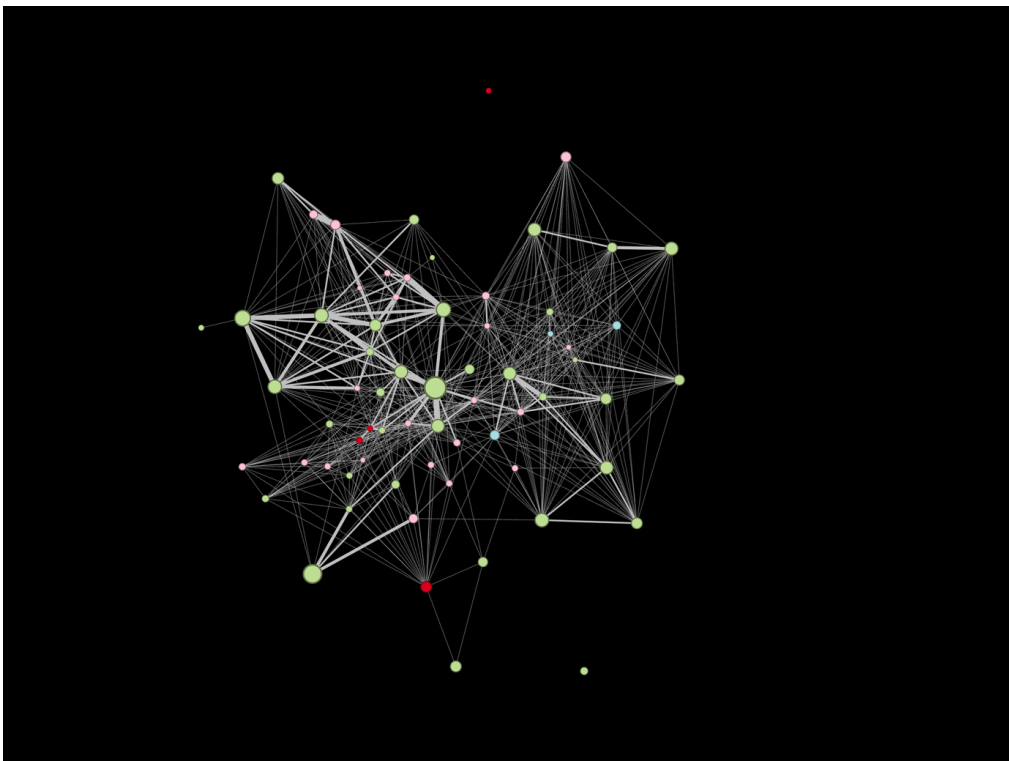
The onomastic data from the Ma'allānāte archive was included in the PNA despite the delayed publication of the text editions. Therefore, the network data could be extracted from the PNA dataset and supplemented with minor corrections. I followed the predetermined criteria for including only texts with more than one name and names with more than two preserved signs.⁵⁸³ The resulting data set includes 67 text nodes, of which 37 are Neo-Assyrian texts, 23 Aramaic, and 3 Neo-Babylonian. The number of people in the dataset is 368.



Picture 8 Ma'allānāte monomodal network of people with the three central protagonists labeled.

Picture 9 demonstrates that the archive is very strongly connected – despite being unprovenanced, the prosopographical connections between the texts are clearly present and this archive can be deduced to be from the same origin.

⁵⁸³ The criteria for network creation are defined in 7.2.



Picture 9 Ma'allānāte monomodal network of texts. The nodes are colored as follows: Neo-Babylonian texts = orange; Assyrian texts with Aramaic epigraphs = red; Assyrian monolingual texts = green; Aramaic monolingual texts = pink.

The structure of the archive is depicted in Picture 8. The visualization corresponds to the archive generations and shows how they overlap. Handī's dossier, whose documents represent the oldest generation, is slightly separated from the later dossiers of Harrānāiu and Sēr-nūrī. There is overlap between the people attested in the texts of Harrānāiu and Sēr-nūrī.

In another version of the network, where the dossiers are represented by the texts rather than the people (Picture 9), the distribution of languages across the dossiers is well illustrated. Handī's dossier can still be recognized on the right side of the graph by the three Neo-Babylonian texts. Otherwise, both Aramaic and Assyrian documents are attested across the whole archive, as is clearly visible from the graph. The Aramaic epigraphs in the network only appear in the dossier associated with Harrānāiu and his sons and as one isolate.⁵⁸⁴

While the publications of Ma'allānāte and Dūr-Katlimmu separate the Aramaic and Akkadian parts of the corpora into different volumes, as is clear from the

⁵⁸⁴ The isolate document (ACP 41) is an administrative document which is undated and cannot be directly associated with any of the archive holders.

networks, the people attested within these documents are not separated by language. The same people are attested in both portions, and the documents belong to the same archives, prosopographically and otherwise. While there is a clear typological division between Aramaic and Akkadian parts of the archives,⁵⁸⁵ it is misleading to treat them separately.

7.6. Nineveh archives and identifying dossiers

In this section, I test how network measures apply to detecting dossiers in the legal corpus from Nineveh. The archival context of legal documents from the palaces in Nineveh is not well known, partially because the documents were found scattered and destroyed already in antiquity, and partially because they were found when the field of archaeology was still developing its methodology and the find context of documents was not recorded.⁵⁸⁶ As dossiers can be reconstructed based on the central protagonist and onomastics can be utilized for approximate dating of documents, attestations of people are integral to understanding the internal structure of archives.⁵⁸⁷ Thus, co-occurrence networks based on attestations of people may be helpful in organizing large unorganized archives. This section demonstrates that community detection algorithms may be helpful in dividing text masses into approximate “chunks,” but not perfectly accurate in creating dossiers.

In the creation of the Nineveh network dataset, I took a simpler route in comparison to the creation of the datasets described in section 7.2. It is directly derived from the PNA-network data, a subset of only the legal corpus i.e. texts from SAA 6 and 14.⁵⁸⁸ As most of the Aramaic material from Nineveh stems from the legal corpus, this dataset represents the majority of the legal corpus. More specifically, this dataset includes cuneiform tablets with alphabetic archival aids, but not monolingual alphabetic or fully bilingual documents. To make them distinct and filterable from other cuneiform tablets, I added an attribute to the text nodes called “Aramaic content” which records whether the document has an Aramaic epigraph or not. A cursory look at the distribution of Aramaic content across the legal corpus from Nineveh already shows that the epigraphs appear without a distinguishable pattern. This is illustrated below with the network. Because the SAA publications did not include the Aramaic monolingual documents from Nineveh, they are not

⁵⁸⁵ As was concluded in their respective chapters, 4 and 5.

⁵⁸⁶ Find context and reconstruction of Nineveh archives is further discussed in section 6.1.

⁵⁸⁷ There is more on the topic in section 3.2.1.

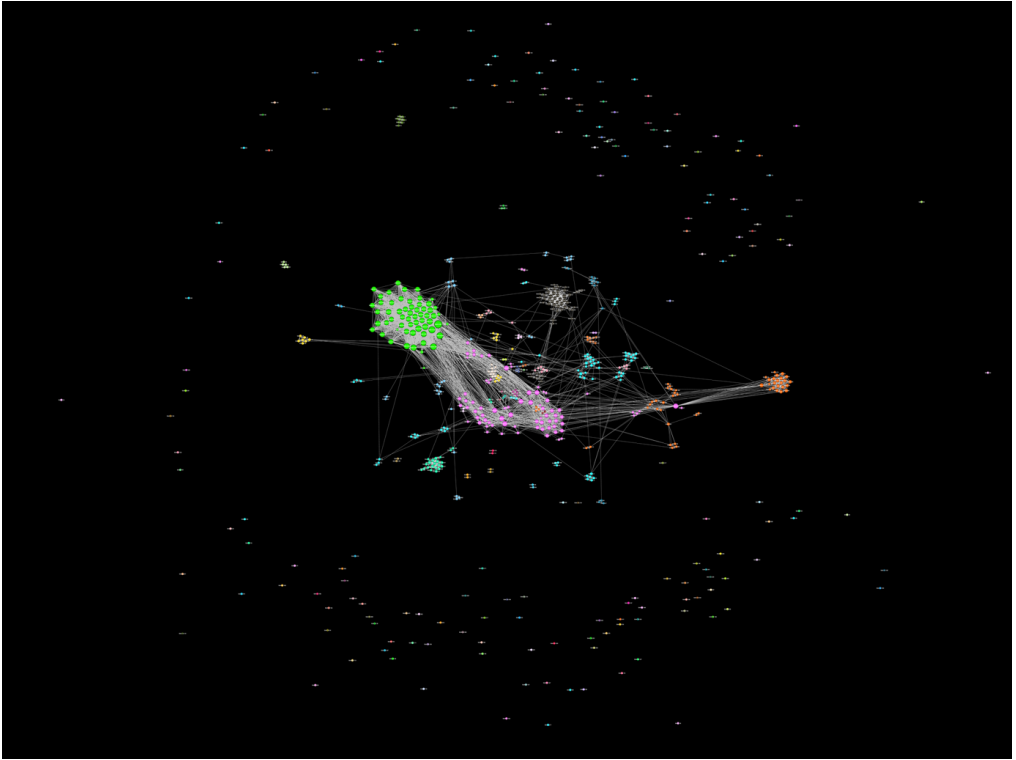
⁵⁸⁸ The network data was therefore not double-checked for mistakes, although some were encountered during the analysis. For example, a text attributed to Bahiānu SAA 14 68 is in the network data connected to people who are attested in SAA 14 69. SAA 14 69 on the other hand is connected to Bahiānu and two other individuals who are not attested in the text. To account for the possible mistakes, the network data is used here only for “big picture analysis”; roughly estimating and evaluating the network structure.

included in this dataset either. These five texts and their place among the other documents are discussed in section 6.4.

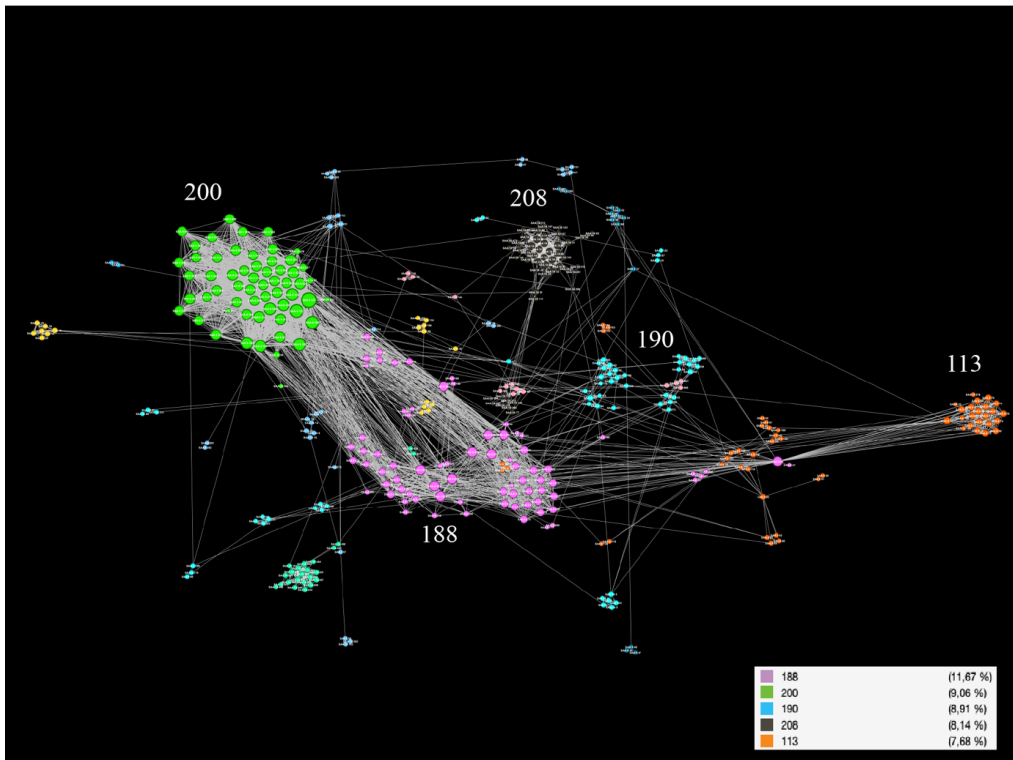
I created a monomodal network of texts from the dataset to examine their connections. The texts are connected to each other based on co-attestation of individuals and consists of 651 text nodes and 3527 edges. It is essentially a “flipped” version of a usual co-occurrence network of people. Network measures could be utilized to identify dossiers within the corpus as they can be utilized to organize and analyze relations between texts. This network is an ideal test case for this, as it consists of only legal documents related to each other on prosopographical grounds. I tested this hypothesis by running the *modularity algorithm* in Gephi to detect communities of texts.⁵⁸⁹ This community detection algorithm groups nodes within the network into communities so that the number of connections within the community is higher than it would be randomly. Running the algorithm sorts the nodes into communities and the nodes can then be colored or filtered based on this attribute. The number of communities can be adjusted based on the parameters given to the algorithm, but I used the default parameters to avoid skewing the results unknowingly.⁵⁹⁰ The detected communities are displayed below in two graph illustrations: Picture 10 with the full network and Picture 11 with just the *giant component*. The giant component refers to a subgraph of a network, where each of the nodes is connected to every other node either indirectly or directly. Essentially, isolated texts are removed from the giant component.

⁵⁸⁹ Also known as the Louvain method, by Blondel, Guillaume & Lambiotte 2008.

⁵⁹⁰ The default parameters are as follows: Randomize: On, Use edge weights: On; Resolution: 1.0.



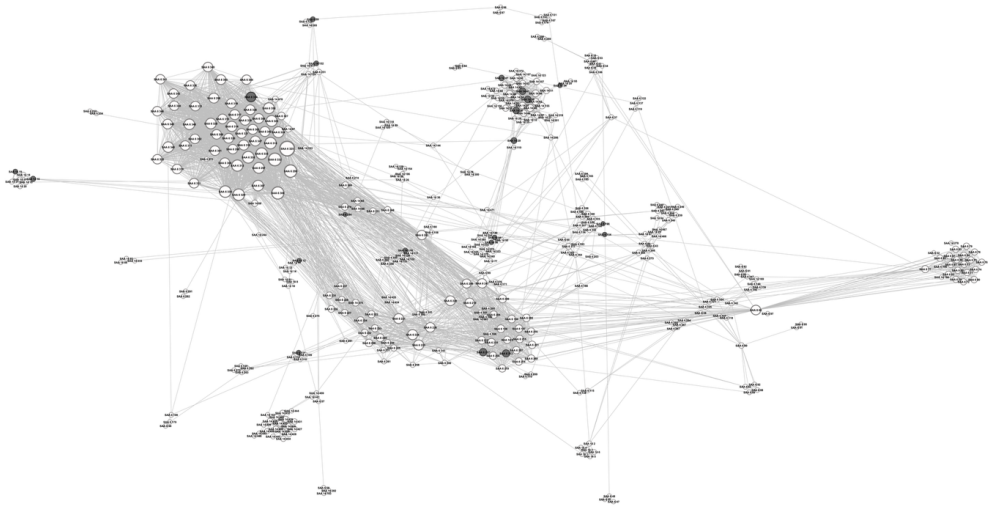
Picture 10 Communities within the Nineveh texts network. The nodes are colored based on the community they belong to.



Picture 11 Communities within the giant component of the Nineveh texts network.

The results suggest that the algorithm does work to detect dossiers roughly but not perfectly. This is already demonstrated by the three largest communities, labeled and visible in Picture 11.

Community 113 mostly consists of texts from Kakkullānu's dossier, but also includes other texts from both volumes. Community 188 includes mainly documents from Šilim-Aššūr's dossier, but also contains several texts that do not have a clear connection to the main body of documents within the community. Rēmānni-Adad's dossier is located in Community 200. Each of these communities includes texts outside these major dossiers and are thus not perfectly sorted. Each of the larger communities includes texts that should not belong to the same dossier by topic, central person, or date.



Picture 12 The giant component of the Nineveh texts network. Nodes that represent texts with an Aramaic epigraph are colored in darker grey; the rest of the nodes are colored white.

The modularity algorithm can nevertheless be used to roughly estimate texts from the same dossiers and time range within the PNA network, even smaller subsets of it like Nineveh network 1 presented here. A quick visualization already shows that the Aramaic epigraphs are distributed across the different dossiers (Picture 12).⁵⁹¹ The graph only includes the giant component because the Aramaic epigraphs in the isolated groups outside of the giant component are not part of any of the major dossiers. The only outstanding group is a small group of four nodes – all connected to each other – which represents texts SAA 14 38–41 and 47. All four texts have an Aramaic archival aid, and they belong to the dossier of Kakkullānu, discussed in section 6.5. Here, the network approach can be used to confirm and demonstrate the results discussed in chapter 6 on the uneven and sporadic distribution of the Aramaic epigraphs at Nineveh.

⁵⁹¹ Four documents with Aramaic epigraphs are not included in the PNA data. Three of these have no complete names in the cuneiform inscriptions and are thus omitted from the dataset: SAA 14 116; 237; 386. As for the final missing text SAA 14 219, this does have two fully preserved names Šārī and Tiṭī, both of which can be found in the PNA (PNA 3/II, 1230: Šārī (1); PNA 3/II, 1327: Tiṭī (3)) The text must be missing from the original PNA dataset by accidental omission.

7.7. Conclusions

In this chapter I have discussed different ways of analyzing language distribution in multilingual archives and issues that may arise in disambiguation, particularly when two different writing systems were used in the archived material.

The three networks are also structured very differently. The structures model the archives the datasets are based on. The Dūr-Katlimmu network is mostly centered on Šulmu-šarri, the central figure of the Red House archive from Dūr-Katlimmu. The Ma'allānāte network is divided among three central figures, who are each present in different phases of the archive. The Nineveh network is a large collection of dossiers, many of them interconnected by the members of the Nineveh elite. While none of this is particularly surprising, these cases illustrate how large unorganized text collections could benefit from this approach to reconstruct the structure or the story of an archive.

Among other benefits of the SNA approach for the study of archives, they can be useful for disambiguation purposes. As illustrated in the case studies above, recurring groups of witnesses can be used to identify individuals. However, collecting a network dataset requires considerable effort, cleaning data, and disambiguation already in the collection process. Nevertheless, some of the issues with disambiguation can lead to insights into the material, as I demonstrated with the “double names” discussed in section 7.3. These disambiguation issues highlight the lack of titles and patronyms in the Aramaic documents, a consequence of their informality.

8 Local variation in the use of Aramaic in provincial archives and the Assyrian heartland

In the previous chapters the archives from Ma'allānāte, Dūr-Katlimmu and Nineveh were analyzed in terms of the archival habits of archive holders. This current chapter provides an overview of the broader trends and the differences between the Assyrian heartland and its provinces in terms of the use of Aramaic. This chapter compares the finds from the previous chapters to the bilingual archives from the older capital cities, Assur and Kalhu, followed by the other provincial archives from Til-Barsip, Burmarina, Marqasu, and Guzana.

Most of the Aramaic corpus stems from the northwestern parts of the Assyrian empire. Aramaic evidence from the Assyrian capitals is sparser but also includes interesting finds outside the legal corpus. Certain trends can be seen between provincial archives, some of which imply contact between the settlements due to the transmission of scribal and archival habits.

8.1. Use of Aramaic in the archives from the heartland of Assyria

Nineveh, analyzed in more detail in chapter 6, represents the use of Aramaic in the heartland of the Assyrian empire and in the capital from the reign of Sennacherib onwards. In the sections 8.1.1–8.1.4 below, this evidence is compared to archives from Assur and Kalhu. To summarize the use of Aramaic at Nineveh, the evidence can be divided into direct and indirect evidence. Out of the direct evidence, the most abundant sources are Aramaic epigraphs/archival aids. These archival aids appear mostly on, but are not limited to, legal documents. Considering the number of archival documents found at Nineveh (ca. 6000), the number of Aramaic archival aids (35) is relatively low. They are not attributable to any single central protagonist, and thus are not part of the regular archival habits of the Nineveh elite. The relatively low number of epigraphs may also correlate with the number of copies drafted by the Ninevite scribes as a part of an administrative process.⁵⁹²

The corpus from Nineveh also includes a few monolingual Aramaic texts. Two of these are triangular dockets (AECT 9; 13), one is a fragment of a triangular docket (AECT 7), and two are fragments of rectangular tablets (AECT 11; 12). Two of the dockets seem to belong to a dossier regarding barley of the crown prince

⁵⁹² The unsealed documents from Nineveh are most likely copies, none of which bear Aramaic epigraphs, as noted by Radner 1997, 42. The copies from Nineveh are discussed further in section 6.1.

(AECT 7; 9), which also includes two Aramaic bilingual documents with the same text repeated on the other side of the docket. Both bilinguals are associated with a creditor Taqūnu, who functions as a middleman between the crown prince and the debtor. The institutional nature of these transactions makes this dossier similar to the cuneiform grain loan dockets from Kalhu, discussed below in section 8.1.3. One of the monolingual Aramaic dockets is a pledge of a man against a loan of silver, uncharacteristically written on a docket instead of a rectangular tablet, which are encountered particularly in the provincial archives discussed in section 8.2 below.

The indirect evidence of Aramaic from Nineveh attests to the employment of alphabetic scribes at court, particularly in administrative positions, and utilizing pliable materials such as papyrus and leather. While they are a distinct professional group, it is possible that the distinction between a cuneiform scribe and alphabetic scribe is only made when it is relevant, and alphabetic scribes are hidden behind unspecified designations of scribes. Cuneiform literacy and alphabetic literacy are not mutually exclusive, as the evidence from Assur and Kalhu suggests.

8.1.1. Aramaic evidence from Assur

Assur was the core and beginning of Assyria, the original capital city when Assyria was simply a city state.⁵⁹³ Despite losing its status as the administrative center of the state when Assurnasirpal II moved the royal seat to Kalhu in 879,⁵⁹⁴ Assur retained significant cultural importance due to being the cult center of Aššur, the main deity of the Assyrian pantheon.⁵⁹⁵

The Aramaic evidence from Assur is primarily from private archives. All Aramaic documents from Assur are monolinguals, and based on the current evidence it seems that Aramaic epigraphs were rarely used in as archival aids in the old capital city, as only one of them is currently known and published (*Faist* 2020 6).⁵⁹⁶ Eight of the Aramaic texts from Assur were first published by Mark Lidzbarski and later re-edited by Lipiński and Fales.⁵⁹⁷ In addition to these, one document from the Iraq Museum in Baghdad, published by Hug,⁵⁹⁸ is recorded to come from Assur. Nine Aramaic archival documents are known from Assur: seven legal documents, one administrative text, and one letter. Not much is known about the central protagonists of the documents as their titles are not used.

⁵⁹³ For a general overview of the city-state of Assur during the Old Assyrian period, see, e.g., Veenhof 2017.

⁵⁹⁴ Frahm 2017, 169.

⁵⁹⁵ On the role of the deity Aššur in Assyrian kingship and imperialism, see the hallmark study Holloway 2002.

⁵⁹⁶ Unless they have been missed in the editing process or are still to be unearthed.

⁵⁹⁷ Fales 1986, 225–238; Lipiński 1975; Lidzbarski 1921. One of the Aramaic documents (VAT 9362) from archive N18 remains unpublished, as it had gone unnoticed before Pedersén's catalogue of Assur archives.

⁵⁹⁸ Hug 1993, 19.

The Aramaic documents from the private houses are a curious example of the parallel use of Akkadian and Aramaic, because they align by topic with the cuneiform examples of each private archive. In archive N17, all 14 documents deal with transactions of silver. Eight of these are loans, of which two are in Aramaic.⁵⁹⁹ The archive also includes one Aramaic administrative list of silver transactions, which appears to be a list of payments or debts due to the central persons of the archive (AECT 52). The Aramaic documents are only dated by month, but Fales estimates they come from the mid seventh century.⁶⁰⁰ The oldest cuneiform document from the archive is dated to 675, and the rest range between mid-seventh century to post-canonical dates 642*–613*.⁶⁰¹ There are several central persons in the archive, most frequently Kakkullānu, none of whom appear as the central persons of the Aramaic silver loans.

Archive N18 consists of 17 tablets, of which two are in Aramaic.⁶⁰² The contents of the archive deal primarily with silver and investments, and the Aramaic documents deal with loans of barley. The dates range between 659–616*, and one of the central persons Kanūnāiu is potentially mentioned as a debtor in the silver loan memorandum AECT 52 from archive N17.

The transactions in archive N27 concern barley, three of which are in Aramaic (AECT 46–48), the rest in Akkadian.⁶⁰³ The dated documents are mostly from the post-canonical period (632*–620*), but the oldest document dates to 691. This archive is an example of utilizing both Aramaic and Akkadian for recording transactions of barley. The creditor in all three Aramaic grain loans is Aššur-šallim-ahhē, the most prominent central person in the archive. The cuneiform grain loans from the archive are structured similarly to the Aramaic loans, written in short format on triangular dockets.⁶⁰⁴ The shape of the tablet implies that they were originally attached to a scroll. The use of Neo-Assyrian on dockets is paralleled particularly at Kalhu,⁶⁰⁵ and this seems to be a more common approach within the capitals of Assyria. The reasons for the language choice between Aramaic and Akkadian are obscure. This choice does not seem to depend on the creditor, as four of Aššur-šallim-ahhē's grain loans were also written in Neo-Assyrian. The amounts of barley borrowed in Aramaic loans are within the same range as in the Akkadian loans.

⁵⁹⁹ AECT 50; 51.

⁶⁰⁰ Fales 1986, 236–237.

⁶⁰¹ Archive described in Pedersén 1986, 104–106.

⁶⁰² N18(15), unpublished, and N18(16) = AECT 49.

⁶⁰³ Cuneiform documents from the archive N27 were published in Faist 2007, 72–94.

⁶⁰⁴ StAT 3 40; 43; 46; 48; 52.

⁶⁰⁵ This practice might have been influenced by institutional administration, as most of the grain loan dockets from Kalhu come from temple and palace archives. This phenomenon is discussed in section 8.1.3 below.

Aššūr-šallim-ahhē was comfortable with utilizing both Akkadian and Aramaic in his private archival documents. This is a key difference between the Assyrian heartland and the provincial areas. Within the heartland, Neo-Assyrian was still used for even the most informal transactions, side by side with Aramaic.

Only one cuneiform document with an Aramaic epigraph (Faist 2020 6) has been found at Assur.⁶⁰⁶ The alphabetic epigraph is incised on the left edge of a judicial document regarding a dispute between two individuals. It reads *ḥ p*, which Rölliġ interprets as the name Ahu-ittabši,⁶⁰⁷ the defendant in the legal dispute (represented as ^mPAB-*tab*-šī in the cuneiform inscription).

The document belongs to the archive of a family of *hundurāius*,⁶⁰⁸ one of whom was Aššūr-dēni-amur, Ahu-ittabši's employer. As the document was found in his archive and not in the archive of the plaintiff Nabû-tariš, Faist suggests that Aššūr-dēni-amur received the tablet after Ahu-ittabši was exonerated and it was thus archived in his employer's files in Aššur N 9.⁶⁰⁹ The epigraph could have functioned as an archival aid either for the original owner of the tablet Nabû-tariš or for Aššūr-dēni-amur, the later owner of the tablet. However, given that the epigraph was incised and therefore likely dates not long after the tablet itself was made, the epigraph was almost certainly intended for Nabû-tariš.

It seems that the archive holders of N 9 presumably did not require Aramaic archival aids, because this is the only document with an Aramaic epigraph in the archive. Moreover, it only ended up there secondarily after the legal case was resolved. Its existence nevertheless indicates that others in Aššur, in this case the plaintiff Nabû-tariš, made use of archival aids.

Among the cuneiform tablets from the archive is one triangular docket, N 9(3), which is a record of a grain loan belonging to Dada-ahhe, one of the archive's central

⁶⁰⁶ I thank Betina Faist for alerting me to the existence of this epigraph.

⁶⁰⁷ Transliteration and translation from Rölliġ, in Faist 2020, 253. The commentary does not explain the reading, but the spelling *ḥet* for the onomastic element Ahu- is typical in Neo-Assyrian Aramaic orthography and represented also in names at Dūr-Katlimmu, see Rölliġ 2014, 15. The rest of the name is more difficult to explain. The elision of the consonants <t> and <š> is not standard at all. Typically, these consonants would be retained or spelled with a *šin* or *samekh* (see Lipiński 2010, 209–215; Rölliġ 2014, 215–216), but switching them to *alef* is unusual. Lipiński notes that the elision of <t> is sometimes visible in Assyrian words ending with *-āt(e/i)*, e.g., *rsh* < *rēšāti*, “first-fruits” (Lipiński 2010, 216). However, this phenomenon has only been attested in word final positions and is usually indicated with *he*, so it is not a perfect solution for this case. Likewise difficult to explain is the devoiced <p> for , also very atypical for Neo-Assyrian Aramaic orthography. As names are commonly used in Aramaic epigraphs as identifiers of the document, Rölliġ's reading is logically sound, but orthographically this is very puzzling. A photo of the tablet was not available to me, but the copy (KAN 4 55) indicates that the epigraph is complete.

⁶⁰⁸ The exact translation and role of this professional group has long been discussed, see overview in Fales & Jakob-Rost 1991, 22–26. Postgate suggested “professional transporter”, which Faist accepts as suitable for the profile of the archive (Postgate 1995; Faist 2020, 254.)

⁶⁰⁹ Faist 2020, 255.

persons.⁶¹⁰ These kinds of documents were likely attached to scrolls written in Aramaic, and it is thus possible that the archive holders kept bilingual archives, even if using alphabetic archival aids was not necessary for them.

The Aramaic loans from Assur follow the standard of Aramaic already established: All six documents are triangular dockets, and mostly loans of barley. Of the six loan documents, two are loans of silver⁶¹¹ and four loans of barley.⁶¹² The silver loans are more explicit, as they include interest rates. Fales suggested that the lack of explicitly stated interest rates in grain loans means that the interest is a 1:1 (100%) rate as expressed by the Neo-Assyrian expression *ana mithar*, “equally, one-to-one,” corresponding to a sum equal to the capital.⁶¹³ Lipiński suggested that the interest was either included in the total sum borrowed, or that these documents were not true loans but receipts.⁶¹⁴ It seems unlikely that the interest would be implied and not written down – this could result in difficulties in claiming debts. This habit of omitting the interest rate was not adapted to silver loans, perhaps seen as more important and therefore requiring an explicit statement of the interest rate. Another, perhaps more likely, alternative is that these were not loans but obligations to deliver grain for an unspecified reason, formulated as loan contracts.

One loan of barley from Assur uses the *htm* PN seal identification,⁶¹⁵ which is commonly used at Dūr-Katlimmu and possibly Tell Shiukh Fawqani.⁶¹⁶ This document is also more detailed than the other grain loans, including an interest rate, date, the name of the scribe, and the circumstances of the loan. The debtor is a *hazannu* (“mayor”), who takes on the grain loan from another debtor. This document attests to the flexibility of the Aramaic legal documents: when the transaction calls for more information, the formula is often expanded. The bare necessities of the formula are used in more informal situations, but here the involvement of the *hazannu* and the less conventional situation have required specifics. The scribe of the document is also mentioned as the last witness, which is uncommon for Aramaic documents.

In addition to the typical Aramaic archival documents, the Assur Ostrakon adds an important piece of diversity to the genres known to be written in Aramaic in the seventh century. The Assur Ostrakon is a draft of an Aramaic letter from Bēl-ēṭir, a cohort commander from Assurbanipal’s reign.⁶¹⁷ The ostrakon was discovered by the German excavations in Assur between 1903 and 1913. It was the only document

⁶¹⁰ Text number 2 in Fales & Jakob-Rost 1991. The use of triangular cuneiform dockets is discussed further in section 8.1.3.

⁶¹¹ AECT 50–51.

⁶¹² AECT 46–49.

⁶¹³ In Fales 1986, 226. For *ana mithar*, see Postgate 1976, 41–42.

⁶¹⁴ Lipiński 2010, 257.

⁶¹⁵ AECT 49.

⁶¹⁶ See section 8.2.3 below.

⁶¹⁷ Museum number VA 8384.

found in the inner room of house No. 81 southwest of the Ruined New Palace in the shaft of the grave chamber, where it may have fallen secondarily.⁶¹⁸ Currently the text is in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin. The text was first published by Lidzbarski along with other Aramaic documents from Assur.⁶¹⁹ Due to its fragmentary state and puzzling contents, the text has been re-edited several times.⁶²⁰

The text is written with ink on a potsherd and consists of six fragments. The Assur Ostrakon is one of the two examples of Aramaic letters from Assyria,⁶²¹ although it is generally assumed that more were written on perishable materials. Radner suspects the rather small number of known inscribed ostraca from the Neo-Assyrian period may be attributed to the cleaning process of excavations: pottery is not expected to be painted or inked, so it is scrubbed with water before studying.⁶²² This process would remove inked writing.

As the letter is one of the few concrete examples of Neo-Assyrian Aramaic letters, it is a valuable source for understanding the social status of Aramaic during the seventh century. References to letters in Aramaic are known from Neo-Assyrian sources, and the Assur Ostrakon is an example of the adaption of the Neo-Assyrian epistolographic conventions to Aramaic writing, as argued by Fales.⁶²³ This document is the only secure example of an Assyrian-Aramaic letter, and as such provides an interesting perspective on the process behind using Aramaic and alphabetic script for writing letters, as I demonstrate below.

The writer Bēl-ēṭir refers to himself as the brother of the addressee Pir'-Amurru, a common way to indicate equal status in letters. Pir'-Amurru's name is listed first, which could suggest Pir'-Amurru is higher ranking than Bēl-ēṭir. Bēl-ēṭir's problem relates to captive deserters from Bīt-Amukāni he had taken as slaves while in Babylonia. Bēl-ēṭir asks Pir'-Amurru to help prove his claim to the captives if they are to be freed. The letter then addresses another person, Nabû-zēru-ušabši. He is probably someone in Pir'-Amurru's circle, as this portion does not open with another introductory formula and cannot therefore be a draft of another letter.⁶²⁴

The document itself was likely a draft that was discarded after it had served its purpose. Fales suggested this because the letter is addressed to persons located in southern Mesopotamia but found at Assur.⁶²⁵ This suggestion is also supported on

⁶¹⁸ Pedersén 1986, 113–114.

⁶¹⁹ Lidzbarski 1921, 1–15.

⁶²⁰ Most recently in Fales 2010.

⁶²¹ See section 5.3.2.2 on the letter from Ma'allānāte.

⁶²² Radner 2021, 174.

⁶²³ Fales 2010.

⁶²⁴ Fales suggests this person may be the governor of Uruk, Nabû-ušabši (Fales 2010, 198 n. 47). Nabû-ušabši was in correspondence with Assurbanipal regarding a certain Bēl-ēṭir, possibly to be identified with the author of the Assur Ostrakon. The letters and their duplicates are most recently edited in SAA 21 22–25 and SAA 22 177.

⁶²⁵ Fales 2010, 198.

epigraphic grounds: the preposition *ly* is written above the line as an addition on line 7.⁶²⁶ The letter was probably copied to some perishable material and the draft could have been discarded immediately or after storing it for a period. The document attests to the process of using ostraca for drafts of letters.

The letter attests to the coexistence of Aramaic and Akkadian as the language of letters and demonstrates how Neo-Assyrian epistolary conventions, such as the greeting formula and the letter within another letter, were adapted to Aramaic.⁶²⁷ It highlights the difference in language choice in correspondence to Babylonia between royalty and non-royalty. Assyrian royal correspondence with Babylonian individuals was conducted in Akkadian, more specifically the Babylonian dialect.⁶²⁸ Bēl-ēṭir writing to Pir'-Amurru sees the use of Aramaic appropriate, even when addressing Nabû-zēru-ušabši. This example demonstrates that the same rules concerning language choice did not necessarily apply outside court and royal correspondence – a domain which would certainly require the highest levels of formality.

The Aramaic evidence from Assur not only provides more variety to the Aramaic corpus, as evidenced by the letter Assur Ostrakon letter and the document of the transaction where the *hazannu* took over another grain loan. Cuneiform writing and the Assyrian language maintained a strong presence in Assur, late into the seventh century, which is indicated by the rarity of Aramaic archival aids even in the private archives. Their absence in material from Assur is further proof that the archival aids in Nineveh represent a provincial scribal tradition. The use of Akkadian on grain loans parallel to Aramaic is a strong indicator that Neo-Assyrian still held a foothold as an everyday language in Assur. Both trends also appear in material from Kalhu/Nimrud, discussed in the next section.

8.1.2. Aramaic evidence from Kalhu

Kalhu (modern name Nimrud) was the capital of the Neo-Assyrian empire before it was moved by Sargon II to Dūr-Šarruken (modern Khorsabad), which was abandoned after the death of Sargon on campaign.⁶²⁹ While the main royal residence was moved to Nineveh by Sennacherib, Kalhu retained importance as a military base and an administrative center, as evident from the archives from the many palaces discussed in section 8.1.3.2. Kalhu was also a religious center due to the large temple of Nabû, which also housed a significant cuneiform archive, discussed below in section 8.1.3.1. While the direct evidence from Kalhu may seem sparse (discussed in sections 8.1.2.1–8.1.2.2 below), the many archives of the

⁶²⁶ Visible in the photo in Lidzbarski 1921, 9, pl. I.

⁶²⁷ Fales 2010.

⁶²⁸ As pointed out by Radner 2021, 176; Fales 2010.

⁶²⁹ Frahm 2017, 181–183.

palaces and the Nabû temple bear traces of the perished Aramaic documents in the form of triangular cuneiform docketets.⁶³⁰

8.1.2.1. Bilingual objects from Kalhu

This study focuses on archival documents, but the Aramaic corpus from Kalhu is not limited to them. Two types of objects with bilingual (Assyrian-Aramaic) inscriptions have been found at Kalhu: lion-shaped weights and protective amulets.⁶³¹ These are discussed below because they represent the different ways Aramaic was utilized in the Assyrian empire. Both object types widen the horizon of where Aramaic was used: the amulets are from the domain of everyday magical/religious context and demonstrate in one instance how the two scripts and languages were used and seen within this domain. On the other hand, the lion weights with Aramaic inscriptions of their weights are a crucial piece of evidence regarding the status of Aramaic in Assyria. Could it be coincidental that objects so strongly related to everyday trade, even in royal and prestigious context, included Aramaic inscriptions?

Sixteen bronze lion-shaped statuettes were found in the Northwest Palace by Layard in 1846.⁶³² One of the lions is uninscribed, but fifteen have cuneiform inscriptions, which date the weights to the reigns of four kings: Tiglath-pileser III, Shalmaneser V, Sargon II and Sennacherib. These dates and the different styles of the weights suggests that they were not originally part of one set.⁶³³ Fourteen of the lions also have an alphabetic inscription on the flanks and bases.⁶³⁴ The fifteenth, bearing only a cuneiform inscription, also includes two strokes on the left flank, the alphabetic numeral for two, corresponding to the cuneiform inscription which states it weighs two minas.⁶³⁵

The content of the inscriptions is as one would expect. The cuneiform inscriptions are written according to the following formula: “Palace of PN, king of Assyria, *measure*,” e.g., KUR ^mMAN.GIN ‘MAN KUR AŠ’ 1 MA-‘NA’ ša MAN, “palace of Sargon, king of Assyria, 1 mina of the king.”⁶³⁶ The equivalent is repeated more laconically in the alphabetic inscription *mnh mlk* 1, “one mina of the king.”⁶³⁷ The Aramaic inscriptions are sometimes even more concise; one lion’s bottom reads in crude script *prš*, “One half.”⁶³⁸

Six of the weights from the reign of Shalmaneser V have an additional Aramaic inscription on the flank of the lion, the meaning of which is unclear, which specifies

⁶³⁰ See the plan of Nimrud Citadel in Reade 2002, 136.

⁶³¹ ND 2438 and ND 2439, both under AECT 45.

⁶³² For the background and description of the lion weights see Mitchell 1990.

⁶³³ Mitchell 1990, 136.

⁶³⁴ See the tabulation of the placement of the Aramaic epigraphs in Mitchell 1990, 136.

⁶³⁵ AALW 15.

⁶³⁶ Transliteration and translation from Fales 1995, 42–43.

⁶³⁷ AALW 9: 1.

⁶³⁸ AALW 10:1.

that the weight not only corresponds to the mina of the king but also to the mina “of the land.”⁶³⁹ Fales suggests this was added by a different scribe from the one who wrote the inscription on the bottom.⁶⁴⁰ Because the *’rq*’ clause “mina of the land” has no Neo-Assyrian equivalence, Fales suggests this must be the equivalent of a mina used “all over the country.”⁶⁴¹ Based on this interpretation, Fales posits a scenario where the first set of lion weights with Aramaic inscriptions were acquired by the royal bureaus of Shalmaneser V and the cuneiform inscriptions were added afterwards, and later kings created their own sets and added bilingual inscriptions on them to keep up the tradition.⁶⁴²

In addition to the question of whether the weights were created as bilinguals, it is important to consider that when they were cached in the palace during or after the reign of Sennacherib, the weights were bilingual. Aramaic was deemed appropriate for these objects stored in the palace, representing the royal mina, whether it was because of the domain of commerce or whether the original set was inscribed only in Aramaic.

The remaining bilingual objects from Kalhu are two amulets found in the room ZT23 in the Northwest Palace’s administrative wing (Ziggurat Terrace). Both bear a spell in both Assyrian and Aramaic.⁶⁴³ They are duplicates of each other and include the same inscription in cuneiform script on one side and alphabetic on the other. The text reads as follows:

o.

1. *bir-ti*

2. *Á [2?]ib-bi*

r.

1. *byn ydy’*

2. *wlbb’*

“(Protection of) the chest (=lit. ‘between the arms’) and the heart.”⁶⁴⁴

This text is defined by Fales as an apotropaic amulet, with parallels in Assyrian magical and medical literature.⁶⁴⁵ The object is sealed with a stamp seal and has a string hole. The string hole indicates that the amulet could have been carried

⁶³⁹ For example, in AALW 1: 1: *mnn 15 b zy ’rq*’, “Minas, 15 by (the standard) of the land”, transliteration and translation from Fales 1995, 35.

⁶⁴⁰ Fales 1995, 53.

⁶⁴¹ Fales 1995, 54.

⁶⁴² Fales 1995, 54–55.

⁶⁴³ Millard 1972, 131.

⁶⁴⁴ Transliteration and translation from Fales 1986, 223.

⁶⁴⁵ Fales 1986, 223.

around one's neck, protecting the carrier's chest as the inscription suggests. If the inscription is based on the cuneiform magical tradition, it stands to reason that the Aramaic side is a translation of the Assyrian original. Based on this assumption, the translation of the Assyrian text indicates on one hand the bilingualism of the person who crafted the amulet, and on the other hand the audience, who may not have been literate in cuneiform. The amulet, protecting its wearer from illness, is an everyday magical object. It could have been written with only one script, but the decision to include both cuneiform and alphabetic script indicates that perhaps cuneiform held by its prestige a magical connotation, while the translation demonstrates the need to understand the content of the words carried by the bearer. This is of course a plausible interpretation only if the bearer was not literate in cuneiform, and if the wearer was literate in Aramaic, but the object nevertheless attests to the bilingualism of its writer, perhaps an *asû* ("physician") or an *āšipu* ("exorcist"). The amulet, much like the bilingual documents from Nineveh or the depictions of cuneiform and alphabetic scribes, demonstrates that Assyrian and Aramaic appear in parallel to each other in equal standing in mundane contexts.

8.1.2.2. Aramaic archival documents from Kalhu

The alphabetic archival evidence from Kalhu is limited to two short inscriptions on sealed triangular dockets (AECT 43; 44) and one ostrakon. All three documents seem to relate to an institutional context.

The two dockets were found in room ZT13 in the Northwest Palace's administrative wing ("Ziggurat Terrace"). The inscriptions are brief compared to loans usually written on the same medium. Their contents, materiality and brevity suggest that the dockets were attached as tags to something, perhaps containers of goods. The better-preserved docket (AECT 43) reads *lhykl'*, "for the palace,"⁶⁴⁶ and the slightly eroded docket (AECT 44) *lby'tl* [x x x], "for the house/temple/palace of ..."⁶⁴⁷ Millard noted that the dockets had "remains of rope fibers through the wide end,"⁶⁴⁸ and it is evident that the dockets were tied to something, perhaps to items delivered to institutions. While the texts are not complex, they fulfill a purpose similar to Aramaic dockets in general. Like other dockets, they are attached to another object and are intended for giving quick and convenient information about the other object, while also perhaps functioning as a sealing. Whoever made the delivery to the temple, was probably also delivering items to other locations, as they needed to label the destination of the delivery. Moreover, as these tags are docket shaped, they are clearly connected to the tradition of using triangular dockets for archival purposes. The sender or deliverer of the objects needed to know alphabetic script to utilize these tags. Despite not being archival documents, their form and

⁶⁴⁶ Transliteration and translation from Fales 1986, 221.

⁶⁴⁷ Transliteration and translation from Fales 1986, 222.

⁶⁴⁸ Millard 1972, 131–132.

implications of literacy suggests that Aramaic was used to some degree by the department, business owner, or whichever party sent the goods over to the temple.

Finally, the only proper alphabetic archival document from Kalhu is the Nimrud Ostrakon, excavated from the latest occupation level of Fort Shalmaneser, dating to the seventh century and published by Judah Segal.⁶⁴⁹ It is an administrative list written in ink on both sides of the sherd, listing the names of 15 men and their patronyms. The first name is separated from the patronym by a punctuation mark, which is sometimes also used to indicate the end of the line. The name of the father is preceded by the Canaanite word *bn* (“son”) instead of the Aramaic *br* (“son”). As they are not separated from the patronym by a punctuation mark, Segal argues that “the writers did not identify it as the equivalent of Aramaic *bar* but regarded it as an integral part of the father’s name.”⁶⁵⁰ The use of punctuation marks in the seventh-century alphabetic texts is generally inconsistent and their function is an under-researched topic. They are not perfect “word dividers” separating each word, so I would not draw conclusions on the scribe’s ability to understand the equivalence between *br* and *bn*. Even in the Nimrud Ostrakon, the word divider is not used consistently, as it does not always appear before the *bn*.⁶⁵¹ Despite the patronyms, none of the individuals mentioned in the document can so far be identified with individuals attested in the cuneiform documents. Some of these names are attested in cuneiform texts from Kalhu, but either accompanied by other patronyms or otherwise difficult to connect with the names listed in the Nimrud Ostrakon.

The archival context of the administrative list suggests that it was kept in a wine-storage area.⁶⁵² A tempting parallel to this document is the Nimrud Wine lists,⁶⁵³ and this could be a memorandum or a draft of the wine rations due to the people attested in the Ostrakon. All three documents suggest that alphabetic script was utilized in administration alongside cuneiform, albeit in rather informal situations as suggested by the brevity and lack of information provided by the texts themselves.

⁶⁴⁹ Segal 1957.

⁶⁵⁰ Segal 1957, 145.

⁶⁵¹ Aramaic Ostrakon from Nimrud II 2.

⁶⁵² The tablet comes from Fort Shalmaneser room SW 1 and was the only document found in this room (see the table in Dalley & Postgate 1984, 261–265). Mallowan notes that the “chambers radiating from the courts proved to be magazines and several of them, for example SW 6 and NW 14 were packed with storage jars once filled with wine” (Mallowan 1958, 107).

⁶⁵³ Records of wine allocations to employees and members of the court found in Fort Shalmaneser, dated to the early eighth century, published first in CTN 1 and in CTN 3, some re-edited in CTN 3. For a concordance see Pedersén 1988.

8.1.3. Triangular cuneiform dockets from Kalhu as indirect evidence of Aramaic

While not written in Aramaic, the triangular cuneiform loan dockets from Kalhu are an important piece of evidence towards the role of Aramaic. As has been demonstrated in previous chapters, the use of Aramaic on this triangular tablet shape and particularly for loans of grain was the norm in private archives from northwestern areas of seventh century Assyria. Against this evidence, the use of cuneiform on this shape and type of transaction is unusual. Both the shape of the tablet and the format of the loans, which parallels the Aramaic grain loan formula, imply that the cuneiform dockets were originally attached to an Aramaic scroll. Like the Aramaic dockets, the cuneiform dockets were probably attached to a scroll due to string holes either in the corners of the docket or a single hole in the short side.⁶⁵⁴ The following sections build on this assumption, and investigate the use of triangular dockets in recording transactions in the temple and palace administration at Kalhu as indirect evidence for the use of Aramaic.

The cuneiform grain loans from Kalhu and Assur were described by Ponchia with a typology and discussion in relation to the archives they belong to.⁶⁵⁵ The legal documents from Kalhu are published in varying degrees. While most of the documents from the archives outlined in Table 25 below are fully published, the legal documents from the northern wing of the North-West Palace were only catalogued and published in part by Barbara Parker, some without witnesses and some as only summaries.⁶⁵⁶ After the publication of the Nabû temple archive and new editions of the archive of Šamaš-šarru-ušur by Suzanne Herbordt et al.,⁶⁵⁷ the grain loans merit a fresh discussion. The 55 documents from the archives from the domestic wing of the Northwest Palace published by Ahmad and Postgate do not include any grain loans or triangular dockets.⁶⁵⁸

Table 25 The number of triangular dockets from Kalhu per archive in relation to the number of documents in total.

Archive	Number of triangular dockets	Total of texts in archive
The Nabû temple	40	59
The Governor's Palace	1	273
The Burnt Palace	1	17

⁶⁵⁴ For an example of the latter type, see, for example, the docket SAA 14 72 from Nineveh.

⁶⁵⁵ Ponchia 1990.

⁶⁵⁶ Parker 1954.

⁶⁵⁷ Herbordt et al. 2019.

⁶⁵⁸ Ahmad & Postgate 2007.

Archive	Number of triangular dockets	Total of texts in archive
The <i>rab ekalli</i> of the Review Palace	8	27
The <i>šakintu</i> of the Review Palace	1	18
Šamaš-šarru-ušur	6	47
The northern wing of the NW Palace ⁶⁵⁹	7	62

Most of the archives could be classified as institutional due to their archival location and the administrators involved in the transactions. Most of the cuneiform triangular dockets from Kalhu come from the Nabû temple. The overwhelming majority of these are grain loans. What is notable, however, is the use of cuneiform for recording grain loans on triangular dockets in private archives from Kalhu as well, as seen in the archive centered on Šamaš-šarru-ušur. Presumably the archival habits of institutions were also transmitted to private persons, perhaps if they utilized scribes employed by the temple and the palace. In the following sections, I first discuss the largest corpus of Kalhu grain loans from the Nabû temple archive and the other institutional archives from the palaces. Finally, I return to the private archive of Šamaš-šarru-ušur.

8.1.3.1. The Nabû temple archive

Most of the Kalhu grain loans are from the Nabû temple, found in room 16. Other documents from the temple archives (not including library texts) include a letter (CTN 6 1), other types of legal documents (CTN 6 2–9), and administrative documents (CTN 6 50–59). In the grain loans, Nabû is explicitly mentioned as the creditor (N ANŠE ŠE.PAD.MEŠ ša dPA, “N homers of barley of Nabû”). An additional creditor is mentioned on two occasions, both times a *šangu* (high-priest).⁶⁶⁰ A clear parallel to this format is seen in the bilingual grain loans of the crown prince from Nineveh, where Taqūnu serves as the middle-man authorizing

⁶⁵⁹ Dispersed between several rooms on the Ziggurat Terrace, ZT 15–17, likely not from one archive.

⁶⁶⁰ The editors suggest that some loan transactions for an unknown reason required the presence of the high-priest’s authority to give the loans; instead, the usual creditors managing the granary might be hidden in the witness-lists, in Herbordt et al. 2019, 240. The loan provided by Nabû-šumu-ušur (CTN 6 36:3) includes a penalty rate if the loan is not repaid *ina adri*, but the loan given by Pulu (CTN 6 12:3) does not. Neither of the debtors is identified by patronym or profession, suggesting that these debtors were familiar to the temple staff, as argued regarding the omission of patronyms and titles in Herbordt et al. 2019, 41.

these loans and managing the granary.⁶⁶¹ The majority of the documents are dated to the mid seventh century, particularly between 662–660. As suggested by the editors, this could indicate crop failure within this period, as so many debtors were not able to repay their loans, as the debt notes remained in the creditor’s archive undestroyed and were thus unpaid.⁶⁶² While the documents clearly point towards a temple granary, such a building has not yet been identified at the site, and it may have been located outside the temple grounds.⁶⁶³ Many of these loans would be characterized as “true loans” based on the presence of the *ina pūhi* expression (*ina pūhi ittiši* “he took in exchange”),⁶⁶⁴ although some are only characterized by the simple formula *ina pāni* PN, “debited to PN.”⁶⁶⁵

In Table 26 below, I compare the standard Neo-Assyrian loan formula by Postgate⁶⁶⁶ to the loan formula of the grain loan dockets from the Nabû temple given by Herbordt et al.⁶⁶⁷ The grain loan formula on dockets is abridged and simpler than the standard Neo-Assyrian loan formula. As is visible from the creditor “Nabû,” this formula applies to the grain loans from the temple. This formula applies to other cuneiform grain loans from Kalhu as well,⁶⁶⁸ but the creditor is in other contexts expressed normally without a secondary creditor. As can be seen from Table 26, compared to the traditional loan formula, the grain loan dockets are very abridged. The interest rate is given in a simple *ina adri* clause regarding the arrangements for payment together with the date of repayment: *ina adri* <interest rate> *iddan*, “He shall pay <n%> at the threshing-floor.”⁶⁶⁹ Unlike in Aramaic grain loans, the date is usually given only after witnesses.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶¹ See section 6.3 for the discussion of these texts.

⁶⁶² Herbordt et al. 2019, 38.

⁶⁶³ Herbordt et al. 2019, 49–50.

⁶⁶⁴ Postgate 1976, 37.

⁶⁶⁵ See the issue of distinguishing true loans based on the loan formula in section 2.1.

⁶⁶⁶ Postgate 1976, 35.

⁶⁶⁷ Herbordt et al. 2019, 38.

⁶⁶⁸ Discussed below in section 8.1.3.2.

⁶⁶⁹ As seen in the schema by Herbordt et al. 2019, 38.

⁶⁷⁰ See section 8.3 below.

Table 26 A table comparing the loan formulas of cuneiform grain loans from the Nabû temple to the standard Neo-Assyrian loan formula.

Following the notation in Herbordt et al. 2019, the clauses often omitted in the Nabû temple archive are given in parentheses.⁶⁷¹

Standard NA loan formula (Postgate 1976, 35)	Cuneiform grain loan docket formula (Herbordt et al. 2019, 38)
Envelope: Seal identification of PN1	(Envelope: Seal identification of PN1)
Object owed	
Creditor; <i>ša</i> PN2	Creditor Nabû;
	(secondary creditor PN2)
Debtor; <i>ina pān</i> PN1; “at the disposal of PN1”	
Transaction: <i>ina pūhi ittiši</i> ; “he has taken it on loan.”	
Arrangements for payment	
Penalty for non-payment; rates of interest (<i>šumma la iddin ana mithar tarabbī</i>); (if he does not pay, it will increase by 100%.)	
Harvester clauses	
Provisions for multiple debtors	
Pledge	
Conditions of pledge	
Guarantors	
Date	Witnesses
Witnesses	Date

The seal identification is omitted in all but two transactions (CTN 6 37 and 40) from the Nabû temple because this would be written only on the envelope and dockets were not wrapped in an envelope.⁶⁷² Despite missing the seal identification, dockets functioned like an envelope, in that the contents of the scroll are duplicated for easy referencing when the loan was still unpaid. However, in some Aramaic dockets the seal identification was included on the docket, which demonstrates that

⁶⁷¹ The phrasing of elements such as “Arrangements for payment” is taken from Postgate 1976 to indicate that the same element is meant in both loan document schemes.

⁶⁷² The seal identification appears in two documents: a loan of grain with a pledge of a woman (CTN 6 37) and a loan of grain (CTN 6 40). Both documents also include the identification of a scribe, which can explain the divergence from the standard formula if these scribes were not normally charged with writing the grain loans.

the dockets functioned like envelopes. For example, the seal identification on Dūr-Katlimmu documents was implemented within the loan formula to identify the debtor, as if to optimize the use of space and avoid redundancy. For example, in BATSH 17 D8: *h̄tm* PN1 š *ʾrn* 3 *zy* PN2 N *ʾluh*, “seal of PN1, barley belonging to PN2, N (homers), at his expense.”⁶⁷³ The debtor’s name is typically not repeated after the seal identification. In documents without the seal identification the debtor’s name is given after the object, and the seal identification was presumably omitted because it was implicit knowledge to the user of the document. These two styles demonstrate two simultaneous trajectories of scribes adapting the Neo-Assyrian loan formula to the Aramaic loan documents.

Most of the dockets are legal documents, but one may be an administrative document (CTN 6 11). This document is notably also docket shaped. It records three transactions of large quantities of barley. The first two transactions total 110.2 homers given to a brewer and a baker from the fixed offering (*ginû*) of Nabû. The third transaction is not from the fixed offering, 30 homers given to an Aramean baker (LÚ.NINDA KUR.ár-ma-a-a).⁶⁷⁴ Finally, the document records the total, the source of the grain (TA *kar-me ša* dPA, “from the granary of Nabû”), the official in charge of giving the barley, and the date 19-I-699. This document is unsealed and as two of the transactions come from fixed offerings, these were probably not loans. It is interesting that an administrative document was written on two mediums (a clay docket and a scroll) and presumably bilingually, particularly at such an early date. It is also the only administrative text from the archive dealing with barley, which explains why it was written on a docket-shaped document: the archive of the temple granary primarily used this dual writing medium.

As Herbordt et al. suggest, these dockets were presumably attached to a scroll written in Aramaic,⁶⁷⁵ which has great implications for the role of Aramaic in Neo-Assyrian society. If these documents were originally bilingual with a cuneiform docket and an Aramaic scroll sealed by it, why write the sealing docket in a language and script that was less accessible in seventh-century Assyria than the scroll it sealed? A few alternative explanations come to mind. The scroll could have been written in ink in cuneiform, as is known from inked colophons of clay tablets from the library of Assurbanipal.⁶⁷⁶ This seems like an unlikely option, but not completely

⁶⁷³ Transliteration and translation from Röllig 2014, 36. Translation given originally in German, adapted to English. Röllig prefers the translation “Sigelurkunde,” “sealed document,” for *h̄tm*, but I prefer to translate this as “seal” due to the similarity to the seal identification in the Assyrian formula.

⁶⁷⁴ The baker should probably not be understood as “Aramean” by ethnicity, but rather as a specialized baker, probably related to the baking of goods like Aramean sweets (listed together with “Assyrian sweets” among other food related items in an administrative list, SAA 7 145: 7–8). His barley is also given by a different measure, unattested elsewhere: *ina ša kar.meš kur*, translated as “by the (*sūtu* measure) of the land/palace markets”) in Herbordt et al. 2019, 52.

⁶⁷⁵ Herbordt et al. 2019, 37.

⁶⁷⁶ Tablets DT 273 and K10100 pictured in Reade 1986, 217.

impossible. Unlike the short Aramaic dockets from Kalhu, these dockets were unlikely to be attached to other items, such as borrowed goods, as the dockets were found in the creditors archive and borrowed ones would have been in the debtor's possession. Moreover, the Aramaic dockets from Kalhu in their short format are clearly served a drastically different function from the cuneiform dockets, despite their similar shape. Because Aramaic dockets from elsewhere usually repeat the terms of a transaction, and the same phenomenon is visible in the cuneiform dockets from Kalhu, it may be ascertained that the short dockets “for the house/palace/temple” and “for the palace” discussed above in section 8.1.2.2 were not attached to scrolls but to vessels delivered to the temple.

The most likely option is that the cuneiform dockets were also attached to Aramaic scrolls and were originally bilingual documents. Attempting to explain the reason for this, in the following paragraphs I return to the question “Who writes what language to whom and when?”⁶⁷⁷ Another thing to note is the medium, clay, which is primarily used for writing cuneiform. While clay was used comfortably for writing alphabetic script in the northwestern provinces as seen in previous chapters, based on the number of cuneiform dockets this was not the norm in Kalhu. Temple and palace scribes could be more comfortable with writing cuneiform on clay.

The involvement of the temple institution in these transactions is relevant for the chosen language in the cuneiform grain loans. These documents represent more formal transactions than the private grain loans. As these were archived by the creditor, the temple, they were also probably tallied and processed in temple administration for accounting for incoming and outgoing barley.⁶⁷⁸ As temple administrative documents were probably drawn up in cuneiform, writing a translated version of the transaction for the docket sealing the scroll would make the process of drafting cumulative lists of ongoing debts easier in the future. Again, we come to the relative term of “comfort,” which is relevant for the question of the audience of the document. The presumed audience, *whom*, is the temple management dealing with incoming and outgoing grain. They are also the writers of the documents, *who*, and the choice of writing in cuneiform was made internally with the requirements of the temple in mind.

Addressing *what language* is being written, the key here is the translation of the Aramaic loan to cuneiform, presuming an alphabetic scroll was originally attached to the docket. As can be seen from the outline of the cuneiform grain loan formula, they begin immediately with the object borrowed usually omitting the seal

⁶⁷⁷ See section 3.1.2 on assessing social domains in bilingual texts.

⁶⁷⁸ While the procedures of accounting in Neo-Assyrian institutional departments is under-researched, evidence of it is discussed in Postgate 1974, 235–236; Mattila 1990; Groß 2020b. On the practice of tallying in different scenarios in institutions, an interesting example in the context of the Neo-Babylonian Eanna temple archive is provided by Levavi, who demonstrates that a tallying system influenced by Aramaic numerals was used in the temple (Levavi 2022).

identification. They follow with the creditor, then the debtor, then possibly conditions of the loan like interest rate and repayment, witnesses and date, rarely identifying the scribe. This short format mirrors almost perfectly the Aramaic loan formula.

The question of *when* is more easily answered in terms of the dating. The documents are from the late seventh century and Aramaic is dominating as the language of grain transactions at this point. But it also draws attention to the placement and format of dating in the cuneiform dockets, which is more specific than the Aramaic equivalents elsewhere. In Aramaic dockets, the date is sometimes noted by month-year, but sometimes simply by month.⁶⁷⁹ The less specific dating in Aramaic loans relates to their private economic domain; loans were presumed to be short-term, and dating by date and year was not always necessary. The use of consistent dating in the cuneiform dockets appears to be another signifier of formality, probably related to temple administration. Most likely the number of yearly transactions of the temple granary far exceeded that of the private property owners represented by the provincial archives, which would necessitate more accurate bookkeeping.

Use of patronymics and professions in the Aramaic loans is rare, while compared to the cuneiform grain loans from the Nabû temple, 10 debtors are identified by patronyms, 10 by profession and 11 by nothing.⁶⁸⁰ Herbordt et al. suggest that the use of patronyms and professions suggests distance and less familiarity to the temple staff, hence more formal.⁶⁸¹ The usual omission of patronymics and professions in Aramaic loans may therefore also suggest informality and familiarity to creditors. This highlights the difference between the institutional and private barley administration. In the institutional context of the Nabû temple, debtors are less familiar, and lending was likely done on a larger scale than by private individuals discussed particularly in chapters 4, on the archive of Šulmu-šarri, and 5, on the Ma'allānāte archive.

To summarize, the formatting of the cuneiform dockets represents the middle ground between the Aramaic loan formula and the Assyrian loan formula. While the Assyrian formula was adapted for the Aramaic loans, the cuneiform dockets represent a transition towards also using Aramaic for everyday transactions of barley in institutional archives. The scribes in charge of writing the documents were familiar with both the Assyrian and Aramaic loan formulas in order to produce these documents, assuming that the dockets were indeed attached to a scroll written in Aramaic.

What does bilingual administration imply about the language situation in Kalhu in the seventh century? The temple administration was certainly bilingual and

⁶⁷⁹ See the section on the date in the Aramaic loan formula, 8.3.

⁶⁸⁰ Herbordt et al. 2019, 46.

⁶⁸¹ Herbordt et al. 2019, 41.

adapting Aramaic for institutional transactions, while keeping the majority of the long-term administration in Akkadian. It is likely that many of the scribes employed in the administration were bilingual, drafting the documents in both Aramaic and Akkadian. It is not impossible that two scribes were involved in the process, but it seems like a waste of resources. As alphabetic and cuneiform scribes were probably at least to a certain level trained together, scribes could have been versed in both cuneiform and alphabetic script.

8.1.3.2. Grain loans from the palaces

Cuneiform grain loans have been found in four palaces at Kalhu: The Governor's Palace, the Northwest Palace, the Review Palace, and the Burnt Palace. Triangular dockets are the most common medium for recording these transactions. The transactions relate to both the institutional distribution of grain and the private economic domain of palace-affiliated officials.

The Governor's Palace does not provide much information on the use of Aramaic within the palaces, as only one grain loan has been found there.⁶⁸² Its shape is not mentioned in the original publication and unfortunately its copy (CTN 2 105, pl. 90) does not help in determining whether it is a triangular docket.⁶⁸³ This document is very different from the standard grain loans.

1. 10 ŠE.PAD.MEŠ *ina* GIŠ[?] BÁN[?] š[*a x x*]
2. ^m*na-i* LÚ.DUMU GEMÉ É.GAL [()]
3. TA ^m*sa-mi-i'* *ina* *pu-u-hi i-ti-š*[*i*]
4. 50 LÚ [*ina*(?)] UD KIN.KUD *i-d*[*an*?]
5. ŠE.PAD.MEŠ *a-na* É LÚ [*ša*?] IGI É S[UM[?]]
6. BE-*ma* 50 LÚ.ŠE.KIN.KUD *la* SUM-*na*
7. ŠE.PAD.MEŠ *a'-na mit-har t[a]*-GAL-*bi*
8. ITI.BARAG UD.24.KÁM *lim-mu*
9. ^{md}PA.KAL-(*x*)-*a-ni* LÚ.*tu[r-t]**a-[nu]*

“10 homers of barley by the sūtu of (...)”⁶⁸⁴ Na'i, the ‘son of the palace servant-girl’, has taken from Sami’ as a loan. He [shall give(?)] 50 men at harvest-time(?), (and) [he shall give(?)] the corn to the household of the palace-supervisor(?). If he does not give 50 harvesters, the corn will

⁶⁸²CTN 2 5. Additionally, one memorandum detailing two grain loans, CTN 2 110, comes from the Governor's Palace.

⁶⁸³ CTN 2 105, pl. 90, ND 498 in Australian Institute of Archaeology, Melbourne, Australia.

⁶⁸⁴ I have suggested an alternative reading for the first line, see the discussion.

accumulate (interest) equally (i.e., at 100 per cent). Month Nisānu (I), 24th day, limmu of Nabû-da”inanni, the turtānu (742).”⁶⁸⁵

The first line is problematic, as by the standard grain loan formula the amount of grain should be followed by the measure. I have reconstructed here the *sūtu* measure instead of Postgate’s reading *ina* UD’ x x [(x x)], as the UD could be a misreading of GIŠ, if the initial two wedges were impressed slightly slanted. According to the drawing, two vertical wedges follow, while BÂN would require one vertical and one horizontal wedge. Of the two signs that follow, the first could be a ŠA. A *sūtu* measure would be expected to follow the amount of barley.⁶⁸⁶ The second unusual feature comes in line three, where Postgate has reconstructed TA for *issu*, “from,” to introduce the creditor of the loan, Sami’. Typically, the creditor would be introduced with *ša* PN2, “(barley) of PN2.” The sign TA is not indicated in the copy, as Postgate notes, but was in a transliteration by Wiseman given to Postgate.⁶⁸⁷ This would already be an unconventional loan formula. Confirmation of these aspects would require collation or at the very least a photo, which is not available.

The title of the debtor *mār amat ekalli* “son of the palace servant-girl” is also attested at Assur and with other individuals from Kalhu.⁶⁸⁸ While Postgate notes that this may be a high-ranking title,⁶⁸⁹ Svärd notes that they sometimes appear as low-status, occasionally wealthy;⁶⁹⁰ thus it would seem that the title itself is not high-ranking but does not limit socio-economic mobility. Despite including the *ina pūhi* clause, which Postgate takes as a sign of a true loan,⁶⁹¹ this document does not include witnesses and does not appear to be sealed – thus missing key aspects of legally binding documents. The early date of the loan may explain some of the unusual features.

The legal documents from the Burnt Palace and the Northwest Palace have not been fully published, but they were catalogued and summarized by Parker.⁶⁹² Based on this catalogue, the yields from the Burnt palace are meager, amounting to only one grain loan docket dated to the first half of seventh century. Of the 10 grain loan documents from the Northwest Palace, seven were written on cuneiform dockets.⁶⁹³ Ponchia identified Ezbu as the central protagonist of these texts, and he appears as

⁶⁸⁵ Transliteration and translation from Postgate 1973, 132. I have modified the translation of the first line; see the discussion.

⁶⁸⁶ See for example the grain loans in the Nabû temple, such as *ina* GIŠ.BÂN *ša* 9, “the 9-*qû sūtu*”, an abridged version of the *ina* GIŠ.BÂN *ša* 9 *ina* 1 *qa ša aš-šur-a-a*, “the 9-*qû sūtu* of the Assyrians”; see Herbordt et al. 2019, 39.

⁶⁸⁷ Postgate 1973, 133.

⁶⁸⁸ See the entry *mār amat-ekalli* in Baker 2017, 53.

⁶⁸⁹ Postgate 1973, 133.

⁶⁹⁰ Svärd 2015, 127.

⁶⁹¹ See the discussion in 2.2.

⁶⁹² Parker 1954.

⁶⁹³ Dockets: ND 2088; 2317; 2302; 2339; 2083; 2092; 2334; 2076; 2077.

the creditor of one grain loan (ND 2302), and as a guarantor of another (ND 2334).⁶⁹⁴ Another repeating creditor in the grain loans is Lakipi, who appears in two documents. It seems thus that the palace housed either two private dossiers or two administrators who managed a granary, but this cannot be said for certain without a full edition of the tablets. These examples of cuneiform grain loans nevertheless attest to the spread of the same phenomenon to the administration within these palaces.

Two archives from the Review Palace or Fort Shalmaneser include grain loans. One of these archives (CTN 3 1–27) is centered on the *rab ekalli* (“palace manager”). The *rab ekalli*’s tasks included supervising palace access and providing and managing the workforce and prisoners and managing the palace properties and commodities, such as the lands tied to his office and upkeep of the animals.⁶⁹⁵ The other archive is centered on the *šakintu*, a high-ranking female administrator who managed the queen’s estate. The documents identified as part of the *rab ekalli* archive were scattered around different rooms.⁶⁹⁶ The archive includes a variety of text types: five letters, 14 legal documents, five unwitnessed notes and labels, one administrative record and one sealing, one incantation, one historical text, one inscribed vase, and one inscribed lion-weight. All dated documents are post-canonical. The archive must have belonged to the office of the palace manager, as several palace managers are named in the documents.⁶⁹⁷

A total of nine dockets come from the *rab ekalli* archive. Seven of these dockets are transactions of grain and straw (CTN 3 11; 13–16; 18–19). Only one grain loan is written on a rectangular tablet (CTN 3 12), and it appears that dockets were the preferred medium for grain loans in this archive. The creditor in three of these documents (CTN 3 14–16) is the *rab karmāni* (“chief of the granaries”), once the Review Palace as an institution (CTN 3 13). The grain loan dockets tend to follow the already established pattern of grain loans. The grain and straw loans clearly relate to institutional/state interests, as the barley/straw is sometimes specified to be of *ša ma’uttu*, “of the *ma’uttu*-land,” which appears in several of this archive’s dockets (CTN 3 11; 14–16). Radner translates this as *maintenance land*, essentially state-owned lands tied to an office and providing grain for supporting the administration of the state and the office.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁴ ND 2334 is also edited in FNALD 33.

⁶⁹⁵ For the most recent overview of the functions of the *rab ekalli*, see Groß 2020a, 55–60.

⁶⁹⁶ Rooms SE 1, 8, 10, 11 and NE 2; see Dalley & Postgate 1984, 4. While the editors suggest the tablets fell from an upper story, Kertai has argued against the existence of a second story based on the lack of evidence such as stairs outside the throne room and as a second floor would have limited the amount of light available to the ground floor (Kertai 2014, 193–194).

⁶⁹⁷ A list and approximate dates of the different palace managers are in Dalley & Postgate 1984, 6.

⁶⁹⁸ Radner 2000, 243. Radner associates this practice with the letter to Sargon II, SAA 5 225, in which the writer complains about providing 1000 homers of grain in harsh conditions, while others, presumably in better farming environments and tasked with the same quota, are able to feed their horses, eat, and cultivate seed from their harvests. *Ma’uttu* is not directly mentioned, but

Two dockets from the *rab ekalli* archive are unrelated to grain, but both seem to relate to informal transactions that had a short time relevance in the archive. One of these dockets (CTN 3 20) is a short, sealed docket, which records that two persons have taken 200 torches(?),⁶⁹⁹ and will deliver them before the campaign (?).⁷⁰⁰ The document is clearly quite informal and intended for short-term storage, as it is undated and does not adhere to either the standard Neo-Assyrian loan formula or the abridged one for the grain loans. The other docket (CTN 3 17) records an obscure obligation to bring one breeding ram to a certain Abu-eriba. The document specifies that its offspring should be brought together with the ram. The transaction here seems to be an obligation to provide more sheep to the “creditor,” but it is uncertain what the “debtor” gains from the transaction, if anything.

One of the barley debt notes is not written on a docket but rather a horizontal tablet. According to Dalley and Postgate’s interpretation, this document (CTN 3 12) is an administrative receipt formulated as a debt note. It details a delivery of barley from the *rab ekalli* Isseme-ilī to Nabû-da”inanni, the commander of teams of the chief eunuch. The *rab ekalli* is to recover the delivered barley from “the feed-stuff of Rēmūtu” (*ki-si-ti šá m̄re-mu-ti*).⁷⁰¹ Dalley and Postgate suggest the seal of the document is an authorization of Nabû-da”inanni, which would have been recognized by Rēmūtu when the *rab ekalli* came to collect the barley.⁷⁰² The choice of a horizontal tablet instead of a docket may relate to the military domain of the transaction or the official authorization from the chief eunuch – perhaps this transaction was not as mundane as delivery obligations and the allocation of grain from the *ma’uttu* lands.

The *rab ekalli* archive attests to the use of cuneiform grain loan dockets in mundane grain transactions particularly associated with the department of the *rab karmāni*. This archival habit suggests that Aramaic scrolls were also utilized in state administration for management of grain. While the “grain loan” CTN 3 12 described above is written on a regular rectangular cuneiform tablet, this exception is most likely due to the transaction recorded on the document, which was not a loan. Dockets were also utilized in other short-term transactions, as exemplified by CTN 3 17 and 20.

this association seems possible considering that the *ma’uttu* land is often specified as belonging to the king or the palace, i.e., state-owned. The term is the equivalent of the Neo-Babylonian *mu’untu*, as noted by Parpola 1975, 295. As can be seen in the entries of *ma’uttu* and *mu’untu* in CAD M/2, 321, the term is often associated with the king and the palace.

⁶⁹⁹ CTN 3 20: 1: 2 ME GIŠ zi ki tú?, although Dalley and Postgate (1984, 72) note that “it is difficult to explain this as a form of *ziqtu* ‘torch’; a reading *zi-iq-pi* ‘stakes’ may be preferable.”

⁷⁰⁰ CTN 3 20: 4: *ina* IGI AD x ‘SUM²¹-nu, the editors suggest based on collation the reading *ina* IGI-at KASKAL.2, Dalley & Postgate 1984, 72.

⁷⁰¹ CTN 3 12: 7. Transliteration and translation from Dalley & Postgate 1984, 63–64.

⁷⁰² Dalley & Postgate 1984, 64.

The second institutional archive from the Review Palace is associated with the *šakintu*, the manager of the queen's household.⁷⁰³ In terms of her functions, Groß compares the *šakintu* as the female counterpart of the *rab ekalli*.⁷⁰⁴ Tablets assigned to the dossier dealing with the *šakintu* were found in the southwestern part of the palace.⁷⁰⁵ Following the terminology used by Dalley and Postgate, the archive includes a letter, three legal records of settlement of disputes, one witnessed prohibition against further litigation, four sales of persons, three exchange loans for silver, two silver debt-notes, a silver and grain debt note with harvester clause, a loan of grain and straw, a delivery contract for grain, one royal inscription, and an amulet. All dated documents are post-canonical, like the documents from the *rab ekalli* archive.

The *šakintu* archive from the Review Palace includes four transactions involving barley, two written on triangular dockets (CTN 3 43 and 92), and two on rectangular documents (CTN 3 42 and 44). One of the dockets (CTN 3 43) is a loan of barley and straw, with all the standard clauses and formulas. The only odd feature is that only the grain bears interest (measured in seah, 5 seah per homer). The second docket (CTN 3 92) is a contract of barley owed by the chief of granaries, *rab karmāni*.⁷⁰⁶ As this docket specifies that the barley is “of feed” (CTN 3 92: 2: *ša ŠE.ki-su-tu*?[O])⁷⁰⁷ and the “debtor” is the *rab karmāni*, it seems likely that this is a delivery contract.

The two barley transactions breaking the pattern of triangular dockets were probably written in a different format because the transaction required more formality. CTN 3 42 is a loan of silver and barley, which may explain why it is written on a rectangular tablet instead of a docket. The second barley transaction written on a rectangular tablet is a loan of barley to seven debtors (CTN 3 44). Dalley and Postgate suggest that due to the medium and lack of the *ina pūhi* clause that this is an “administrative supply” contract, which they point out is related to the repayment date “when the king enters Nineveh” and guarantor, uncommon in grain loans.⁷⁰⁸ Clearly, the transaction here is different compared to the regular grain loans, and possibly drafted according to a different departments needs from those involved in grain management.

The palace archives from Kalhu display similar patterns on the usage of cuneiform grain dockets in the management of grain. Particularly many dockets

⁷⁰³ The texts associated with the *šakintu* archive in the Review Palace are CTN 3: 28–45. For a discussion of the *šakintu* household at Kalhu and elsewhere see Svärd 2015, 91–105.

⁷⁰⁴ Groß 2020a, 73.

⁷⁰⁵ Rooms S 10 and 18; see Dalley & Postgate 1984, 9. Like the *rab ekalli* dossier, these were also presumed to have fallen from an upper storey; see n. 696 above.

⁷⁰⁶ Dalley and Postgate associate this with two tablets from the *šakintu* archive (CTN 32 and 44), presumably because the creditor Mannu-kī-Arbail appears there as well, although the docket was found in a different room; see Dalley & Postgate 1984, 16.

⁷⁰⁷ Translation and transliteration from Dalley & Postgate 1984, 155–156.

⁷⁰⁸ Dalley & Postgate 1984, 100.

come from the *rab ekalli* archive and seem to be associated with the position of the *rab karmāni*, who seems to have overseen the palace grain supply and state-owned field management. When traditional rectangular tablets are used, the transaction and/or its context differs from typical grain loans, which may have led to a longer archival period or being archived in a different context.

8.1.3.3. Šamaš-šarru-ušur archive (TW53)

The tablets from the six houses on the northeastern edge of the acropolis mound were designated under the collective term TW53 (Town Wall 1953.)⁷⁰⁹ Among these is Šamaš-šarru-ušur's private archive of 47 texts, which is from TW53 Room 19.⁷¹⁰ Ponchia suggested the archive holder was involved with bird breeding due the large number of bird-related debt notes.⁷¹¹ Herbordt et al. suggest instead that he acquired birds either for his own household or supplied them to an institution, perhaps the temple of Nabû.⁷¹² He was a eunuch (CTN 6 64: 6: ^{l6}SAG) although his sons and grandsons are mentioned later in the penalty clause. The documents are dated between 660 and 613*. The archive includes both conveyances of real estate and slaves and loans and debt notes.

As this is a private archive, Šamaš-šarru-ušur seems to have upheld fewer rigid standards than institutional archives when it comes to format and shape of documents. As a general pattern, he maintained silver loans following the standard Neo-Assyrian loan formula and shape. This also extended to mixed loans of silver and grain; two loans of the mixed type are written on the standard horizontal tablets (CTN 6 88–89). Six of his documents are purely grain loans (CTN 6 102–107); most follow the same formula and shape as the grain loans from the Nabû temple. Two documents are an exception to this, and both lack the *ina pūhi* clause. The first one is a docket bearing two seal impressions, but only the seal identification of one person (CTN 6 103). As has been established, normally the seal identification is omitted from the grain loan dockets. The second (CTN 6 105) is even more unusual, as it bears no witnesses and is written on a horizontal sealed tablet – not an unsealed tablet inside a sealed envelope. As the editors note, by this date (635*) the expected format would be a triangular docket.⁷¹³

The use of dockets also extended to two bird transactions; one a debt-note of 36 doves and one a loan of a goose (CTN 6 100–101).⁷¹⁴ Šamaš-šarru-ušur's private transactions allowed more flexibility for archival documents. However, the use of cuneiform for the dockets also penetrated the private domain, perhaps originating

⁷⁰⁹ Herbordt et al. 2019, 131.

⁷¹⁰ Šamaš-šarru-ušur texts CTN 6 63–72; 74–109.

⁷¹¹ Ponchia 1990, 50.

⁷¹² Herbordt et al. 2019, 224.

⁷¹³ Herbordt et al. 2019, 239.

⁷¹⁴ Interestingly, the loan of a goose is sealed with finger-nail marks forming a cross and the shape of a bird's claw, see the discussion of the sealing in Herbordt et al. 2019, 230. Perhaps the debtor was being playful?

from the institutions. As discussed by the editors of the archive, the witnesses who make up the social network of Šamaš-šarru-ušur involve persons with titles associated with both palaces and the Nabû and Ninurta temples in Kalhu.⁷¹⁵

8.1.3.4. Conclusions on the use of triangular cuneiform dockets at Kalhu

The *rab ekalli* archive and the Nabû temple archive demonstrate how Aramaic was adapted for institutional grain loans. Some of the documents from the palaces seem to be related to the private economic domain, as the creditors do not appear by title. Like the private archive of Šamaš-šarru-ušur, these documents show how the use of this format for grain loans was normalized in Kalhu private archives, probably because of interaction with the palace and temple institutions. The cuneiform grain loan dockets were utilized across the archives in Kalhu, and probably stemmed from departments of grain management, such as the temple granary and the *rab karmāni* office in the Review Palace.

8.1.4. Conclusions on the use of Aramaic in the Assyrian Heartland

The Aramaic corpora from the three Assyrian capital cities representing the Assyrian heartland – Assur, Kalhu, and Nineveh – all have different types of profiles. At Assur, Aramaic dockets were used in several small archives. The Aramaic documents from these private archives usually align with the business they were structured around. Like the use of Aramaic in the provincial archives, the Assur material represents the private economic sphere and private archival context instead of the institutional.

The cuneiform grain loan dockets are not an isolated phenomenon at Kalhu, but the same process was also utilized at Nineveh. The dossiers of Taqūnu and Bahiānu from Nineveh (discussed in sections 6.3 and 6.6 respectively) are also arguably associated with royal estates and grain management. Bahiānu was the village manager of the *lahhenutu* (“female financial officer”), and Taqūnu served in a similar role as a *rab karmāni* (“chief of the granaries”) for the estate of the crown prince.⁷¹⁶ The use of cuneiform grain loan dockets is mainly limited to situations where institutions were involved, and this phenomenon suggests that the institutions functioned bilingually, utilizing Aramaic scrolls and sealing them with cuneiform dockets possibly for future bureaucratic processing. Because alphabetic scribes were employed at the Assyrian court, particularly in administrative

⁷¹⁵ Herbordt et al. 2019, 134.

⁷¹⁶ It is possible that the job description of the *lahhinu* and the *lahhinutu* should be associated with grain management in general, which would explain why the dossier of Bahiānu includes so many grain documents.

duties,⁷¹⁷ traces of the use of alphabetic writing and Aramaic influence are due to be seen somewhere in institutional administrations.

Another glaringly obvious phenomenon in the material from Assur and Kalhu is the relative rarity of Aramaic archival aids on cuneiform tablets, as seen in Table 27. While this phenomenon is present in the Nineveh texts, it occurs mainly in legal documents that were written outside of Nineveh. The current evidence together with the use of cuneiform grain loan dockets suggests higher levels of cuneiform literacy among the elite in the Assyrian heartland than in the provinces.

Table 27 Aramaic archival evidence in the Assyrian heartland.

The table includes only the inscriptions on clay tablets and thus not the ostraca from Assur and Kalhu. Total number of cuneiform archival texts is sourced from the Oracc ATAE project.⁷¹⁸

	Aramaic monolinguals	Aramaic archival aids	Bilinguals
Assur	8 (+1 unpublished)	1	0
Nineveh	6	35	2
Kalhu	2 ⁷¹⁹	0	0

8.2. Use of Aramaic in the Assyrian provinces

The use of Aramaic in archives from the northwestern regions of the Assyrian empire relates mostly to the private economic domain, outside of institutions. Most of the documents from Dūr-Katlimmu come from the Red House archive and are centered on the economic transactions of Šulmu-šarri, a *ša-qurbūte* (royal agent). In his dossier, both Aramaic monolinguals and Aramaic epigraphs on cuneiform documents are plentiful, but both types are also associated with other central protagonists. Aramaic was particularly used for loans of grain and silver, usually incised on triangular dockets. Rectangular tablets were used in transactions with exceptional circumstances, such as loans with pledges, which could be used to back up ownership of people and real estate.

Very similar patterns are visible in the unprovenanced Ma'allānāte archive. This archive is represented by three central protagonists whose active periods are sequential. The first active period is represented by Handî, who bears the title *šaknu ša ekalli*, “palace prefect.” The second period is represented by Harrānāiu, Handî’s son, who is designated as *šaknu*, “prefect.” The third and final period overlaps

⁷¹⁷ See the discussion on the functions and education of the alphabetic scribe in section 1.3.

⁷¹⁸ <http://oracc.org/atae/>, accessed on 29 Aug 2025.

⁷¹⁹ While not archival documents, the two docket shaped tags discussed in section 8.1.2.2 are included here.

slightly with the period of Harrānāiu and is represented by Sēr-nūrī. His relationship to the previous generations is not certain, but his activities are similar to the previous generations. The archive and its possessions may thus be associated with the office of *šaknu* or a family relationship between Sēr-nūrī and his predecessors, possibly both.

Despite aligning with the general patterns outlined regarding Šulmu-šarri's dossier, i.e. using alphabetic triangular dockets for standard loans of barley and silver and Aramaic archival aids from the archive holder's point of view at least in one archive generation, the Aramaic evidence from Ma'allānāte is less consistent. The text types written in Aramaic are diverse, including loan documents, administrative documents, and a letter. While the loan documents follow the basic structure of an Aramaic loan formula (discussed and outlined in section 8.3 below), scribes at Ma'allānāte make additions according to local customs. The formulation of standard clauses such as interest rate varies as well.

Archives from Dūr-Katlimmu and Ma'allānāte make it evident that there is a certain amount of standardization but also local variation in the use of Aramaic in provincial archives. As the largest units of Aramaic documents from the seventh century, they help to define the norms of using Aramaic in archival documents. Thus, I bring the rest of the provincial archives to demonstrate that similar patterns exist at other sites as well.

The sections below give an overview of the typology of documents from Marqasu, Guzana, Burmarina, and Til-Barsip,⁷²⁰ with special attention to the formulaic similarities of loan documents. Additionally, a handful of unprovenanced Aramaic documents from private collections have been published by Lemaire,⁷²¹ many of which cannot be securely connected to any of the known archives based on onomastics. Six of these documents are Aramaic conveyance documents (NTA 1–6), all written on rectangular tablets rather than triangular dockets. These documents are used here for parallels to similar documents from provenanced archives, as rectangular Aramaic documents appear in many of them.

Certain features, such as the use of Aramaic archival aids, the use of vertical rectangular tablets for loans with pledges, and specialized terminology demonstrate that Aramaic legal language was transmitted between the provincial settlements. Similarities can be observed between documents from Burmarina and Dūr-Katlimmu, and possibly even direct connections between the archives.⁷²² Differences particularly in additional clauses demonstrate that not all aspects of Aramaic legal documents were formalized and the scribes adapted the legal formulas to local customs.

⁷²⁰ See map in chapter 2, Picture 1.

⁷²¹ Lemaire 2001.

⁷²² Radner notes that if the theophoric component Salmānu was exclusively used by residents of Dūr-Katlimmu in seventh-century Assyria, certain individuals attested in documents from Burmarina must be from Dūr-Katlimmu (in Fales et al. 2005, 641).

8.2.1. Marqasu

Marqasu was the ancient name of the modern site of Kahramanmaraş in modern Türkiye. It was the capital of the kingdom of Gurgum before the kingdom was annexed by Sargon II to the Assyrian provincial system as the province of Marqasu.⁷²³ The site of Kahramanmaraş has not been excavated, but texts purchased by museums and private collectors on the antiquities market have been identified as originating from the site based on explicit references to Marqasu in the cuneiform documents.⁷²⁴

The archive includes 46 legal documents from the Neo-Assyrian period, one of them written in Aramaic and the rest in Neo-Assyrian cuneiform.⁷²⁵ One of the cuneiform documents bears an Aramaic epigraph (*Marqasu* 28), attesting to how wide-spread this practice was. The documents are dispersed among several museums,⁷²⁶ and one of the tablets is only known from photographs circulated in the antiquities market in the late 1990s.⁷²⁷ The cuneiform documents include 20 sales of people and real estate,⁷²⁸ five loans of silver,⁷²⁹ seven loans of barley,⁷³⁰ three judicial documents,⁷³¹ two contracts with unclear transaction types,⁷³² one administrative note (*Marqasu* 40), one uninscribed sealed bulla (*Marqasu* 36), and six only partially preserved contracts of unclear contents (*Marqasu* 39; 42–46). The dates range between 703 and 621*.

An Aramaic epigraph appears on a tablet recording the sale of a field (*Marqasu* 28) from Erība-ilu to a certain Nabû-ušēzib. It is incised on the left edge and reads “Erība-ilu, field of three homers”, *rbl ḥql byt 3*.⁷³³ To make sense of the brief epigraph, the editors have reconstructed the line as *ʾlʾ rbl ʾbzt ḥql byt III*, “To

⁷²³ Jiménez, Adalı, & Radner 2015, 154.

⁷²⁴ The acquisition history of the tablets is somewhat unclear, and Jiménez et al. state that “the tablets are reported to come from uncontrolled excavations at the fortress of Kahramanmaraş” (Jiménez, Adalı, & Radner 2015, 153).

⁷²⁵ The primary publication, including documents already edited in previous publications, is Günbatti et al. 2020, including the Aramaic document, which was published first in Fales 2019a.

⁷²⁶ Five in the Kahramanmaraş Museum of Archaeology, three in the Erimtan Museum of Archaeology and Art in Ankara, two in the private collection of Mustafa Demir registered at the Gaziantep Museum of Archaeology, and the rest in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara.

⁷²⁷ *Marqasu* 18; see for details on the text see Jiménez, Adalı, & Radner 2015, 163.

⁷²⁸ *Marqasu* 1–4; 8; 10; 14–18; 21–23; 27–28; 31–32; 38; 41.

⁷²⁹ *Marqasu* 5–6; 24–25; 29.

⁷³⁰ *Marqasu* 11–13; 19; 26; 33; 37.

⁷³¹ *Marqasu* 9; 20; 34.

⁷³² *Marqasu* 30 regarding a garden and *Marqasu* 7 regarding a person.

⁷³³ *Marqasu* 28, l.e. 34, reading based on the photo in Günbatti et al. (2020, 163) the letters are very legible and clearly incised.

Erība-ili, for a sown field: (an) estate of three (hectares),”⁷³⁴ but neither the photo nor the adjoining cuneiform text support this reading.

The attributed *byt* 3 refers to the seed capacity of the field, as seen also in the mortgage document ACP 64 from Ma'allānāte, “land of three (se'ah) contents” ʾr'. *byt šlš* (discussed in section 5.3.3.2).⁷³⁵ While the measure is omitted in the Aramaic epigraph, following the area of land defined in the cuneiform contract (3: É 3 ANŠE ŠE.NUMUN) the expression translates thus to “field of 3 homers”. The reconstruction of *bzr* for sown field is thus unnecessary.

Erība-ili (*rbl* in the alphabetic script, ^mSU-DINGIR in cuneiform) sold the field for three shekels of silver, while the translation of the editors implies a sort of exchange. As seen already in previous chapters,⁷³⁶ using the seller's name as the identifier for the sold object is typical in Aramaic epigraphs. Usually this is achieved with a possessive construct, (e.g., in SAA 14 219: s.1–2: “Deed of the field of Tiṭi”, *dnt ḥql[] zy tty?*),⁷³⁷ but the syntax here does not support that. A possessive construct is not necessarily needed, however, and a similar abridged form is seen in SAA 14 44: 15e: “Deed of Lu-šakin, land” *dnt lsgn ḥql*. Based on evidence from other sites, the epigraph would be expected to begin with a “label”⁷³⁸ such as *dnt*, “document”, or the preposition *l* “concerning,” but as no traces of further letters are visible in the photo, it was presumably omitted by the scribe or not part of the local archival aid formula.

The Aramaic document (*Marqasu* 35) from Marqasu is a triangular docket (dated to VIII-630*) partially broken at the bottom. Based on an interest clause partially preserved on line 2 “(by) its [nth], will increase) its interest” (ʾ x x x x *hʔyʾ rbyhʔ*).⁷³⁹ As Fales notes, the typical formulaic expression for interest would be *b xxxx -h*, “by its ...”, such as *bpłgh*, “by its half.”⁷⁴⁰ Despite the illegible first lines which would contain the names of the debtor, creditor and the object, the interest clause indicates that the document is a loan of silver.

While the central protagonists of the transaction are not legible, some of the names among the witnesses are attested in the rest of the Marqasu documents, such

⁷³⁴ Translation to English by Poppy Tushingham from a preliminary version prepared by Faruk Akyüz, on <http://oracc.org/atae/P522573/>, accessed 9 Feb 2026.

⁷³⁵ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 134. See also Lipiński's discussion for examples of the use of this expression in indicating area of fields in Aramaic and Hebrew (Lipiński 2010, 135–137).

⁷³⁶ See, for example, the table 6.4 regarding the Aramaic epigraphs from Nineveh outlining the contents of the epigraphs: the use of seller's name is much more common than the buyer's name, as it was more crucial information to the archiver (i.e., the buyer.)

⁷³⁷ Transliteration and translation from Mattila 2002, 173.

⁷³⁸ Borrowing the terminology used by Fales to refer to the first words in Aramaic epigraphs which identify the document as a legal deed, most commonly *dnt* (Fales 1986, 7).

⁷³⁹ Transliteration and translation from Fales 2019a, 47.

⁷⁴⁰ Fales 2019a, 48. Fales points out that *rby* should be understood as a lengthened imperfect verbal form *yrbh* “it will increase” or noun “interest” with a possessive suffix *-h*, “its interest.”

as Ubru-Nergal (the central protagonist in *Marqasu* 4–14). Ubru-Nergal is clearly one archive holder, but due to the lack of archaeological context and the incompleteness of the archive, it is difficult to say whether the documents come from one archive or several.

The grain loans from *Marqasu* are written in a formula identical to cuneiform barley loans from Kalhu and elsewhere, discussed in section 8.1.3 above: object, creditor, debtor, *ina pūhi* clause, repayment, harvester clause, witnesses, date. For example, in *Marqasu* 11 “Twenty homers of barley, capital, belonging to Ubru-Nergal, at the disposal of Rammān-dâ. He has taken it as a loan. He will pay three seahs per homer at the threshing floors (*ina adri*) in *Marqasu*.”⁷⁴¹ Five are written on triangular dockets,⁷⁴² and two on rectangular tablets.⁷⁴³ Three of the dockets are identical in formula, written on the same day, all borrowed from Ubru-Nergal (*Marqasu* 11–13). These were probably written by the same scribe, although one is not specifically mentioned. The other three grain loans are from different creditors, and in one the name of the creditor is broken.

The reason why two of the grain loans were written on rectangular tablets is difficult to determine. The motive may relate to the large amount of barley borrowed (30 homers in *Marqasu* 19), but the amount of barley is not preserved in the second document (*Marqasu* 37). Nevertheless, this evidence shows that cuneiform grain loan dockets were also utilized in archives at *Marqasu*, and based on the different creditors attested in the documents it is likely that this habit was practiced in several private archives. If the cuneiform dockets were attached to a scroll, together with the Aramaic docket they attest to bilingual archival habits at *Marqasu*. Moreover, the Aramaic silver loan docket attests to recording not only loans of barley, but silver, at *Marqasu*.

8.2.2. Guzana

Guzana is the ancient name of Tell Halaf, situated on the Khabur river near the site of Tell Fekheriye. In the eleventh century the site was the capital of Bit-Bahiani, one of the groups designated by Tiglath-Pileser I as “Arameans,” and it was annexed to the empire as an Assyrian province in the ninth century.⁷⁴⁴ Guzana retained great cultural and commercial importance in the Khabur triangle, as suggested by the common references to the city god Adad of Guzana in many penalty clauses and individuals traveling to and from Guzana.⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴¹ English translation by Poppy Tushingham based on the version prepared by Faruk Akyüz on the ATAE *Marqasu* subproject on Oracc, <http://oracc.org/atae/P522556/> accessed on 13 Sep 2025.

⁷⁴² *Marqasu* 11–13; 26; 33.

⁷⁴³ *Marqasu* 19; 37.

⁷⁴⁴ Novák 2013a; Novák 2013b.

⁷⁴⁵ Particularly visible in the archive of Šulmu-šarri at Dūr-Katlimmu; see section 4.3.3 on the long-distance relationships and influences at Dūr-Katlimmu.

It is thus somewhat surprising that the number of Aramaic documents from Guzana is meager. Five documents from the earlier excavations (between 1911 and 1913 and in 1929) have been published, and they were re-edited by Fales.⁷⁴⁶ Later excavations between 2006 and 2011 have yielded two additional Aramaic dockets, which are so far unpublished.⁷⁴⁷

All five published documents are loans of barley inscribed on triangular dockets (AECT 53–57). Two of the documents are badly damaged and illegible from the photographs – and as the documents were lost during World War II, not much can be done to amend this.⁷⁴⁸ The texts belong to a small archive of Il-manāni (written as *ʾlmny* in the Aramaic documents), son of Sagib from the town of Mehini,⁷⁴⁹ found in a jar in a private house together with six Neo-Assyrian legal documents.⁷⁵⁰ The Neo-Assyrian documents include two loans of silver and barley (AfO Beih 6, TH 101–102), one sale of a slave (AfO Beih 6, TH 103), one fragment of a witness list (AfO Beih 6, TH 104), one loan of barley, (AfO Beih 6, TH 105), one judicial document concerning a dispute over sheep (AfO Beih, TH 106). Il-manāni is the main protagonist in all of them. All dated documents are post-canonical.

In the Aramaic documents from Il-manāni's archive, the general structure of the loans is as expected: object, creditor, debtor, clause regarding repayment and interest, witnesses. The creditor is most often introduced with the preposition *l* and the debtor with the preposition *ʾl*, for example, in AECT 53: 1–3: [š] ʾrn 5 *lʾlmny ʾl nbwdlh whddsmny*, “Barley 5 (homers), belonging to Il-manāni, (are debited) to Nabû-dalâ and Adad-šimanni.”⁷⁵¹ In one instance, the creditor is introduced with the relative pronoun *zy* and the debtor with the preposition *qdm*: AECT 55 1–3. š ʾrn 2[+ n?] [z]y ʾlmʾnʾn[y] *qdm* [m x x x x], “Barley, 2 [+ n] (homers), belonging to Il-manāni, debited against”⁷⁵² The relative pronoun *zy* is also used to identify the creditor at Dūr-Katlimmu.⁷⁵³ The use of the preposition *qdm* before the debtor's name is rare, but is also attested at Maʾallānāte.⁷⁵⁴

Some indications of localization are visible in the additional clauses. One loan with several debtors specifies that “whoever is present” should pay back the debt (AECT 53 r. 1–2: *mn qrb mn ʾhʾ[m?] š ʾry ʾ yntn*).⁷⁵⁵ Simultaneously, Assyrian influences are visible; Fales has reconstructed an Assyrian loanword *hubullu* (*hbl*,

⁷⁴⁶ AECT 53–57. See bibliography and overview of the site and its excavations in Novák 2013b.

⁷⁴⁷ The dockets are mentioned and pictured in Novák 2013b, 275.

⁷⁴⁸ AECT 56 and 57.

⁷⁴⁹ Full name and locality mentioned in AfO Beih 6, TH 106: 1–2.

⁷⁵⁰ Friedrich et al. 1967, 47.

⁷⁵¹ Transliteration and translation from Fales 1986, 239–241. The same construction also appears in another text from the same archive, AECT 54.

⁷⁵² Transliteration and translation from Fales 1986, 247–248.

⁷⁵³ See the discussion of the Aramaic legal formulas at Dūr-Katlimmu in section 4.2.2.

⁷⁵⁴ For example, in ACP 44; formula discussed in section 5.2.1.

⁷⁵⁵ Transliteration and translation from Fales 1986, 239–240.

“debt; interest-bearing loan”) for two documents (AECT 54 and 55), both times in loans with interest.⁷⁵⁶ While the term is not particularly common in Aramaic loans, it is another sign of the closely knit relationship between Assyrian and Aramaic legal language.

Although his private archive shows preference for utilizing Aramaic triangular dockets for documenting loans of barley, one of the cuneiform documents is a loan of barley written according to the Neo-Assyrian loan formula on a rectangular sealed tablet (AfO Beih 6, TH 105). The document includes a seal identification unlike the Aramaic equivalents, and a guarantor clause, which suggests that the loan was higher risk, possibly explaining why it was recorded in Akkadian in a more formalized manner. Similar reasoning may apply to the loans of barley and silver recorded in Akkadian (AfO Beih 6, TH 101–102).

The Il-manāni archive demonstrates how Aramaic and Neo-Assyrian documents were stored together in a private archival context. As at Dūr-Katlimmu and Ma'allānāte, the pattern of recording loans of barley in Aramaic repeats. The formula of the Aramaic barley documents shares its basic features with documents from other provincial archives, but the scribes adapted the formula and Aramaic legal language to local legal customs and the requirements of the transaction. Dūr-Katlimmu was a trading hub and bore cultural and religious relevance in the northwestern provinces of Assyria and thus its Aramaic finds reflect the customs visible in other provincial archives.

8.2.3. Burmarina

The bilingual archive from Burmarina, excavated between 1994 and 1998, consists of 123 texts, most of which are fragments. They were discovered scattered in room 783 among pottery and weights, which suggests that the documents were possibly originally archived in a jar like the Il-manāni archive from Guzana.⁷⁵⁷ Of 63 legible texts, 19 are in Aramaic and the remaining 44 are in Neo-Assyrian.⁷⁵⁸ The dated texts all come from the reign of Esarhaddon, ranging between 679 and 673. The editors suggest the following division based on the typology of the texts: business and commercial activities recorded primarily in Assyrian and occasionally in Aramaic and domestic administration exclusively in Aramaic.⁷⁵⁹ Eight of the cuneiform documents bear an Aramaic epigraph.

Seventh-century Burmarina was an Assyrian provincial village, which had been conquered already in the ninth century by Shalmaneser III during a campaign against Bit-Adini.⁷⁶⁰ It was closely connected administratively with the nearby

⁷⁵⁶ Fales 1986, 244–247.

⁷⁵⁷ For the description of the archaeological context and discovery see Fales et al. 2005, 616–618.

⁷⁵⁸ Published in Fales et al. 2005.

⁷⁵⁹ Fales et al. 2005, 618.

⁷⁶⁰ Fales et al. 2005, 618–621.

military settlement of Til-Barsip, located only 18km south of Burmarina.⁷⁶¹ The connections of the two sites are also apparent in the texts, as individuals from Til-Barsip appear as witnesses. The editors tentatively suggest that many of the legal documents found at Burmarina could have been drafted in Til-Barsip, as sometimes the archive holders are identified as locals from Burmarina, clearly written from an outsider perspective.⁷⁶² The central protagonist of the Aramaic documents, Še'-ušnî, may also appear in a text from Til-Barsip.⁷⁶³

The Neo-Assyrian documents from Burmarina are classified as legal documents: 32 conveyance documents, four loans of silver, five judicial documents, and three fragments of legal documents too small for further categorization. There are numerous protagonists in the archive, and their relationship is not clear.⁷⁶⁴ Aramaic epigraphs are attested on eight documents, mostly conveyance documents,⁷⁶⁵ plus two judicial documents.⁷⁶⁶

Table 28 Cuneiform documents with Aramaic epigraphs from Burmarina.

Text number	Method of writing	Date
Tell Shiukh Fawqani 2	Inked	N/A
Tell Shiukh Fawqani 3	Inked&incised	N/A
Tell Shiukh Fawqani 4	Inked	673
Tell Shiukh Fawqani 11	Incised	N/A
Tell Shiukh Fawqani 13	Incised	N/A
Tell Shiukh Fawqani 23	Inked	N/A

⁷⁶¹ Fales et al. 2005, 619–621.

⁷⁶² Fales et al. 2005, 621. In text 46 the debtors are identified as *mn brmrn*, “from Burmarina.”

⁷⁶³ Noted in Fales et al. 2005, 609 n. 105. The first witness in text TH 11: 6 is reconstructed as Š' š[ny?] by Lemaire 2001, 127.

⁷⁶⁴ Fales et al. 2005, 624.

⁷⁶⁵ *Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 2–4; 11; 13; 23.

⁷⁶⁶ *Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 37 and 41.

Text number	Method of writing	Date
Tell Shiukh Fawqani 37	Inked	676
Tell Shiukh Fawqani 41	Inked	N/A

As seen in Table 28 above, epigraphs at Burmarina were both written in ink and incised, and in some cases include both an incised epigraph and an inked epigraph, probably written at different times. Many of the inked epigraphs have faded to only traces. Certain patterns may nevertheless be detected, which have already been encountered in other archives. The same vocabulary used to refer to the document was used in Burmarina as elsewhere (*dnt*, “document” in *Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 3). As in other archives, the names of the transferred person were used to identify specific sales of persons (*Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 11; possibly also 13). Finally, a judicial document of a lawsuit by Kubaba-lidi (*Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 37), one of the protagonists of the archive, includes an Aramaic epigraph referring to the defendant of the case, thus clearly written from Kubaba-lidi’s point of view. Therefore, the use of Aramaic archival aids aligns with the pattern of use elsewhere in the provincial archives, and the use of ink finds parallels particularly at Dūr-Katlimmu.⁷⁶⁷

The monolingual Aramaic material from Burmarina includes interesting deviations from the general Aramaic corpus. One of these aspects is the inked triangular dockets, some with fully inked inscriptions (*Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 56) and some with additional lines in ink.⁷⁶⁸ Due to the fading of the ink, most of the signs are illegible or only faintly incised due to the writing instrument. As the contents are not translatable, it remains uncertain whether inked dockets served a different purpose from incised dockets.

In addition to the standard triangular docket shape, some of the docket fragments appear to be from rectangular dockets – still originally attached by string to an object due to rope marks on the surface.⁷⁶⁹ Unfortunately, none of the dockets, triangular or rectangular, are fully preserved. The rectangular dockets possibly served a different function from triangular dockets or vertical tablets. Two of the triangular dockets were possibly silver loans based on the word for mina.⁷⁷⁰

⁷⁶⁷ See the overview in section 4.2.3 and the discussion on the implications of the writing method for the author in section 4.4.2.

⁷⁶⁸ *Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 54–55; 57–59.

⁷⁶⁹ Referred to by the editors as “quadrangular.”

⁷⁷⁰ In *Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 54: 4: *lmnh* and possibly in *Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 55: 1: *mn[h/n]*. Both dockets are singular fragments.

Some of the better-preserved Aramaic texts from Burmarina were written on rectangular tablets. All three examples involve transfer of people, and these tablets were intended to function on their own like Neo-Assyrian conveyance documents, not attached to a scroll.⁷⁷¹ One is a sale of a woman (*Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 45) and two are loan documents involving a pledge, which presumably resulted in using the vertical tablet shape (*Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 46–47).

The loans with pledge are both credited by Še'-uśnî. The better-preserved example (*Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 47) is interesting on account of the pledge documents encountered at Ma'allānāte and Dūr-Katlimmu and is discussed in more detail below.

Tell Shiukh Fawqani 47: 1–15

1. [ẖtm šʔ] 'l. wmy'. wpḻty
 2. 'gbr'n zy ḵsr. mlk'
 3. mn bny zmn. rhnn 'š
 4. pʔ/ṉsh' š m 'h' ḻš' [']šny
 5. btʔmn š'qln zy ḵsp' II (?)
 6. wl šʔ'r 'm š' 'šny
 7. hn ynqʔq'eras. 'h' 'š' ḵsp'
 8. bmṉh wmnt' rbh bplgh
 9. whn 'š' p 'ḻh ḻš' 'šny
 10. k'lw' yhb snb qrṉh
 11. mn yw'mh pmh ḥyy mlk'
 12. w'ʔdwh yʔb'mh' bydh
 13. hn l'htwn ḵsp'
 14. ypwʔgʔn. 'š. mn y'h' b [x]
 15. mgl. bḥ̱sd 'yn/p x' [x x]
- (Witnesses)

“Seal of... Ša'il and Maya' and Palṭî, men of the king's army from Bīt-Zamani, who are giving a man, by the name of Nasuḥâ/Pashâ as pledge to Še'-uśnî, against eight shekels of silver (on edge: II?). And there will be nothing outstanding incumbent upon Še'-uśnî. If he (=any debtor) redeems the man, the sum will be one mina, but (as for) the share, its

⁷⁷¹ Probably also *Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 49, which is heavily abraded and only the reverse is legible.

interest will be (only) of one-half. But if the man has worked for Še'-'ušnî, he (=any debtor) will give in accompaniment (only) two-thirds of his (=the man's) capital. Whoever will open his mouth – the life of the king and his loyalty oath will hold him responsible. If they actually give back the sum, they will take away the man. Whoever gives a sickle at the harvest will... (Witnesses).⁷⁷²

In this text, two men from the king's army (*kšr mlk'*) from Bīt Zamāni pledge another man, presumably their servant, to Šē'-'ušnî in exchange for eight (?) shekels of silver. The text defines the conditions of the pledge. Conditions of repayment of the debt and redeeming the pledged man are introduced with *hn*, "if," equivalent to similar clauses in Neo-Assyrian pledge documents.⁷⁷³ A parallel to this can also be seen in AECT 53 from Guzana, discussed above in section 8.2.2. If the pledged man performs work for the creditor, the value of the work is removed from the interest.

Typically, Neo-Assyrian loans with pledge do not accrue interest, as the pledged person was expected to serve in the creditor's household.⁷⁷⁴ This practice is also paralleled in the Aramaic pledge documents from Dūr-Katlimmu (D 22) and Ma'allānāte (ACP 64).⁷⁷⁵ Similarly, a pledged field can be harvested and cultivated by the creditor. If the debt goes unpaid, the pledge should cover the creditor's losses. In this document from Burmarina, it seems that the pledged man's work is conditional, as it is clearly specified as "if he works for Še'-'ušnî" (*Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 47: 9: *whn 'š' p'l'h lš' šny*).⁷⁷⁶ Even if he does, the debt still accrues interest, albeit a smaller amount. Clearly this clause is dependent on the man pledged and he cannot be expected to give full servitude. However, this seems to go against the whole concept of pledging a person: if a person can be pledged, presumably he is the possession of someone and not free to do as he wants. Is the person pledged instead a free man, who stays rather as a guarantee of the loan, but gains nothing in return if he performs work to diminish the interest of the loan? Or perhaps the creditor is uncertain whether he has a use for the pledged man?

The text also includes a peculiar penalty clause referring to the adê-treaties (lines 10–11: *mn ywmh pmh hyy mlk' / w 'dwh y'b 'mh bydh*, "whoever opens his mouth, by the life of the king will be held accountable."⁷⁷⁷ This penalty clause is

⁷⁷² Transliteration and translation from Fales et al. 2005, 655–656.

⁷⁷³ For example, in BATSH 6 117: 6–r. 1: *šum₄-ma maš-šur-KUR-LAL-ni i-zu-ku maš-PAP.MEŠ TA ŠÀ GIŠ.SAR.MEŠ e-li ú-la-a de-ni ina UGU maš-šur-KUR-LAL e-te-peš, GIŠ.SAR.ME šá-par-tú*, "if Aššur-matu-taqinanni is cleared, Iddin-ahhē will leave the gardens, but if (he) initiates a lawsuit against Aššur-matu-taqinanni, the gardens are pledged." Transliteration and translation from Radner 2002, 158.

⁷⁷⁴ Postgate 1976, 48.

⁷⁷⁵ In all these documents, the pledge is marked with the root *rhn*.

⁷⁷⁶ Transliteration and translation from Fales et al. 2005, 655–656.

⁷⁷⁷ Transliteration and translation from Fales et al. 2005, 656. As noted by Fales and Attardo, this mention means that the earliest possible date for this document is the reign of Esarhaddon, who

similar to the penalty clauses of the Neo-Assyrian conveyance documents. This type of clause is rarely if ever encountered in loan documents. Perhaps the creditor truly had no faith in these debtors, and as military personnel they could be difficult to reach. In the other, more fragmentary pledge document, the debtors are probably more familiar to the creditor, as they also are “from Burmarina” (*Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 46: 2: *mn brmrn*)⁷⁷⁸ – although specifying that they come from there may also indicate that the document was written outside Burmarina.

Nevertheless, the pledge appears to be weaker than normal. The transaction behind the document appears to include unwritten information either about the pledged person or the debtors. The situation described in the document is a compromise between the creditor and the debtors. It may be imagined that the use of Aramaic in this situation functions to mediate between traditional Assyrian legal practice and the conditions of the debtor.

As has been seen with pledge documents from other locations, some Aramaic loans with a pledge open with a description of the pledge instead of the loaned object.⁷⁷⁹ This divergence from the Neo-Assyrian formula prioritizes the pledge and makes the document more similar to a conveyance document, as is also reflected by the vertical shape of the document. While the examples of Aramaic pledge documents share similarities such as terminology and tablet shape, the data is too sparse to conclude that the document type was standardized. It is notable, however, that these documents are more similar to conveyances than regular loans. They are higher in value due to the collateral, and therefore one of the more formal types of Aramaic documents.

The sale of a woman appears to mimic the Assyrian sale formula based on the remaining lines.⁷⁸⁰ The verb *zrpt* (“she is bought”), is the equivalent of the Assyrian *zarāpu*, followed by a penalty clause and witnesses. Conveyance documents in Neo-Assyrian Aramaic are rare but not unknown. In this archive, however, most of the conveyances are written in Assyrian. Supposedly this could be a marriage document, but this is purely speculative based on the chosen language and the purchase of a woman.⁷⁸¹ As the Aramaic adoption document from Dūr-Katlimmu (BATSH 17 D1**) attests to the choice of using Aramaic for family documents in provincial locations, perhaps other legal documents belonging to the domain of family matters could be written in Aramaic as well.

imposed the *adê* loyalty oath on all of Assyria (Fales et al. 2005, 659). The loyalty oath appears in the penalty clauses of legal documents around the empire; see Fales 2012, 152–153.

⁷⁷⁸ Transliteration and translation from Fales et al. 2005, 653–654.

⁷⁷⁹ For example, BATSH 6 D18 and ACP 64.

⁷⁸⁰ Tell Shiukh Fawqani 45.

⁷⁸¹ Only a few Neo-Assyrian marriage documents are known, discussed in detail in Radner 1997, 165–171. As Radner notes, purchases of slave women for other slaves can record marriages, such as the Neo-Assyrian marriage contract from Nineveh with an Aramaic archival aid discussed in section 6.5.

The Burmarina documents compared to other Aramaic documents are exceptional on many accounts. On the one hand, many archival habits align with the archives from Ma'allānāte and Dūr-Katlimmu. One is the use of Aramaic epigraphs, both inked and incised as seen in Dūr-Katlimmu epigraphs. Another habit is writing Aramaic documents with a pledge, although rare in all archives, on rectangular tablets. Due to the fragmentary state of the triangular docket, it cannot be said for certain whether they were used for documenting barley transactions, but it is very likely considering the location, chosen language and period.

On the other hand, the Burmarina corpus also shows several localized habits and structural differences. Structurally, this corpus is not connected by one central protagonist, even though it may have been archived in one room. One unusual local phenomenon described above is full documents written in ink, although not unattested: the adoption document with a foot imprint from Dūr-Katlimmu (BATSH 17 D1**) was also inked rather than incised. Another oddity is the fragments of quadrangular docket –this is unparalleled in any other archive described in this study. The Burmarina corpus, therefore, shows a mixture of Aramaic archival habits present elsewhere and some unique to the site.

8.2.4. Til-Barsip

Til-Barsip, modern Tell Ahmar, was known by many names in antiquity depending on the language of its occupants or conquerors: Masuwari, Til-Barsip, and Kar-Šalmaneser.⁷⁸² It is situated 20 km south of Karkemish and on the Balikh river, and it was excavated first between 1929 and 1931 and later in 1988–1999 and 2000–2010.⁷⁸³ The site was occupied prior to the Assyrian presence by Luwians and the group Bit-Adīni, but as is suggested by one of the many names, Til-Barsip was conquered by Šalmaneser III (r. 858–824) and renamed after him when the site was made part of the Assyrian provincial system.⁷⁸⁴

Only two Aramaic documents come from Til-Barsip, both inscribed on rectangular tablets (*Abr-Nahrain* 34 A, T 11; T23).⁷⁸⁵ The cuneiform documents from Til-Barsip were found in the same building and may belong to the same archive, centered on persons called Hannî and Ištar-dūri son of Samiraya.⁷⁸⁶ The dates preserved span the period from 683 to the early post-canonical period. The

⁷⁸² Bunnens 2022, 1.

⁷⁸³ See the description of the discovery and excavations on the site in Bunnens 2022, 1–10.

⁷⁸⁴ Bunnens 1997.

⁷⁸⁵ Both documents were first published in Bordreuil & Briquel Chatonnet 1996, and later re-edited by Lemaire 2001, 127–130.

⁷⁸⁶ Neo-Assyrian documents published in Dalley 1996.

archive includes five silver loans,⁷⁸⁷ three administrative lists,⁷⁸⁸ five conveyance documents,⁷⁸⁹ one judicial document (*Abr-Nahrain* 34 B, T14), and fragments of other documents.⁷⁹⁰

The Aramaic texts from Til-Barsip are both in poor condition and undated, but the editors note the paleography aligns with the seventh-century dating of the Neo-Assyrian documents.⁷⁹¹ One is a loan of silver inscribed on a vertical-shaped tablet missing the upper part (*Abr-Nahrain* 34 A, T11).⁷⁹² The document does not reflect the normal conventions of writing Aramaic loan documents based on its shape, and as was discussed above in section 8.2.3 regarding the pledge of a man to Še'-'ušnî, this tablet shape is more commonly used in loans backed by a pledge. As the beginning of the document is missing, it is not certain whether this one included a pledge too, while the shape alludes to it. The other text (*Abr-Nahrain* 34 A, T23) is written on a rounded horizontal tablet with one inscribed side; the other side is missing. The topic of the transaction is unclear, but as part of the witness list is preserved, the document type is either a contract or a conveyance document.

The Aramaic documents cannot be connected to either of the archive holders based on onomastics. As the material is limited in both legibility and quantity, not many conclusions can be drawn from the use of Aramaic at Til-Barsip. While the format of the texts is odd (i.e., not triangular dockets), the legal documents bear a similarity to Aramaic documentation from other sites in the use of the punctuation mark and vocabulary. Not much can be said about the formulas, as the texts are fragmentary.

8.2.5. Conclusions on the use of Aramaic in provincial archives

The archival norms of using Aramaic, i.e., in which genres and why, are best exemplified by what I have classified as provincial archives outside of the Assyrian heartland: Dur-Katlimmu, Marqasu, Guzana, Burmarina, Til-Barsip, and the unprovenanced Ma'allānāte archive. In these archives, Aramaic usually appears in two forms: as monolingual documents completely written in alphabetic script or as marginal alphabetic notes on cuneiform tablets. As is visible in Table 29 below, most Aramaic archival documents come from Dūr-Katlimmu, but significant portions of the Ma'allānāte and Burmarina archives are also in Aramaic.

⁷⁸⁷ *Abr-Nahrain* 34 B, T2; T3+T4 (envelope and inner tablet), T6; T15; and T20. *Abr-Nahrain* 34, T7 may be the envelope of T6 according to Dalley 1996, 76.

⁷⁸⁸ *Abr-Nahrain* 34 B, T1 fragment of a ration list; T12 list of leathers, metals and other materials; T18 administrative list of silver and barley transactions.

⁷⁸⁹ *Abr-Nahrain* 34 B, T5 sale of an unknown object; T8 sale of a woman called Nanaya; T9 sale of a slave; T13 sale of one or more persons to an unnamed *šakintu*; T22 sale of a person.

⁷⁹⁰ *Abr-Nahrain* 34 B, T10 and T16+17 are witness lists of a legal document. *Abr-Nahrain* 34 B, T19 is a fragment without inscribed surface and T21 includes fragments of an envelope.

⁷⁹¹ Bordreuil & Briquel Chatonnet 1996, 102.

⁷⁹² This document includes the puzzling word *bdl* also encountered in two documents from Ma'allānāte, discussed in section 5.3.1.3.

Table 29 The number of Aramaic archival texts in the provincial archives. The total number of archival texts is based on edited texts.

	Aramaic monolinguals	Aramaic archival aids
Dūr-Katlimmu	183	74
Burmarina	19	8
Guzana	7	0
Ma'allānāte	23	4
Til-Barsip	2	0
Marqasu	1	1

Aramaic archival aids or epigraphs on cuneiform tablets seem to be a feature of provincial archives based on current evidence. While not all the examples of Aramaic archival aids from Nineveh can be determined as written in the northwestern areas of the empire, they do not appear consistently in any dossiers of legal documents and cannot therefore be associated with the habits or needs of the central protagonists.

The archives from Dūr-Katlimmu, Ma'allānāte, and Guzana are centered on clear protagonists whose interests the archiving of documents would have served. Documents from Burmarina and Til-Barsip are more fragmentary and thus it is more difficult to reconstruct the story of the archive they were once part of. Nevertheless, both include important additions to the Aramaic corpus in terms of understanding local legal customs.

The Aramaic material from the provincial archives is more abundant but also mainly restricted to the private economic domain. The main text type where Aramaic is utilized is loan documents, the basic structure of which I outline below. Variation within this formula shows that it was adapted and appended to, when necessary, while still based on Neo-Assyrian legal language. In Aramaic documents this core could be modified and improvised on.

8.3. The Aramaic loan formula

In this section I discuss in detail the Aramaic loan formula and the variation within it to demonstrate the similarities and local peculiarities of different sites. The formula of Aramaic conveyance documents has garnered more attention and has been previously addressed by Lemaire.⁷⁹³ As was discussed in section 2.1 regarding the distinction between true loans and other types of obligations recorded in the loan formula, it is unclear what constitutes a true loan in Neo-Assyrian Aramaic

⁷⁹³ Lemaire 2001, 58–64.

loans. There does not seem to be a clear formulaic difference between Aramaic true loans and other types of obligations, although this distinction was briefly discussed by Lipiński. Lipiński's definition of a true loan in the context of the Ma'allānāte corpus is as follows: "The true loan usually starts by stating that some determined goods, belonging to such-and-such, are debited or have been given to such-and-such. Hence follows the obligation of repayment with specified interests."⁷⁹⁴ This definition is broad and includes loans without specified interest rates as true loans.⁷⁹⁵ If there are formulaic differences between true loans and other types of obligations, the standard formula should first be outlined. While the question of true loans is not yet resolved here, it is hoped that this issue will be addressed in future research.

While the loan formula present in the individual archives of Dūr-Katlimmu and Ma'allānāte has been outlined by Röllig and Lipiński, a more universal loan formula for seventh-century Assyrian-Aramaic may be suggested based on the rest of the evidence. This loan formula is very similar to the standard Neo-Assyrian loan formula, particularly the abridged version utilized in grain loan dockets.⁷⁹⁶ The implication is twofold: the alphabetic legal tradition was to a degree standardized and developed by scribes who were well trained in Neo-Assyrian legal formula. The basic formula of an Aramaic loan based on the evidence from the documents outlined in the previous chapters is as follows:

1. Seal identification
2. Object owed
3. Creditor
4. Debtor
5. Arrangements for payment
 - a. Pledge
 - b. Date of payment
 - c. Interest
 - d. Guarantor clause
 - e. Harvester clause
6. Date of transaction
7. Witnesses

⁷⁹⁴ Lipiński 2010, 256.

⁷⁹⁵ Such as "Loan of wheat" ACP 52 and "Loan of barley" ACP 50.

⁷⁹⁶ See sections 6.6 and 8.1.3 for the formula in the cuneiform grain loans from Nineveh and Kalhu.

This structure also includes clauses that are often omitted, such as the harvester clause, guarantors, and pledge. I will discuss each element below. The basic elements of the Aramaic loan are in the operative clause with elements 2–3: “X zy PN1 l PN2,” “X of PN1 debited to PN2,” and this is usually present in all the Aramaic loan documents. The rest of the elements vary and may include additional clauses. The most recent descriptions of the Aramaic loan formula are by Lipiński (specifically with documents from Ma’allānāte)⁷⁹⁷ and Röllig (Dūr-Katlimmu).⁷⁹⁸ In the sketch below, instead of focusing on evidence from one site, I bring together observations from all sites to portray the formula of Aramaic loans in the seventh-century Assyria. This is intended to demonstrate the similarities between sites and the level of standardization. When compared to the Neo-Assyrian grain-loan docket formula,⁷⁹⁹ the basic structure and order is almost identical. This is partially because the Aramaic loan formula is adapted from the Neo-Assyrian loan formula. Due to the triangular shape of the dockets and the regular omission of seal identification in the Neo-Assyrian grain loan dockets, it seems plausible that the abridged version utilized in Aramaic loan dockets was in turn adapted for the cuneiform grain loan dockets at Kalhu.

1. Seal identification and seal impressions

The seal identification *ẖtm* “seal of” is only used consistently in texts from Dūr-Katlimmu. It also appears sporadically in material from elsewhere: once in a document from Assur (AECT 49) and reconstructed in a document from Burmarina (*Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 47). Its relative rarity but occasional appearance at different sites suggests several legal conventions coexisted simultaneously. This is supported by the cuneiform grain loans from the Nabû temple in Kalhu, which generally omit the seal identification. This grain loan was probably written by a scribe who did not typically work in the temple’s granary, as he also included himself in the witnesses, a habit that was not typically followed in this context.

The seal identification is used at Dūr-Katlimmu even in documents that are not sealed, and it is omitted elsewhere even with sealed documents. Röllig has suggested translating *ẖtm* as “sealed document of PN1” (Siegelurkunde des PN1), but because this clause appears at the beginning of the document like the Neo-Assyrian equivalent it seems unnecessary to presume so. The same term *ẖtm* is used even if the docket is only sealed with fingernail impressions (e.g. BATSH 17 D20; D22).

The placement of the seal on the docket varies. It is often on the wide top edge of the docket (e.g. BATSH 17 D15) or on the obverse preceding the seal

⁷⁹⁷ Lipiński 2010, 255–266.

⁷⁹⁸ Röllig 2014, 7–14.

⁷⁹⁹ See section 6.6 on the formula in the dossier of Bahiānu at Nineveh and the formula in the Nabû temple archive at Kalhu in section 8.1.3.1.

identification (BATSH 17 D19). Sometimes it is also on the reverse (ACP 46). The top edge is usually left uninscribed and is thus a convenient place for the seal impression. The variation of the placement and omission of the seal identification in sites outside Dūr-Katlimmu implies that this aspect is an unformalized part of the document. The use of seal identification consistently at Dūr-Katlimmu, however, shows that the local scribes were trained consistently to use this formula.

2. Object owed

As most Aramaic loan documents do not usually include a seal identification, this is usually the first element of the document. As each document begins with the object that the transaction concerns, this can be imagined to be the equivalent of a title intended to make the identification of the document easier for its user. Omission of the seal identification emphasizes the object's role in the transaction, whereas including the seal identification prioritizes the debtor's role.

The object in Aramaic loans is typically barley (*šr'n*) or silver (*ksp*), but can vary from other types of grain to livestock, etc. With barley, this is usually expressed as "N (homers) of barley" (*š'm N*), and the unit of measurement is omitted. In the case of silver, this would be N shekels of silver (*N šqln ksp*). The unit of measurement can either be omitted or included.⁸⁰⁰

3. Creditor

The creditor is usually introduced as the owner of the object with the particle *zy* or the prefixed preposition *l*. In the texts from Ma'allānāte, the owner is sometimes a deity as in the cuneiform grain loans from the Nabû temple in Kalhu. In these cases, the "middleman" or the creditor can follow the name of the deity (e.g., in ACP 63: 1–4: *ksp . rsh lhdd 1 ntn bsy lbbn rbh*, "Silver, 'first-fruits' belonging to Hadad, 1 (shekel), Busāy gave to Babānu")⁸⁰¹ or be completely omitted.⁸⁰²

4. Debtor

The debtor is most often preceded by the preposition *l*, but *l'*⁸⁰³ and *qdm*⁸⁰⁴ are also attested. Lipiński posits that all these formulations carry the same legal value,⁸⁰⁵ but this may require further inspection. Debtors may have identifiers such as a patronym or a locality attached to them, although this level of formality is relatively

⁸⁰⁰ Omitted, for example, in ACP 55, included in ACP 56.

⁸⁰¹ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 144.

⁸⁰² For example, in ACP 58 from Ma'allānāte.

⁸⁰³ In several documents from Ma'allānāte; see Lipiński 2010, 256 n. 79. Possibly also in AECT 56 from Guzana, but the different editions disagree on this.

⁸⁰⁴ ACP 44 from Ma'allānāte and AECT 55 from the Il-manāni archive from Guzana.

⁸⁰⁵ Lipiński 2010, 256.

rare and was probably deemed necessary if the debtors were not familiar to the creditor. For example, in the loan with a pledge from Burmarina (*Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 47), the debtors are identified as “men from the kings army from Bīt-Zamāni” and given strict conditions on the loan.⁸⁰⁶

5. Arrangements for payment

5.1. Pledge

Loans with pledges in Aramaic are rare but attested at several sites: Dūr-Katlimmu (BATSH 17 D2; D18; D22), Ma'allānāte (ACP 64), and Tell Shiukh Fawqani (*Tell Shiukh Fawqani* 46; 47). The pledge documents are marked with the root *rhn*, “to pledge”, but there does not appear to be a formalized expression with the root. The root *rhn* appears as the heading of the document on the upper edge (ACP 64: u.e. 1: *rhn*’, “Mortgage”)⁸⁰⁷ and as a verb (BATSH 17 D22: 3: *byth . rhn. hlp . ksp*’, “he pledged his house in exchange for the silver”).⁸⁰⁸ There seems to be shared vocabulary and understanding of the concept of a pledge, but the formal expression of it for legal documents was not yet standardized.

Loans with pledges may also be written on rectangular, independently standing tablets, instead of dockets with string holes,⁸⁰⁹ perhaps intended to mimic the shape of cuneiform tablets which would be stored for a longer time, as these loans carry high value due to the attached pledge and can function as proof of ownership of said object.

The pledged object may also be introduced before the borrowed object, as seen for example in BATSH 14 D2 and ACP 64. In these cases, both rectangular tablets, the formula thus emphasized the higher value of the pledge than the borrowed object.

5.2. Date of payment

Most common way to express the date of payment of grain loans is with *b'drn yntn*, a direct translation of the Neo-Assyrian expression *ina adri iddan*, “he will give it on the threshing-floor.”⁸¹⁰ This is often omitted, as it was presumably the normative payment arrangement in grain loans.

5.3. Interest

⁸⁰⁶ This document is discussed in 8.2.3.

⁸⁰⁷ Transliteration and translation from Lipiński 2010, 134.

⁸⁰⁸ Transliteration and translation (adapted from German) from Röllig 2014, 64

⁸⁰⁹ For example, ACP 64.

⁸¹⁰ For example, in AECT 48: 5.; 53: 5.

Typically expressed with *rbw* + possessive-suffix + fraction + possessive suffix, e.g. *rbh bplgh*, “its interest (is) its half.” Another common way to express this is to indicate the capital plus the interest with the expression N1 *b* N2, “N1 into N2”, for example in O. 3670: 2: 10 *b* 15, “10 into 15.”⁸¹¹

The interest rate is used in both loans of silver and grain but may be omitted from either. In the case of silver loans where the interest is not specified,⁸¹² Lipiński has suggested that these documents are receipts rather than true loans, or the interest rate is already included in the amount specified in the beginning of the document.⁸¹³ An alternative suggestion by Fales is that the interest rate is in cases like this 1:1 (100%).⁸¹⁴ This last option can probably be excluded, as this type of implicit interest would not have been very secure for the creditor when the debt was due. Lipiński’s suggestion about the loan formula being used for writing receipts is a possible alternative, as the loan formula can be used for recording several different types of transactions.⁸¹⁵ However, if the document does not indicate that the obligation has been paid, and it is found in the creditors archive as at Ma’allānāte, a receipt is an unlikely scenario. From the debtor’s perspective, the creditor could then come claim the goods based on the “receipt.” Thus, out of these options, including the interest rate in the amount of the debt seems like the most likely choice.

5.4. Guarantor clause

This clause is rarely included and is thus far only attested in loans from Ma’allānāte.⁸¹⁶ The guarantor clause is expressed with PN *mḥ’ yd*, “PN struck the hand,” a direct translation from Neo-Assyrian *qātāti mahāšu*, as observed by Lipiński.⁸¹⁷ The presence of this clause may indicate that the debtors are less familiar to the creditor, as additional security for the loan is needed.

5.5. Harvester clause

The harvester clause is usually included after the interest and consists simply of *ḥṣdn* N, “N harvesters.” As shown by Lipiński, one borrowed homer of grain is usually equal to one harvester required.⁸¹⁸ This clause refers to the debtor’s responsibility to provide harvesters for the creditor and is also attested in cuneiform documents. It can be considered part of the interest of the loan. If the date of

⁸¹¹ Translation and transliteration adapted from Lipiński 2010, 83.

⁸¹² For example, ACP 46 from Ma’allānāte.

⁸¹³ Lipiński 2010, 257.

⁸¹⁴ Fales 1986, 226.

⁸¹⁵ As discussed in section 2.1 regarding true loans.

⁸¹⁶ ACP 47; 50, possibly also in ACP 46.

⁸¹⁷ Lipiński 1998, 293.

⁸¹⁸ Lipiński 2010, 261.

repayment is not written down, the harvester clause implies that the debt was to be paid off during harvest, which is the usual time of payment for grain loans. The harvester clause is most common in grain loans but can also appear in other types of transactions, as exemplified by a contract regarding sheep from Ma'allānāte (ACP 59), where the “debtor” is obligated to provide harvesters in exchange for sheep.

6. Date of transaction

The Aramaic documents are rarely dated, and if they are, it is most commonly by month (*yrh*), rarely by eponym (*lm*). In some uncertain cases, the date may be given by day as well. Dating by month implies that the dockets were not intended for prolonged storage, and the period of use was usually within a year. This corresponds to the type of transaction most recorded in Aramaic, loans of grain, which are usually repaid by the next harvest. In comparison, in cuneiform grain loan dockets dating by year is more common and would thus be either more formalized or intended for longer term storage or accounting.⁸¹⁹

7. Witnesses

Witnesses are almost always listed at the end of the document. Their omission is likely an indication that the loan may be given by an institutional party, as seen with bilingual grain loans of the crown prince from Nineveh⁸²⁰ or the grain loans from the Nabû temple.⁸²¹ In general Aramaic loan dockets have fewer witnesses listed than cuneiform legal documents. One reason for this may be that the docket is an abridged version of the scroll it was initially attached to. Another alternative is that the transactions recorded in Aramaic represent more informal situations in the private economic domain and thus require fewer witnesses than for example sales of real estate. The latter option seems more likely as usually the members of the archive holder's inner circle appear here⁸²² – they are often around (possibly family, employees, co-workers, friends) and thus also present for more informal transactions. This scenario seems likely because the witnesses are usually not identified by a patronym or a title, which implies familiarity to the archive holder.

8.4. Conclusions

I return again to the question *who writes what language to whom and when* to bring together the differences and commonalities between the use of Aramaic in the archives from the Assyrian heartland and the provinces.

⁸¹⁹ As seen in the grain loans from Nineveh (section 6.6) and Kalhu (section 8.1.3).

⁸²⁰ Discussed in section 8.1.3.1.

⁸²¹ The loans from the dossier of Bahiānu do not include witnesses, see section 6.6.

⁸²² As discussed regarding Šulmu-šarri's inner circle in section 4.3.3.

The question of *who* can refer to both the scribe and commissioner of the document. For the sake of clarity, I discuss the scribes first and the commissioners or archive holders with the question of *to whom*. The provincial archives demonstrate that the local scribes had the ability to modify a formula with additional clauses according to the local needs. Certain standardized writing conventions can be recognized across sites such as use of punctuation marks (although their exact function is so far unclear and requires further research), conventions of using triangular docket, and uniformity in the basic legal formula and vocabulary based on the Neo-Assyrian conventions. These conventions are also visible in the archives from the Assyrian capitals, suggesting a level of standardization of scribal education and legal Aramaic.

The writers of the Aramaic archival aids on cuneiform tablets were most likely the same scribes who wrote the cuneiform. This is particularly evident in the documents from Nineveh. For example, in the dossier of Rēmanni-Adad, there is only one Aramaic epigraph (on SAA 6 334). This document is, as the incised epigraph details,⁸²³ regarding a sale of real estate in the province of the *rab šaqê*, the Chief Cupbearer. It was likely written outside of Nineveh, and as no other document among the 55 documents in Rēmanni-Adad's dossier bears an Aramaic epigraph, it was unlikely added at Rēmanni-Adad's request but by the provincial scribe out of habit. While intended to serve the archive holder, to Rēmanni-Adad the archival aid made no difference. When an archival aid is inked, it is possible that it was written by another person, perhaps even the archive holder. For example, a document from Dūr-Katlimmu (BATSH 6 41) includes two epigraphs, one incised and one inked, unlikely to be added at the same time due to their differing contents.⁸²⁴

The *who*, therefore, is a scribe trained at least in Aramaic legal and administrative language, and probably in some cases a scribe also trained in the equivalent Neo-Assyrian skills. The question of *what language* in provincial archives is still tipped towards Akkadian – that is, more cuneiform texts remain – but the portion of Aramaic is significantly higher than in the heartland (see Table 29 on the Aramaic archival documents from the provinces and Table 27 from the heartland). While the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, due to the private archives in the provinces one would expect Aramaic to dominate barley transactions in seventh-century Assyria. As the medium of most barley transactions from Kalhu and Nineveh is a triangular docket, associated with Aramaic due to its function as a sealing to a scroll, the choice to write on the docket in cuneiform

⁸²³ SAA 6 334: e. 1–2: *d[nt by]t w ḥ[q]ly ḥ k'nb' zy n [x x x]d b mt rbšqn* “(Aramaic caption:) De[ed concerning the hou]se and f[ie]lds of *H* (and) Ken-abua [...] in the Land of the Chief Cupbearer.” Translation and transliteration from Kwasman & Parpola 1991, 273.

⁸²⁴ As discussed in section 4.4.

becomes more significant. This would be the expected medium and transaction type for Aramaic, yet its use is only implicit in the scroll originally attached to the docket.

To *whom* is a complex question, as it addresses the archive holders and the legal system that could be the audience of the document if one of the parties disputed the transaction. The archive holder can be an individual or a family, as in the case of the Ma'allānāte archive, the Red House archive from Dūr-Katlimmu, or the archives from private houses in Assur, Kalhu, and Nineveh. At Kalhu and Nineveh, certain archives and dossiers were institutionally stored and used according to the institution's needs.

The document was stored because it serves the archive holder, and the use of Aramaic archival aids is particularly relevant for this aspect. They are more common in the provincial archives, which suggests that the archive holders were more limited in cuneiform literacy. On the other hand, the use of Aramaic for barley transactions may also be a sign of either lower cuneiform literacy or at least a preference for everyday use of the alphabetic script. Documents on high-value transactions such as the house the archive holder lived in *could* be written in cuneiform because they did not need to be sourced from among documents often. But a contract on a loan of barley would need to be sourced during the next harvest, and there could be many of them from different debtors. The decision here is not only affected by prestige, but also functionality.

As for the legal system, as Fales has argued, Aramaic had to be a legally recognized language if it was utilized for legal documents.⁸²⁵ This is generally accepted for short-term transactions such as loans of barley, but as loans with a pledge and the few sale documents recorded in Aramaic demonstrate, Aramaic could also be utilized for high-value transactions. The necessity for legal validity also affected the vocabulary and formula utilized in the Aramaic documents, but also in the unconventional clauses which reflect local legal systems.

When can be answered on the macro scale through dating: Aramaic was used in archival texts throughout the seventh century. It is difficult to say for certain when the first monolingual documents are dated, as they often omit the year, but the earliest dated monolingual document is dated to 676 (BATSH 17 D6). The earliest incised epigraph appears in a document dated to 687 (SAA 6 154). On the micro scale, the specific situations where Aramaic was used are in the private economic domain: transactions of barley, silver, and livestock, and administrative documents, but also more personal domains such as letters (Assur Ostrakon, ACP 54) and apotropaic amulets (AECT 45). Indirect evidence suggests that the institutional economic domain (the Nabû temple archive and the *rab ekalli* archive from Kalhu and the dossier of Bahiānu at Nineveh) utilized Aramaic in transactions of barley. Similarly, indirect evidence from Nineveh demonstrates that Aramaic scribes were employed at court in administrative positions along with cuneiform scribes.

⁸²⁵ Fales 2021, 8.

Despite the sparsity of Aramaic evidence from the heartland compared to the northwestern provincial private archives, finds from the capitals provide clues to the different domains where Aramaic was used. The Assur Ostrakon provides an example of the use of Aramaic in letters: how they were drafted, structured and what was appropriate. The bilingual amulets demonstrate that Aramaic was used in everyday matters of the magical/religious domain. These are glimpses of the use of Aramaic in the personal domains outside of business and loans, most likely much more commonplace than the evidence found so far shows.

9 Concluding remarks on the use of Aramaic in archives of seventh-century Assyria

The main research questions this study aimed to answer were “What was the function of Aramaic in Neo-Assyrian archival practices, and with what kinds of work processes was it connected?” I limited this question to functions in archives rather than the general function of Aramaic in Neo-Assyrian society due to the nature of the documents. The original role of these documents was to serve a purpose in a work process and to be archived in case the process continued. A secondary research question to define these functions and work processes is “Who writes what language to whom and when?” While this approach leaves out some evidence, such as the monumental inscriptions from the early Neo-Assyrian period,⁸²⁶ it addresses the question on the role of Aramaic in Neo-Assyrian society from the most abundant source. These archives and their archive holders have previously been an untapped source for sociolinguistic analysis on the social domains present in the archives.

The use of archival analysis to identify social domains in bilingual archival sources, as discussed in chapter two, aimed to outline situations where Aramaic was appropriate and useful, how Aramaic was adapted for economic transactions, and the commonalities and variation of format and language choice between sites. While previous studies have aimed to identify attitudes towards Aramaic in Assyria,⁸²⁷ this approach calls for assessing the language situation in Assyria from a functional point of view. Recognizing that the use of Aramaic has practical value such as a simpler writing system and diplomatic use,⁸²⁸ there must be a reason for utilizing two languages and scripts simultaneously in parallel. The assumption behind this study is that choosing between two languages in archival context must serve a purpose and identifying the different functions they serve sheds light on the practical use of languages, literacy, and what was valued about the different scripts and languages.

9.1. Summary of results from previous chapters

In chapter two, I described the sources of Aramaic archival documents as text collections and the text types they can be subcategorized to. This introduction of the

⁸²⁶ Discussed in 1.1.1.1.

⁸²⁷ While aspects of functionality are touched upon, several studies such as Radner 2011; Radner 2021; Parpola 2004 focus on discussing the hierarchy between Akkadian and Aramaic based on how Assyrians would have valued these languages.

⁸²⁸ Gzella 2015, 125.

sources summarized the publication situation and current state of research on bilingual Assyro-Aramaic archives and provides a premise for the more in-depth presentation and analysis of sources in the following chapters. The “birds-eye-view” of the sources already confirmed certain conclusions made by previous scholars, such as the division between writing loan documents in Aramaic and conveyance documents in Akkadian,⁸²⁹ or the predominant use of alphabetic script in private archives from the northwestern provinces of Assyria.

Chapter three introduced the theoretical and methodological starting points of evaluating bilingual archives and language choice within them in relation to the archive and its function. This combination aimed to identify work processes where Aramaic was relevant, and to define which social domains it was related to. I discussed why it is necessary to study the text collections as archives to define whose language choice is in question. The question *who writes what language to whom and when* can be applied to whole archives as well. The chapter also addressed the limitations of sociolinguistic analysis of social domains when the material is limited to archival documents. This genre of texts is formulaic and repetitive, particularly as the corpus of Neo-Assyrian Aramaic includes only two letters. Additionally, the domain where the texts are relevant is limited to economic and legal transactions, which leaves out several other domains of life where language choice could be relevant. As language use and social domains are inherently social phenomena, the use of Social Network Analysis can provide some answers related to the context of language use.

Chapter four on the archives from Dūr-Katlimmu, a military and administrative center outside the Assyrian heartland, was focused on the language use and archival habits of the central protagonist, Šulmu-šarri, whose archive was found in the Red House. Because the text corpus from Dūr-Katlimmu mainly concerns the private business documents of Šulmu-šarri, I took a more egocentric approach in the analysis. In other words, this chapter was focused around one person’s language choice. In general, the material supports the already established trends. Aramaic was used mainly for loan documents, and the format of the Aramaic archival aids follows the patterns laid out by Fales based on material discovered before Dūr-Katlimmu.⁸³⁰ The Aramaic epigraphs were written from the archive holder’s perspective, as argued in the context of Neo-Babylonian material by Sonneveld.⁸³¹ In addition to the expected document types, the archive includes local oddities such as an adoption document or rectangular Aramaic tablets. These documents record clauses which are not seen in Aramaic documents from other archives. The consistency of using seal identification and a regular loan formula demonstrates that the scribes of Dūr-Katlimmu were probably locally trained. The

⁸²⁹ Radner 2011, 395.

⁸³⁰ Fales 1986, 6–9.

⁸³¹ Sonneveld 2021, 134.

unconventional documents compared to the rest of the Aramaic corpus demonstrate how the scribes were adapting Neo-Assyrian legal language to Aramaic.

The unprovenanced Ma'allānāte archive was presented in chapter five. This corpus is reconstructed as an archive primarily based on onomastics. While unprovenanced, Ma'allānāte, the settlement which the documents relate to, was located in the Upper Khabur valley.⁸³² The archive was divided by the editors Homès-Fredericq and Garelli into three archive generations involving three central figures.⁸³³ The archive itself, if originally compiled as a set, was probably associated with the office of the *šaknu*, as it consists of a mixture of private documents and documents related to the position. This archive exemplifies again the issue of identifying when an official was acting in the capacity of his office and when as a private person. This text collection includes oddly formulated documents and brings variety to the Neo-Assyrian Aramaic corpus, which is why many of the documents are discussed in detail. Some alternative readings are offered for certain more difficult texts, such as the brief Aramaic letter from Ma'allānāte.

The legal documentary corpus re-edited and collected in SAA 6 and SAA 14 from Nineveh was presented in chapter six. Nineveh represents the use of Aramaic in the Assyrian heartland, as Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire in the seventh century. Aramaic is distributed unevenly among the dossiers. As suggested by Kwasman,⁸³⁴ it seems that epigraphs are mostly on texts written in the provinces but archived in Nineveh, although certain texts including Aramaic archival aids were probably written in Nineveh. While the legal documents presumably were found in a palatial context, Aramaic epigraphs do not seem to be a regular archival habit of Ninevite scribes, despite a few exceptions. However, Aramaic scribes were not out of a job in the palaces: Bilingual dockets and the dossier of Bahiānu point towards the use Aramaic and Akkadian simultaneously for recording loans of barley in an institutional context. The documentation from Nineveh also includes indirect evidence on the use of Aramaic such as the employment of alphabetic scribes at court.

Chapter seven on Social Network Analysis approaches to bilingual archives demonstrated some different ways that language choice can be displayed and analyzed in the archives. This approach highlights how the Aramaic and Akkadian portions of archives are interconnected, despite the issues that may arise in disambiguation in the analysis of archives using two writing systems and languages. This chapter demonstrates how exploratory Social Network Analysis can be utilized in depicting, exploring and familiarizing the user with archives and the people involved in them.

⁸³² See discussion of the probable location in section 5.1.

⁸³³ As charted in Homès-Fredericq & Garelli 2018, 17–18.

⁸³⁴ Kwasman 1986, 240.

The three archives which were in the focus of chapters four to six demonstrate that almost universally in Assyria, the most appropriate economic domain for Aramaic was loans of grain, which were short term, mundane, and lower in value than sales of real estate. This describes the general processes which alphabetic writing was intended for. Unconventional formulas demonstrate that the scribes and their clients wished to utilize Aramaic for more and were independently developing the legal formulas and language for other purposes.

In chapter 8 the rest of the Assyrian Aramaic archival corpus was brought together to compare the use of Aramaic in archives between the Assyrian heartland and the provincial archives. While the evidence of Aramaic in the heartland is more meager, the spotty finds and the indirect evidence such as the cuneiform grain loan dockets from Kalhu are likely an indication of the bilingualism of the Assyrian writing elite. The use of dockets in the administration of the temple granary and the state-owned *ma'uttu* land suggests that Aramaic as the language of grain also penetrated the institutional domain of archive habits.

9.2. Functions of Aramaic in archives

This study confirms many previous statements made about the functions of Aramaic in Neo-Assyrian society, but with caveats. Aramaic was a language primarily used for loan documents,⁸³⁵ but there is more nuance to this: as Lemaire has already shown,⁸³⁶ deviations do exist, and this was confirmed with further data in this study. The choice of writing something in Aramaic and the alphabetic script was a choice based on convenience, which is suggested by the writing of documents utilized more frequently and for a shorter term in Aramaic, primarily loan documents. The convenience of alphabetic script was due to the fewer signs compared to the cuneiform script. As I argued in sections 6.6 and 8.1.3, in barley transactions, even when the triangular dockets sealing the scroll were written in cuneiform, the scroll itself was likely written in Aramaic. Departments of temples and royal estates were thus managing parts of their administration in Aramaic, as exemplified by Nineveh⁸³⁷ and Kalhu.⁸³⁸ This phenomenon also has implications for the bilingualism and literacy of the officials and scribes who wrote these documents, discussed below in 9.3.

Aramaic epigraphs have long been regarded as evidence of bilingualism,⁸³⁹ but before summarizing whose bilingualism, their function needs to be specified.

⁸³⁵ Radner 2011, 395.

⁸³⁶ Lemaire 2001.

⁸³⁷ Dossiers of Taqīnu and Bahiānu, discussed in sections 6.3 and 6.6.

⁸³⁸ Discussion of cuneiform grain loans at Kalhu, 8.1.3.

⁸³⁹ E.g. Tadmor 1982, 453; Tadmor 1991, 421. Fales also argued that the epigraphs were written based on the written document, not “from the ‘oral’ reality of discussion and agreement of the terms of the sale,” thus implying that the writer of epigraphs was literate enough to summarize the Neo-Assyrian cuneiform tablets (Fales 1986, 11–12).

While Fales noted that Aramaic epigraphs must be archival aids because they help identify the document based on personal names and the object transferred,⁸⁴⁰ it is important to note that epigraphs rarely name the buyer or the creditor, i.e., the archiving party, which heavily implies they were intended to aid the archive holder. When they do, it is significant, particularly because this usually happens when the epigraphs are inked. Inked epigraphs, particularly in cases when the document has both an incised and an inked epigraph, suggest that they were written during a later transaction, such as when the object sold in the document was resold or pledged.⁸⁴¹ Scribes were probably responsible for most epigraphs, as suggested by the sporadic appearance of Aramaic epigraphs on documents from Nineveh. Most of these epigraphs were written in western provinces by western scribes (see sections 6.5 and 7.6). Aramaic epigraphs in general use standardized vocabulary, which implies that the practice of using them was transmitted via scribal education. This archival habit was probably mimicked by archive holders in the scenarios leading to two archival aids on one tablet.

The work processes in which Aramaic appears based on the current evidence of archival sources are related to barley and silver transactions. These were often documented in Aramaic, although silver transactions in Aramaic are more common in the provincial areas. Aramaic epigraphs as archival aids are evidence of the different stages of how a record was used. In their simplest form, an archival aid was written on a document when it was drafted. Then, it was used to source a document from an archive by summarizing the variables of the document, such as the object transferred. However, if archival aids were used when a document was transferred together with an object, they were thus also relevant later in the life cycle of the document and in a different transaction than what the document was originally drafted for.

9.3. Implications for cuneiform and alphabetic literacy

The question of parallel use is not only about language, but also two very different writing systems. When literacy in the Neo-Assyrian period is discussed, it is most often from the point of view of cuneiform literacy.⁸⁴² While alphabetic script is recognized as a simpler and more accessible script than cuneiform, it is often left out of the conversation of literacy.

The same issues concern questions of both cuneiform and alphabetic literacy: the available sources are limited to the members of the elite. Nevertheless, the results on the comparison of archives from the northwestern provinces and the heartland of Assyria highlight the uneven distribution of Aramaic, particularly of archival aids. This distribution suggests that cuneiform literacy was likely higher

⁸⁴⁰ Fales 1986, 12–13.

⁸⁴¹ See section 4.4.1 regarding this phenomenon in the archive of Šulmu-šarri from Dūr-Katlimmu.

⁸⁴² See, e.g., Parpola 1997; Livingstone 2007.

among the archive holders in the Assyrian capitals. This does not rule out the ability of the Assyrian elite from the capitals to write and read alphabetic script (on the contrary as shown by alphabetic evidence in archives from Assur, Kalhu and Nineveh) but implies that basic cuneiform literacy functioned without it. The other side of this phenomenon is that individual archive holders who preferred Aramaic archival aids, even high-ranking and wealthy ones like Šulmu-šarri from Dūr-Katlimmu, were not proficient in reading cuneiform.

Another issue concerning literacy is scribal education, touched upon particularly in sections 1.3, 4.4.2, and 8.3–8.4 regarding the role of alphabetic scribes in the Assyrian empire, scribes at Dūr-Katlimmu, and standardization. Scribes are very rarely mentioned in Aramaic documents, and alphabetic scribes are rarely identified by name in cuneiform sources. Thus, tracing their education or abilities with microhistorical approaches based on these references is impossible. One possible future avenue would be to evaluate the connections between alphabetic archival aids in archives based on handwriting and see whether the connections correlate with scribes or archive holders.

Röllig argued that standardized paleography and legal language in Aramaic legal documents imply standardized Aramaic legal training.⁸⁴³ True enough, by comparing the loan formula from several different sites, the basic elements are there. Even though the alphabetic scribes are borrowing the formulas from Neo-Assyrian legal formulas, there are small consistent deviations in the Aramaic version (no *ina pūhi* clause, dating and witnesses switch places, the object is often introduced first). Repetition of the formula across the sites does point towards standardization and thus, education. Much as in Neo-Assyrian legal documents,⁸⁴⁴ the Aramaic legal documents also reflect local legal traditions.⁸⁴⁵ Clauses or transactions that were typically not recorded in Aramaic required the scribe to improvise based on their knowledge of both local traditions and Neo-Assyrian legal tradition.

9.4. Future avenues

Finally, the work with Aramaic is by no means done. As highlighted already by some of the new readings of documents from Ma'allānāte, it seems clear that the Aramaic legal corpus despite its current decent publication status requires revisitation and re-editions. While re-editions were not within the scope of this study, the analysis of the trends and domains in the use of Aramaic in archival practice provided here can hopefully be used to build upon this work. Simultaneously, the definition of bilingual archives could be extended to include cuneiform archives with Aramaic influences, and bilingual texts which are not digraphic (using two different scripts)

⁸⁴³ Röllig 2014, 15–16.

⁸⁴⁴ Radner 2011; Tushingham 2019.

⁸⁴⁵ See for example the *bdl* case at Ma'allānāte (ACP 42 and ACP 53) in section 5.3.1.3.

could reveal more about written language switching, for example in the letter corpus.

As addressed in section 2.2 there have been attempts to distinguish between true loans and other types of obligations in both Neo-Assyrian and Aramaic legal documents. This issue should be addressed in future studies for both Neo-Assyrian and Aramaic legal formula. There may not be a satisfactory solution based on the legal formulas alone: the transaction type may have to be determined on a case by case basis.

The Assyrian Aramaic evidence from Assyria is remarkably standardized and in alignment with Assyrian administrative and legal traditions. Utilizing alphabetic evidence from the seventh century is necessary for a holistic understanding of Assyrian archival practices and scribal environment. Due to the bilingual archives published in the past two decades, this part of the Neo-Assyrian corpus has become unignorable. Aramaic is used in archival documents in both private and institutional administration and had an integral role particularly in transactions with a rapid life cycle and/or informal settings. Comprehending the archival process for drafting, recording, storing, retrieving, using, and destroying documents in seventh-century Assyria requires the acknowledgment of the alphabetic evidence.

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