

The transcription of West Semitic names in the Prosobab Database (V.01 published 03/2019)

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Basic principles

For the transcription of West Semitic names in the Prosobab database the Akkadian spelling serves as point of departure. For instance, West Semitic gutturals, vowels, or vowel length are not reconstructed, if not (consistently) represented. Moreover, it is not always possible to discern whether a name is Akkadian or West Semitic. Should, for example, 'ba-ni-ia be read as Akkadian Bānia or is it the West Semitic name Banī? In these instances the Akkadian form is given precedence.

For the sake of utility, harmonisation is sometimes favoured. Several theophoric elements are transcribed in a uniform way despite the fact that individual orthographies display much variation (see Iltehr and Tammeš below). Occasionally, a standard version is required in an individual's passport (see Adad and Nusku).

As a result of these principles, there will always be a margin of error. For a more in-depth reconstruction of linguistic features or orthographic diversity of a certain name type, the spellings contained in the database may be consulted.

Below, the transcription of the following components is dealt with: (1) theophoric elements, (2) verbal complements, (3) passive forms, (4) suffixes, (5) the consonant Ayin.

1. Theophoric elements

1.a Common Semitic ʔ

ʔ, the most common theophoric element in West Semitic names, appears in a variety of syllabic orthographies, such as il-; -i-lu; -i-li; -il-lu; -il-li; -Ci-lu; -i-il. Moreover, it is written logographically as DINGIR during the Neo-Babylonian period and as DINGIR.MEŠ during the Achaemenid period. There is a broad consensus that the latter form should be interpreted as singular instead of plural, based on the following observations:¹

-DINGIR.MEŠ appears as subject of perfect 3. sg. verbal forms

Anā-il	¹ a-na- ² -DINGIR.MEŠ	Il has heard
Il-naṭar	¹ DINGIR.MEŠ-na-ṭa-ri	Il has guarded

-the second component of theophoric element Bīt-il also appears as DINGIR.MEŠ

Bīt-il-adar	¹ dÉ-DINGIR.MEŠ-a-dar-ri
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-both forms are solely attested as ʔ in alphabetic script

DINGIR.MEŠ	¹ ra-hi-im-DINGIR.MEŠ	<i>rhm ʔ</i>
DINGIR	¹ DINGIR-ia-a-ha-bi	<i>ʔlyhb</i>

→ Transcribe il (not ʔil), as Akkadian does not represent Aleph.

→ Transcribe il also for DINGIR.MEŠ if it occurs in a West Semitic name.

1.b Names of deities

Adad and Addu

Deity Adad is generally written with logograph ^dIŠKUR; less often syllabically as ^dad-du. These are distinguished in the transcription as Adad and Addu, respectively, whether co-occurring with an Akkadian or West Semitic complement. The Prosobab passport of an individual attested with both of these spellings contains the harmonisation Adad.

Adad-šarru-ušur	¹ dIŠKUR-LUGAL-ÛRU
Addu-ēreš	¹ dad-du-KAM
Adad-rapā	¹ dIŠKUR-ra-pa- ²
Adad-zēru-iddin	¹ dIŠKUR-NUMUN-MU
Addu-zēru-iddin	¹ dad-du-NUMUN-MU

→ Transcribe Adad for ^dIŠKUR and Addu for ^dad-du, regardless of the language of the complement or other attestations of the same individual.

Attar, Iltar and Iššar

The Aramean deity ^ʿAttar, has cognates in different Semitic languages, of which Akkadian Ištar is most notably in this context.

Attar-nūrī	¹ dāt-tar-nu-ri- ²
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¹ Clay 1908, 319f; Coogan 1976, 44; Zadok 1977, 28-33; Streck 2017, 192.

The theophoric elements Iltar and Iššar are phonological variants of Ištar that appear side-by-side in the corpus of the Neo- and Late-Babylonian period.²

Iltar-gadā	^l il-ta-ri-ga-da ^ʔ
Iššar-ilā	^l dŠÁR-la-a- ^ʔ
Abdi-Iššar	^l ab-da- ^d iš-šár
Nūh-Ištar	^l nu-uh- ^d 15

→ Transcribe Attar and Iltar for syllabic writings and Iššar for ^dŠÁR.

Iltehr

Moon god ʔ + *šahr, that had Neirab as its centre of devotion, is attested syllabically in diverse ways, for instance: il-te-ri-; il-te-hi-ir-; te-ri- and ^dil-te-(eh/hi)-ir/ri. In fact, most Akkadian spellings render original š/sa as te-, which is most frequently preceded by ^dil- from the Neo-Babylonian period onwards.³

Iltehr-ušallim	^l dil-te-ri-GI
Iltehr-abi	^l dil-te-hi-ri-AD
Iltehr-hēlī	^l te-ri-hi-li-ia

→ Transcribe Iltehr, also when not preceded by ^(d)il-.

Nusku and Nu/ašhu

Deity Nusku, venerated for instance in Neirab, is generally written logographically ^dPA.KU, less often syllabically as Nu/ašhu: nu-šu-uh, na-šuh etc.⁴ These are distinguished in the transcription as Nusku and Nu/ašhu, respectively, whether co-occurring with an Akkadian or West Semitic complement. The Prosobab passport of an individual attested with both of these spellings contains the harmonisation Nusku.

Nusku-iddin	^l dPA.KU-MU
Itti-Nusku-inīa	^l KI- ^d PA.KU-IGI-ia
Našhu-rām	^l na-šuh-ra-am

→ Transcribe ^dPA.KU as Nusku and syllabic spellings as Nu/ašhu regardless of the language of the complement or other attestations of the same individual.

Qūs

Qūs (or Qōs), an Edomite deity, is written syllabically, as ^(d)qu-su or ^l(d)qu-ú-su.⁵

² Possibly, Akkadian Ištar was pronounced Iššar, as consonant cluster -št- shifted to -lt- which changed to -ss- in the late Neo-Assyrian period. The latter cluster was pronounced -šš-, which is visible in Aramaic transcriptions from that era. During the Neo- and Late-Babylonian period this shift must have been irregular, as the forms co-occur (Zadok 1977, 34-37).

³ Zadok 1977, 42; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 58.

⁴ Zadok 1977, 44f.

⁵ Zadok 1977, 178; Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 77.

Qūs-yadā	^l qu-su-ia-da- [?]
Qūs-rahā	^l dqu-ú-su-ra-ha- [?]

→ Transcribe Qūs.

Šamē

Deity Šamē has syllabic orthographies such as šam-me-[?]; šá-me-e; ša-mi-e.

Šamē-rām	^l šá-me-e-ra-mu
Šamē-idrī	^l šá-mi-e-id-ri- [?]

→ Transcribe Šamē.

Tammeš

The first consonant of the West Semitic counterpart of Akkadian Šamaš must have been /š/, which is generally rendered /t/ from the Neo-Babylonian period onwards. Exceptions are, for instance, ^lba-ri-ik-sa-mi-iš and ^lša-am-iš-ki-in.⁶

The name of this deity is transliterated in different ways. Compare, for instance, the transliteration of DN-barak in BE 9 85, 6:

Tolini (2013)	^l il-tam-meš-ba-rak-ku
Zadok (2015)	^l dta ₅ -míš-ba-rak-ku

Thus, the first sign following the Personenkeil can be read ^lil + DN, in the same vein as ^lil + Tehr, or as a determinative for the DN following. In the latter case, only a few combinations of determinative + *il* + deity (^dil-) remain.

As regards the reading of the theophoric element itself, Zadok's reading ta₅-míš (2015) seems to aim at a more accurate representation of the original, which he reconstructs as Tameš (1977, 39). As the use of ta₅ seems somewhat of an artificial solution, the more basic transliteration ^dtam-meš may be followed.

Finally, a few individuals that are attested with a personal name containing ^dtam-meš appear with logographic ^dUTU as well, which is transcribed as Šamaš. The Prosobab passport of an individual attested with both of these spellings contains the harmonisation Tammeš.

Tammeš-barak	^l dil-tam-meš-ba-rak-ki
Tammeš-liṅṭar	^l d ^d tam-meš-li-in-ṭár
Šamaš-liṅṭar	^l dUTU-li-in-ṭár
Tammeš-il	^l tam-meš-i-lu
Zarah-Tammeš	^l za-ra-ah-tam-meš

→ Transcribe Tammeš for both frequent ^dtam-meš and infrequent ^dil-tam-meš.

→ Transcribe Šamaš for ^dUTU, also with a West Semitic complement.

Yāhû / Yāma

The form of the Yahwistic theophoric element tends to depend on the position within the personal name: Yāhû + complement versus complement + Yāma.

Yāhû is written in a variety of ways, but most commonly: ^(d)ia/iá-(a)-hu-ú. If Yāhû is abbreviated to

⁶ Zadok 1977, 39-42.

Yā, this is transcribed as such. The Prosobab passport of an individual attested with both of these spellings contains the harmonisation Yāhû. Yāma is most often spelled ^(d)ia/iá-a-ma.⁷

ʿYāhû-hīn	^(d) ʿia-a-hu-ú-hi-in
ʿYā-hīn	^(d) ʿia-a-hi-in
Yāhû-azar	^(d) i-hu-ú-a-za-ra
Yāhû-izrī	^(d) ia-hu-ú-iz-zi-ri
Rapā-Yāma	^(r) ra-pa- [?] a-a-ma
Zakar-Yāma	^(z) za-kar- ^(d) ʿia-a-ma
Barik-Yāma	^(b) ba-ri-ki-ia-a-ma

→ Transcribe Yāhû or Yā, and Yāma.

2. Verbal complements

2.a V = perfect 3.sg.m. of the G-stem

- Strong verbs

The Aramaic perfect 3.sg.m. of the G-stem is the most frequent verbal form in personal names. Its form, *q^otal*, is rendered *qatal* in Akkadian, which is generally written Ca-CaC-CV. The final -CV component is added in order to avoid a closed final syllable and probably indicates that the preceding closed syllable was stressed. The miscellaneous final vowels seem not to have been pronounced.⁸

Adad-natan	^(d) IŠKUR-na-tan-na
Amurru-natan	^(d) KUR.GAL-na-tan-nu
Natan-il	⁽ⁿ⁾ na-tan-ni-DINGIR.MEŠ

This is underlined by Ca-CaC spellings:

Ahi-natan	^(š) ŠEŠ-na-tan
Natan-il	⁽ⁿ⁾ na-tan-DINGIR.MEŠ

Like vowels of final components (-CV), vowels at the end of verbal components (-CV-) were probably not pronounced:⁹

Gadal-Yāma	^(g) ga-da- <u>lu</u> -ia-a-ma
Natan-Yāma	⁽ⁿ⁾ na-ta- <u>nu</u> / <u>ni</u> -ia-ma

⁷ For all variant spellings and the appearance of determinatives for deities with Yāhû and Yāma, see Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 19-28.

⁸ Clay 1908, 318. Exceptions exist: in a few cases the stressed vowel has been dropped, e.g., in ^(a)ad-gi-ši-ri-zab-du and ^(a)AG-aq-bi. However, the same individuals appear with regularly written names as well: ^(a)ad-gi-ši-ri-za-bad-du; ^(a)AG-aq-qa-bi and ^(a)AG-a-qa-ab-bi (Zadok 1977, 79-82).

⁹ This also appears with passive formations: ^(r)ra-hi-mu-il; ^(z)za-bi-du-na-na-a (Zadok 1977, 252 with references).

A variety of verbs is attested in the perfect 3.sg.m. of the G-stem (attestations in other formations hardly exist or are difficult to recognise).

Bēl-barak	^{1d} EN-ba-rak-ku
Amurru-našab	^{1d} KUR.GAL-na-ša-bi
Il-hanan	¹ DINGIR-ha-na-nu
Il-naṣar	¹ DINGIR.MEŠ-na-ṣa-ri
Nabû-zabad	^{1d} AG-za-bad-du
Bahar	¹ ba-har-ri

→ Transcribe X-*qatal* / *qatal*-X for regular verbal forms perfect 3.sg.m.

- Weak verbs I[?] (such as [?]*mr* – speak) lose the first consonant.¹⁰

Il-amar	¹ DINGIR.MEŠ-a-ma-ra
Apladda-amar	^{1d} DUMU.UŠ-ad-du-a-mar

→ Transcribe X-*Øatal* / *Øatal*-X for weak verbal forms I[?] perfect 3.sg.m.

- Weak verbs I w/y (for instance, *yd^f* – to know, *yhb* – to give, *yp^f* – to be brilliant, *yqr* – to be esteemed) appear with primary ia-a-; a-a-; or i-.¹¹

Il-yahab	¹ DINGIR.MEŠ-ia-a-ha-bi
Yahab-il	¹ ia-a-hab-bi-DINGIR.MEŠ
Abi-yaqar	¹ AD-a-a-qa-ri
Bēl-yadah	^{1d} EN-ia-a-da-ah
Yadah-Nabû	¹ i-da-hu- ^d AG

→ Transcribe X-*yatal* or *Yatal*-X for weak verbal forms I w/y perfect 3.sg.m.

- The vowel of weak verbs II[?] (for example, *š[?]l* – to ask) is lengthened, which reflects assimilation of the middle consonant (the examples have object suffix 1.sg.).¹²

Adad-šāltī	^{1d} IŠKUR-šá-al-tu ₄
Būr-šāltī	^{1d} AMAR-šá-al-ti

→ Transcribe X-*qāl* or *qāl*-X for weak verbal forms II[?] perfect 3.sg.m.

¹⁰ Zadok 1977, 82.

¹¹ Zadok 1977, 83f.

¹² Zadok 1977, 84.

- The vowel of weak verbs II w (for instance, *hwr* – to see, *rwm* – to be high, *qwm* – to rise) is lengthened, due to assimilation of the middle consonant.¹³

Sîn-rām	^l d30-ra-am-mu
Addu-rām	^l dad-du-ra-am-mu
Adrī-qām	^l a-di-ri-ia-qa-am

→ Transcribe X-*qāl* or *qāl*-X for weak verbal forms II w 3.sg.m.

- The final vowel of weak verbs III ^ʔ/y/h (like *bny* – to build; *dly* – to save; *hzy* – to see; *pdy* – to redeem; *rp*^ʔ – to heal; *šly* – to be tranquil) is lengthened. The most recurring spelling pattern is Ca-Ca^{-ʔ} in which Aleph replaces the weak final consonant; less often patterns Ca-Ca-∅ and CaC-Ca-∅ occur:¹⁴

Nabû-rapā	^l dAG-ra-pa ^{-ʔ}	Aramaic <i>nbwrp</i> ^ʔ
Nabû-dalā	^l dAG-da-la ^{-ʔ}	
Sîn-banā	^l d30-ba-na ^{-ʔ}	
Hazā-il	^l ha-za ^{-ʔ} -DINGIR.MEŠ	Aramaic <i>hzh</i> ^ʔ
Šalā-Bēl	^l šá-la ^{-ʔ} -dEN	
Barā-il	^l ba-ra-DINGIR	
Šamē-barā	^l šá-me ^{-ʔ} -bar-ra	
Padā-Yāma	^l pa-da-ia-a-ma	

→ Transcribe X-*qatā* / *qatā*-X for weak verbal forms III^ʔ/y perfect 3.sg.m.

2.b V = perfect 2.sg.m. of the G-stem

A verbal form that is specific for personal names from the Achaemenid period is the perfect 2.sg.m. + object suffix 1 sg.

šá-ma-ah-ta-ni ^{-ʔ}	Šamahtānī	You have heard me	<i>šm</i> ^ʕ
da-la-ta-ni ^{-ʔ}	Dalatānī	You have saved me	<i>dly</i>
ha-an-na-ta-ni ^{-ʔ}	Hannatānī	You have favoured me	<i>hnn</i>

→ Transcribe -tā for the suffix perfect 2.sg.m. and -nī for object suffix 1.sg. As stress shifts to -tā, final vowels of weak verbal forms III^ʔ/y/h are not lengthened (see example of *dly*).

¹³ Zadok 1977, 82f.

¹⁴ However, the doubling of consonants in the final example is exceptional and probably indicates that this syllable was stressed (Zadok 1977, 85-87).

2.c V = imperfect 3.sg.m. of the G-Stem

This conjugation is attested with two prefixes for 3.sg.m., which yield the forms *yaqtVI* or *laqtVI*. The latter form, which is most common in sources from this region, can be encountered in verbs like *dyn* – to judge; *nṭr* – to guard; *kwn* – to become / be firm; *rwm* – to be exalted. The verb *dyn* also appears as a *yaqtul* form; as do the verbs *ntn* – to give and *yqy* – to guard.¹⁵

Amm-ladin	ʼam-ma-la-din
Tammeš-ladin	ʼdtam-meš-la-din-ni; -la-di-in
Tammeš-linṭar	ʼdtam-meš-li-in-ṭár
Ahi-lakun	ʼšEŠ-la-kun; -la-ku-nu
Ahi-larim	ʼšEŠ-la-rim; la-ri-im
Šamaš-yadin	ʼdUTU-ia-di-nu
Adad-yatin	ʼdIŠKUR-ia-ti-in
Abi-yaqī	ʼAD-ía-qí-ia
Yaqī-il	ʼia-a-qí- ² -il

→ Transcribe *laqtVI* and *yaqtVI* for verbal forms imperfect 3.sg.m.

3. Passive forms

As the original, lengthened second vowel of the passive (*qatīl*) is not consistently indicated in Akkadian spelling, it is not transcribed.¹⁶

Barik-Enlil	ʼba-rik- ^d en-líl
Barik-il	ʼba-ri-ki-DINGIR.MEŠ
Barik-Bēl	ʼba-rik-ki- ^d EN
Rahim-il	ʼra-hi-im-DINGIR.MEŠ
Zabid-Nanāya	ʼza-bid- ^d na-na-a
Adad-natin	ʼdIŠKUR-na-ti-in
Naṭir	ʼna-ṭi-ri
Zabin	ʼza-bi-in

→ Transcribe *qatīl*.

¹⁵ Zadok 1977, 91-95.

¹⁶ Zadok 1977, 122-127.

The same applies to *qatūl*-forms.¹⁷

Aqub	'aq-qu-bu
Hanun	'ha-nun; 'ha-nu-nu
Natun	'na-tu-nu
Šakuh	'šak-ku-hu; šá-ku-ú-hu
Zabud	'za-bu-du; 'za-ab-bu-du

→ Transcribe *qatul*.

4. Suffixes

4.a -ā

The most common hypocoristic suffix during the Neo- and Late Babylonian period is -ā (spelled -Ca-² or -Ca-a). To a certain extent, it has replaced suffixes that were more common before the first millennium, such as -aya, -at, and -ān.

As hypocoristic suffix -ā represents alphabetic -h or -² it is thought to be connected to the Aramaic definite article that follows the noun. However, it is added to names from other Semitic groups, such as Akkadian and Arabian as well.¹⁸ A final -Ca-a can also be interpreted as Akkadian -aya; this is transcribed as -ā if the base is West Semitic and/or the name of the individual is attested with -Ca-² as well.

Arzā	'ar-za- ²
Haninā	'ha-ni-na- ² ; 'ha-nin-na-a
ʿHannā	ʿha-an-na- ² ; ʿha-an-na-a
Idrā	'id-ra-a
Zabudā	'za-bu-da- ² ; 'za-bu-da-a

→ Transcribe -ā for -Ca-² and -Ca-a attached to names with a West Semitic base.

→ Transcribe -āya for -Ca-a added to Akkadian names, if the name of the individual is not attested with -Ca-².

4.b -ī

The hypocoristic suffix -ī (spelled -Ci-i / -ia / -iá / -²), which may originate from the gentilic or the suffix 1.sg., represents alphabetic -y. Despite the fact that -ī is common Semitic, most hypocoristic names that finish with -ī are Aramaic.¹⁹

Gabrī	'gab-ri-i
Hannī	'ha-an-ni-iá
Namarī	'na-ma-ri- ²
Rahimī	'ra-hi-mi-i

¹⁷ Zadok 1977, 127-130.

¹⁸ The fact that -ā was added to these names may be due to influence of the Aramaic language (Zadok 1977, 149f).

¹⁹ Since 'ba-ni-e is the same individual as 'ba-ni-iá, -ē can be viewed as a phonetic variant of -ī (Zadok 1977, 153).

→ Transcribe -ī for -Ci-i / -ia / -iá / -² attached to names with a West Semitic base.

4.c -ān

The hypocoristic suffix -ān (spelled -Ca-nu/ni; -Ca-a-nu/ni; -Ca-an-nu; -Ca-an) has an Amorite background and is definitely a hypocoristic when attached to theophoric elements.²⁰

Abnān	¹ ab-na-nu
Harbatān	¹ har-ba-ta-nu
Hirān	¹ hi-ra-an
Šalamān	¹ šá-lam-ma-a-nu

→ Transcribe -ān for -Ca-nu/ni; -Ca-a-nu/ni; -Ca-an-nu; -Ca-an attached to names with a West Semitic base.

4.d Other suffixes

→ Transcribe -u for -Cu-u / -ú / -², a common suffix in North-Arabian names, such as Umahbu (¹ú-ma-ah-bu-²).²¹

→ Transcribe -īn for -Ci-nu and -Ci-in-ni used in names like Qaqqadīn (¹qaq-qa-di-nu) and Suqīn (¹su-qi-in-ni).

→ Transcribe -ēn for -Ca-en-na, for instance: Apsēn (¹ap-sa-en-na).²²

→ Transcribe -at for -Ca-ti/ta/tu₄; -Ca-at; -a-ta, which often appears in female names like ¹Yababat (¹ia-ba-ba-ti) and ¹Aqubat (¹a-qu-ba-tu₄).²³

→ Transcribe -īt for -Ci-(i)-ti/ta/tu₄, also oft-attested in female names: ¹Didīt (¹di-di-i-tu₄) and ¹Agibīt (¹a-gi-bi-ti).²⁴

→ Transcribe -ī + -ān for Ci-an-na, for example in the name Izzīān (¹iz-zi-an-na).²⁵

5. Transcription of Ayin

The consonant Ayin in medial and final position of perfect verbs is mostly represented by -Vh / hV; exceptionally by -².

¹ dDN-ra-ha- ²	<i>r²y</i> – to please
¹ ia-a-da-hu-DN; ¹ dDN-ia-da-ah-; ¹ dDN-i-da- ²	<i>yd²</i> – to know
¹ šá-ma-ah-ta-ni- ²	<i>šm²</i> – to hear

²⁰ Sometimes the same suffix may be adjectival, e.g., in ¹ba-ah-ia-nu, which consists of adjective *baḥú* (weak) + -ān, which translates as the weakling (Zadok 1977, 157-162).

²¹ Zadok 1977, 156.

²² Zadok 1977, 162f.

²³ Zadok 1977, 163.

²⁴ Zadok 1977, 163.

²⁵ Zadok 1977, 165f. N.B. It is common for West Semitic names to contain clusters of these suffixes.

Exceptions are verbs with final Ayin that are not followed by a complement. These are treated like weak verbs III[?]/y:

ʾšá-ma- [?] ; ʾšá-am-ma-a	Šamā	šm ^ʿ – to hear
ʾia-da- [?]	Yadā	yd ^ʿ – to know

Ayin in primary position of perfect verbs is mostly Ø, exceptionally it is represented by h-.

ʾdDN-a-dar-ri		ʿdr – to help
ʾdDN-a-qab-bi; -aq-qa-(ab)-bi; -aq-bi; -ha-qa-bi		ʿqb – to protect

Ayin in primary position of imperfect verbs is mostly Ø as well and follows the *yaqtul*-pattern.

ʾia-da-ar-ni- [?] ; ʾia-da-ar-i-; ʾi-da-ri-nu-DN		ʿdr – to help
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The distribution for nominal forms is more or less similar.

- Transcribe -h(-) for Ayin in medial and final position and Ø- for Ayin in initial position.
- Transcribe Ayin in primary position of imperfect forms as Ø, according to the pattern it appears in (e.g., *yaqtul*); for Ayin in final position of perfect verbs without complement: transcribe *qatā*.

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