SKELETON ACHAEMENID ARAMAIC GRAMMAR

INTRODUCTORY BIBLIOGRAPHY

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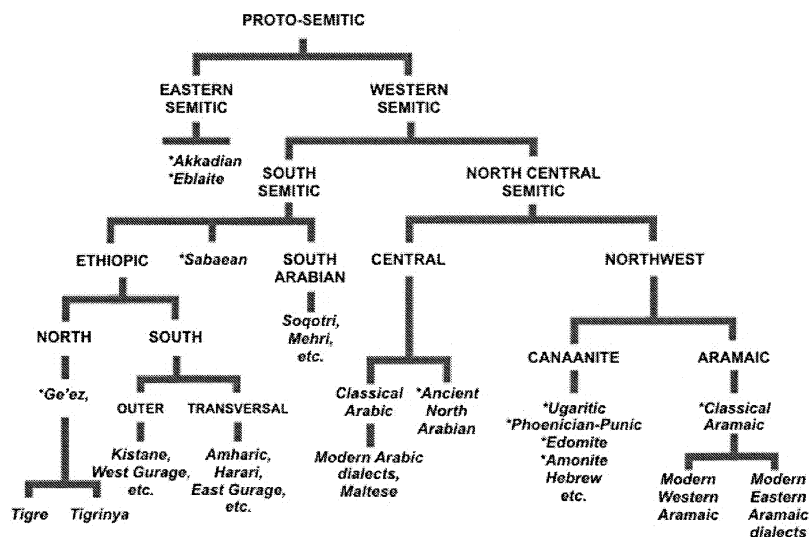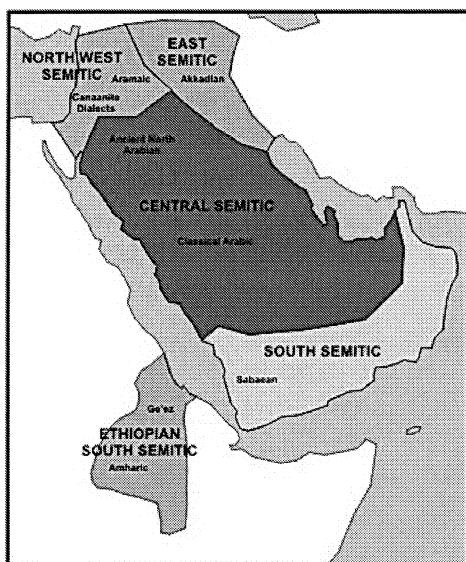
3. Texts
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ARAMAIC AMONG THE SEMITIC LANGUAGES

[Map and diagram from: http://www.21stcenturyfogey.com/language/semiticlangs.htm]

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARAMAIC

The earliest definite mention of Aramaeans occurs in Akkadian texts of the late 12th century BCE

OLD ARAMAIC
C.10 – C.8 BCE

E.Turkey, Syria, Iraq, NW Iran · [inscriptions in various local dialects]

IMPERIAL ARAMAIC
C.7 – C.4 BCE

E.Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia · [Standardised dialect, obscuring local dialects; inscriptions; documents; a few literary texts (Ahiqar; Ezra)]

MIDDLE ARAMAIC
C.3 BCE – C.2 CE

Turkey to Afghanistan, Caucasus to Egypt and Saudi Arabia; South Shields!

WESTERN DIALECTS	LITERARY DIALECTS	EASTERN DIALECTS
[inscriptions]	[literary texts]	[inscriptions]
NABATAEAN	BIBLICAL ARAMAIC	PALMYRENE
PALESTINIAN ARAM.	QUMRAN ARAMAIC	HATRAN
		PROTO-SYRIAC

LATE ARAMAIC
C.3 CE –

Spain to China, but mainly E.Turkey, Syria, Israel/Palestine, Iraq, W.Iran

WESTERN DIALECTS	EASTERN DIALECTS
[literary texts, inscriptions]	[literary texts, inscriptions]
JEWISH PALESTINIAN ARAMAIC	SYRIAC (still in use)
SAMARITAN ARAMAIC	MANDAIC
CHRISTIAN PALESTINIAN ARAMAIC	JEWISH BABYLONIAN ARAMAIC
[VERNACULAR SYRIAN ARAMAIC?]	

NEO-ARAMAIC
C.11 – C.21

[Modern spoken dialects]

E.Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, diaspora.

WESTERN DIALECTS	CENTRAL DIALECTS	EASTERN DIALECTS
MAʿLULA	TUROYO	MODERN MANDAIC
BAKHʿA	MLAHSO	CHRISTIAN NEO-ARAMAIC [NENA]
JUBB ʿADDIN		JEWISH NEO-ARAMAIC [NENA]

Fundorte

Kaspisches Meer

Persischer Golf

Rotes Meer

Mittelmeer

Inschriften
auf Stein u. a. — früharamäisch / reichsaramäisch
auf Ostraka, Papyri und kleinen Objekten
Ja'udi (Zincirli)

From Segert, S., *Altaramäische Grammatik* (Leipzig, 1975).

ALEXANDRIA

NAUKRATIS

TELL EL-MASHKHUTA

TURA ५५३
MAʿSARAH QUARRY ५५३
GIZA ५५३
SAQQARAH
ABUSIR
MASTABAT EL-FARAʿUN
MEMPHIS
DAHSHUR ५५३

MEDINET MAADI

EL-HIBEH

OXYRHYNCHUS

KOM EL-AHMAR

HERMOPOLIS
SHEIKH FADL
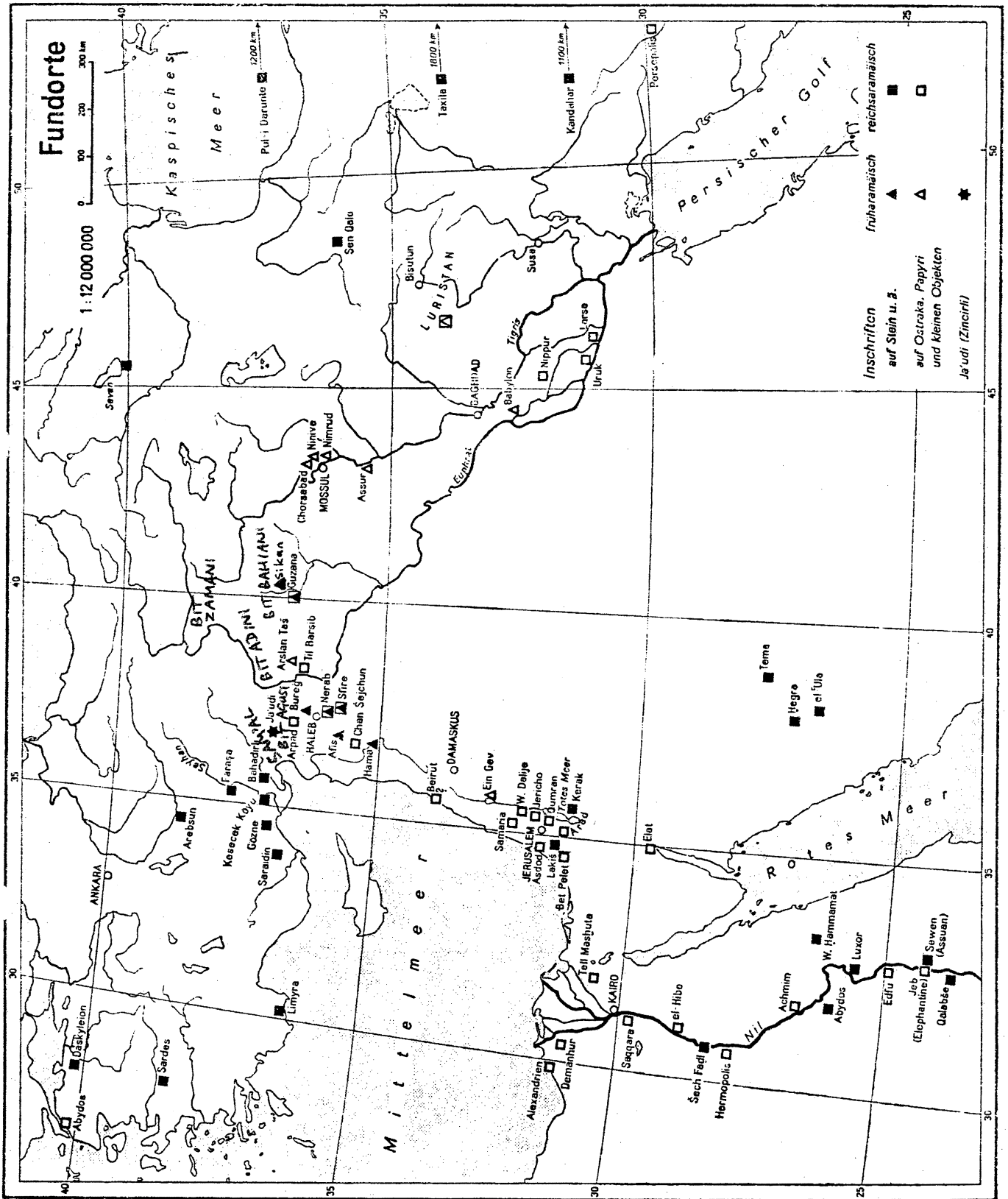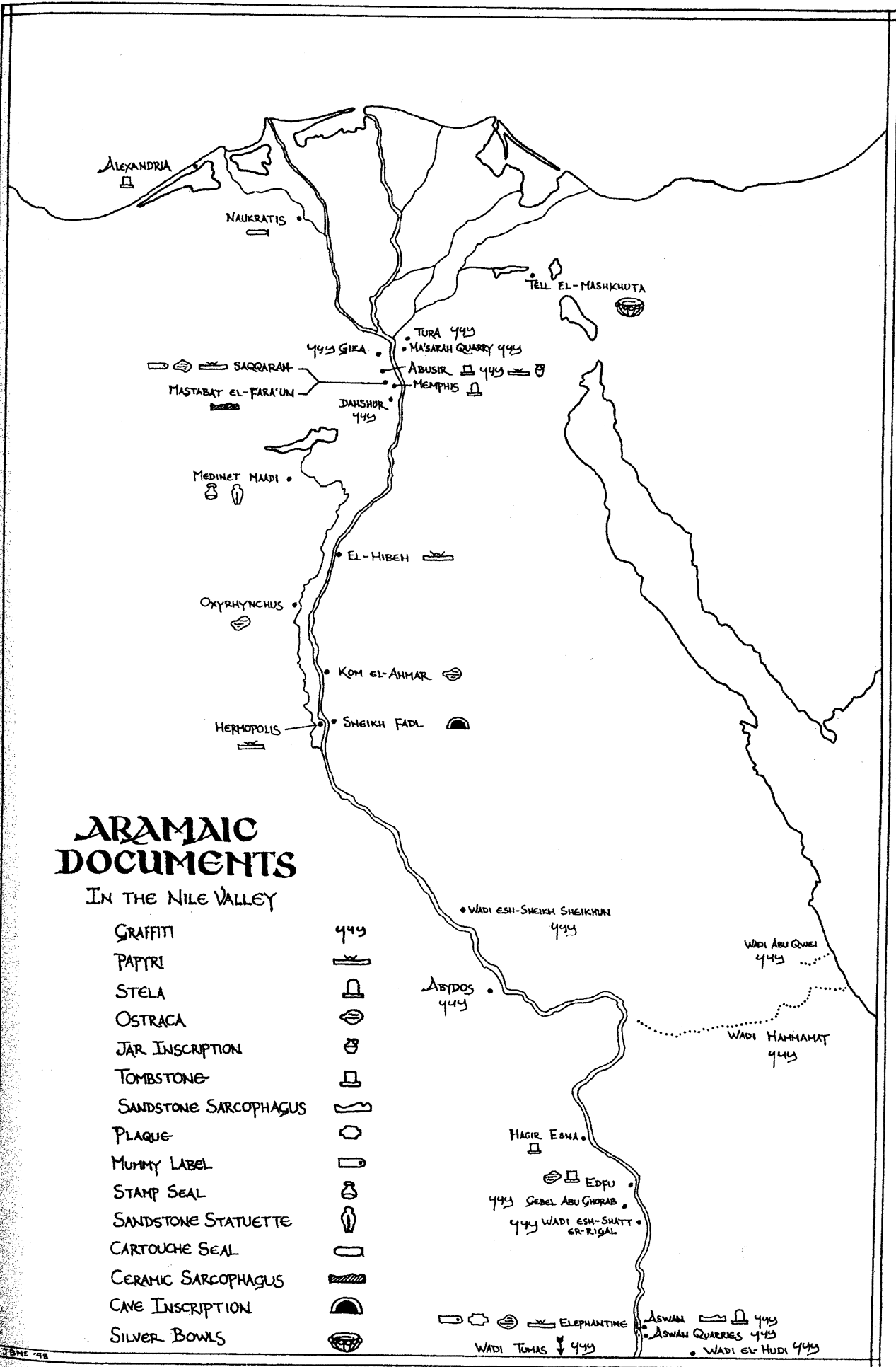
ARAMAIC DOCUMENTS
IN THE NILE VALLEY

GRAFFITI	५५३
PAPYRI	
STELA	
OSTRACA	
JAR INSCRIPTION	
TOMBSTONE	
SANDSTONE SARCOPHAGUS	
PLAQUE	
MUMMY LABEL	
STAMP SEAL	
SANDSTONE STATUETTE	
CARTOUCHE SEAL	
CERAMIC SARCOPHAGUS	
CAVE INSCRIPTION	
SILVER BOWLS	

WADI ESH-SHEIKH SHEIKHUN ५५३

WADI ABU QWEI ५५३

ABYDOS ५५३

WADI HAMMAMAT ५५३

HAGIR ESNA

EDFU
GEBEL ABU GHORAB ५५३
WADI ESH-SHATT ER-RIGAL ५५३

ELEPHANTINE
ASWAN ५५३
ASWAN QUARRIES ५५३
WADI TUMAS ५५३
WADI EL-HUDI ५५३

JBMC '98
Brett McClain

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FROM: Porten & Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt, IV. Ostraca and assorted inscriptions* (1999)

The Alphabet

DGKT 2010

Transcription	Proto-Canaanite c.19 BCE	Ugaritic c.14 BCE	Phoen./Aram. c.11 BCE	South Arabian c.13 BCE	Ethiopic c.4 CE	Hebrew c.3 BCE	Syriac (Estrang.) c.1 CE	Syriac (Serto) c.3 CE	Nabatean c.2 BCE	Arabic c.6 CE	Greek c.8 BCE	Latin c.7 BCE	Coptic c.3 CE	Cyrillic c.9 CE	Letter Names
ʾ										ا	A	A	ⲁ	А	ʾalp = ox
b										ب	B	B	ⲃ	Б В	beyt = house
g										ج	Γ	C	ⲅ	Г	gaml = throw-stick
d										د	Δ	D	ⲇ	Д	digg = fish / daleth = door
ḏ										ذ					?
h										ه	E	E	ⲉ	Е Э	hô = man calling?
w										و	[F]	F			waw = peg
z										ز	Z	Z	ⲍ	З	zên = weapon /olive tree
ḥ										ح	H	H	ⲏ		ḥêt = fence
ḫ										خ					ḫa = hank of yarn
ṭ										ط	Θ		ⲑ		ṭêt = spindle?
ẓ										ظ					?
y										ي	I	I	ⲓ	И Й	yad = hand/arm
k										ك	K	K	ⲕ	К	kapp = palm of hand
l										ل	Λ	L	ⲗ	Л	lamd = ox-goad
m										م	M	M	ⲙ	М	mêm = water
n										ن	N	N	ⲛ	Н	naḥš = snake [nun = fish]
s											Ξ	X	ⲝ		samk = prop?
ʿ										ع	O	O	ⲟ	О	ʿên = eye
ġ										غ					ġa = ?
p										ف	Π	P	ⲡ	П	pê = corner
ṣ										ص	[ϻ]			Ц	ṣad = plant
ḍ										ض					?
q										ق	[Ϙ]	Q			qup = ?
r										ر	P	R	ⲣ	Р	raʾš = head
ś										س					?
š										ش	Σ C	S	ⲥ ⲱ	С Ш Щ	ṯann = bow [šin = tooth]
t										ت	T	T	ⲧ †	Т	taw = mark
ṯ										ث					ṯann = bow
additional letters		å, ì, ù			ṗ, pˢ						Υ Φ Χ Ψ Ω	Υ (G V)	Υ Φ Χ Ψ ⲱ	У Ф Х Ж Ч Ы Ю Я	

THE ARAMAIC / HEBREW ALPHABET

Transcription	Name	Old Aram. Script	Sama-ritan	Imp. Aram. Script	Square Script	Rashi	Mod. Cursive	(Syriac)	(Arabic)	Origins of Letter Names
ʾ	ʾĀlep{h}									ʾalp = ox
b	Bēt{h}									beyt = house
g	Gimel									gaml = throw-stick
d	Dālet{h}									digg = fish daleth = door
h	Hē									hô = man calling?
w	Wāw									waw = peg
z	Zayin									zên = weapon / olive tree
ḥ	Ḥēt{h}									ḥêt = fence
ṭ	Ṭēt{h}									ṭêt = spindle?
y	Yōd{h}									yad = hand/arm
k	Kap{h}									kapp = palm of hand
l	Lāmed									lamd = ox-goad
m	Mēm									mêm = water
n	Nūn									naḥš = snake [nun = fish]
s	Sāmek{h}									samk = prop?
ʿ	ʿAyin									ʿên = eye
p	Pē									pê = corner
ṣ	Ṣād{h}ē									ṣad = plant
q	Qop{h}									qup = ?
r	Rēš									raʾš = head
ś	Śīn									
š	Šīn									ṭann = bow [šin = tooth]
t	Tāw									taw = mark

DGKT 2010

ARAMAIC NUMERALS

	Imp. Aram. (Elephantine)	Nabataean	Palmyrene	Hatran	Syriac	Alphanumeric			
						Syriac	Hebrew	Greek	Arabic
1	‍	‍	‍	‍	‍	ܐ	א	α′	ا
2	‍‍	‍‍	‍‍	‍‍	ܪ	ܒ	ב	β′	ب
3	‍‍‍	‍‍‍	‍‍‍	‍‍‍	ܪܝ	ܓ	ג	γ′	ج
4	‍ ‍‍‍	‍‍‍‍ or X	‍‍‍‍	‍‍‍‍	ܪܪ	ܕ	ד	δ′	د
5	‍‍ ‍‍‍	ܗ	٦ or ۷	۷ or ﴿	ܗ	ܗ	ה	ε′	ه
6	‍‍‍ ‍‍‍	‍‍‍ ‍‍‍	‍۷	‍۷	ܘ	ܘ	ו	ς′	و
7	‍ ‍‍‍ ‍‍‍	‍ ‍‍‍ ‍‍‍	‍‍۷	‍‍۷	ܙ	ܙ	ז	ζ′	ز
8	‍‍ ‍‍‍ ‍‍‍	‍‍ ‍‍‍ ‍‍‍	‍‍‍۷	‍‍‍۷	ܪܚ	ܚ	ח	η′	ح
9	‍‍‍ ‍‍‍ ‍‍‍	‍‍‍ ‍‍‍ ‍‍‍	‍‍‍‍۷	‍‍‍‍۷	ܪܛ	ܛ	ט	θ′	ط
10	⅂	⅂	⅁	⅂	ܝ or 7	ܝ	י	ι′	ى
12	‍‍⅂	‍‍⅂	‍‍⅁	‍‍⅂	ܝܒ	ܝܒ	יב	ιβ′	يب
20	3	3	3 or ٦	3	ܟ	ܟ	כ	κ′	ك
30	⅂3	⅂3	⅁3	⅂3	ܝܟ	ܠ	ל	λ′	ل
40	33	33	33	33	ܟܟ	ܡ	מ	μ′	م
50	⅂33	⅂33	⅁33	⅂33	ܝܟܟ	ܢ	נ	ν′	ن
60	333	333	333	333	ܟܟܟ	ܣ	ס	ξ′	س
70	⅂333	⅂333	⅁333	⅂333	ܝܟܟܟ	ܥ	ע	ο′	ع
80	3333	3333	3333	3333	ܟܟܟܟ	ܦ	פ	π′	ف
90	⅂3333	⅂3333	⅁3333	⅂3333	ܝܟܟܟܟ	ܨ	צ	ϙ′	ص
100	חܐ	٩ܐ	ܘ⅁	◁	ܩ	ܩ	ק	ρ′	ق
200	חܐܐ	٩‍‍‍	ܘ⅁‍‍	◁‍‍	ܪ	ܪ	ר	σ′	ر
300	חܐܐܐ	٩‍‍‍‍	ܘ⅁‍‍‍	◁‍‍‍	ܪܩ	ܫ	ש	τ′	ش
400	חܐܐܐܐ	٩‍‍‍‍	ܘ⅁‍‍‍‍	◁‍‍‍‍	ܪܪ	ܬ	ת	υ′	ت
500			ܘ⅁۷	◁‍‍‍‍‍		ܬܩ	תק (ך)	φ′	ث
600						ܬܪ	תר (ם)	χ′	خ
700						ܬܫ	תש (ן)	ψ′	ذ
800			۷‍‍‍‍⅁			ܬܬ	תת (ף)	ω′	ض
900						ܬܬܩ	תתק (ץ)	ϡ′	ظ
1000	‍‍ܠ٩					ܐ	תתר (א׳)	͵α	غ
2000	‍‍‍ܠ٩					ܒ	ב׳	͵β	

Unlike Arabic numerals, the symbols are read from right to left (i.e. in the usual direction of reading). Examples: Elephantine 55 = ‍‍ ‍‍‍ ⅂33 ; Nabataean 25 = ܗ3 ; Palmyrene 538 = ‍‍‍۷ܘ⅁۷ ; Syriac 27 = ܟܙ or ܟܙ ; 286 = ܪܟܟܚ or ܪܩܘ ; 1887 = ܐܬܬܦܙ ; 5637 = ܗܬܪܠܙ . Hebrew avoids יה and יו for 15 and 16, because of their resemblance to the divine name, and so uses טו and טז instead. Greek *stigma* (6) was a ligature for *στ* that came to replace similar cursive form of *digamma*.

Introductory Notes:

General

1. Aramaic is written from right to left.
2. Aramaic texts and grammars are usually printed in the Hebrew square script (borrowed from Aramaic around the C.6 BCE), and so this will be the script employed at first in this course.
3. Achaemenid Aramaic texts were written without vowels, but these are included in editions of Biblical Aramaic texts, based on the vocalisation of Jewish scribes known as 'massoretes', active after the C.6 CE. Later Jewish and Christian Aramaic texts are also vocalised. These enable reconstructions of Achaemenid Aramaic vocalisation. But these remain tentative!
4. Many of the paradigms which follow contain both Egyptian Aramaic [EA] and Biblical Aramaic [BA] forms, though these are usually separated.

Alphabet and phonology

1. Aramaic has 22 consonantal letters. In Achaemenid Aramaic these were used to represent at least 26 consonantal phonemes. (see below.)
2. Five square script letters have a modified form which is used at the end of words, four with a descender: כ ך, מ ם, נ ן, פ ף, צ ץ. (These were not used earlier than the C3 BCE.)
3. Indication of approximate pronunciation will be given in class. For the linguists, there is the following table. (For everyone else, DON'T PANIC !):

	plosive	fricative	lateral	lateralised?	rolled	nasal	frictionless continuant
bilabial	p פ b ב					m מ	w ו
inter-dental		t̲ ת d̲ ז		d̲ ק			
dental & alveolar	t ת d ד ṭ ט	s ס z ז ṣ צ	l ל	ś ש	r ר	n נ	
palato-alveolar		š ש					
velar	k כ g ג q ק						
pharyngal		ḥ ח ʿ ע					
laryngal		ʾ א h ה					
palatal							y י

4. Several letters represent more than one phoneme. These can only be distinguished by knowledge of other semitic languages and Aramaic dialects.

    a. ז represents both /z/ and /d̲/. In EA (from 483 BCE on), ד starts to be used to represent /d̲/ (as well as original /d/). This use of ד remains far less common than ז, and many texts contain examples of each. Some scribes occasionally hyper-correct so that even words with ד = /d/ are written with ז !

    b. ש represents both /ś/ and /š/ (in BA ש and שׂ). (Very rarely in EA, /ś/ is represented by ס.)

    c. ת represents both /t/ and /t̲/.

d. ק represents both /ḏ/ and /q/. ע can also represent /ḏ/, as well as /ʿ/. In EA the use of ק is more frequent than ע, but in BA this is reversed.

e. It is possible that ע represents both /ʿ/ and /ġ/. It is impossible to prove from EA in Aramaic script, but papyrus Amherst 63 (late C2 BCE, from Thebes, written in demotic Egyptian script) distinguishes the two phonemes. (cf. Heb. עֲמֹרָה, LXX Γομορρα, Gomorrah.)

f. Similarly, it is possible that ח represents both /ḥ/ and /ḫ/, but this also is only evident from papyrus Amherst 63.

5. Six letters (BeGaDKePaT, בגדכפת) have in BA (as in Hebrew and other Aramaic dialects) a soft, aspirated, pronunciation if they follow a vowel (b > v ; g > gh ; d > dh ; k > kh ; p > ph ; t > th). In BA the hard, non-aspirated, form is indicated by a central dot (*dāgēš*): בּ גּ דּ כּ פּ תּ . It is possible that this spirantisation was already operating in EA.

VOWELS

1. There are no dedicated vowel letters in EA. However, 4 consonantal letters may <u>sometimes</u> also be used to indicate vowels.

   a. א = a or e (e.g. מטא məṭā, 'he arrived; תתמלא titməlē 'she will be full'). Usually word-final.

   b. ה = a or e (e.g. זנה dənā, 'this'; אלה illē, 'these'). Rarely = o. Usually word-final.

   c. ו = o or u (e.g. בנו bənō, 'they built'; הו hū, 'he'). Word-medial, and word-final.

   d. י = i (or y) (e.g. חכים ḥakīm, 'wise'; הי hī, 'she'). Word-medial, and word-final.

2. Vowel length is not clearly indicated by the use of these letters.

3. In some texts the dipthong /ay/ seems to have contracted to /ē/. (e.g. בת bēt for בית bayt, 'house'). The dipthong /aw/ is very rarely contracted to /ō/. (e.g. יומא yawmā and ימא yōmā, 'day').

4. In printed BA texts, the consonants are 'pointed', that is, they are accompanied by the Tiberian vowel signs (one of several systems of small dots and lines developed by Hebrew scribes in Late Antiquity to indicate the vowels, inspired by East Syriac vowel signs). This vocalisation represents the contemporary reading tradition of BA

TIBERIAN (HEBREW) VOWEL SIGNS

	SHORT			LONG			VERY SHORT		
A		a *pataḥ*	(בַ)		ā *qāmeṣ*	(בָ)		ă *ḥaṭef-pataḥ*	(בֲ)
E		e *səgōl*	(בֶ)		ē *ṣērê*	(בֵ)		ə *šəwâ*	(בְ)
					ê	(בֵי)		ĕ *ḥaṭef-səgōl*	(בֱ)
I		i *ḥîreq*	(בִ)		ī *ḥîreq*	(בִי)			
O		o *qāmeṣ-ḥāṭûf*	(בָ)		ō *ḥōlem*	(בֹ)		ŏ *ḥaṭef-qāmeṣ*	(בֳ)
					ô	(בוֹ)			
U		u *qibbûṣ*	(בֻ)		ū *šûreq*	(בוּ)			

1. Every syllable must begin with a consonant. Syllables can be open (Cv) or closed (CvC).

2. The same sign (◌ָ) is used to indicate /ā/ and /o/. In a Closed, Unaccented Syllable it is Short. ['CUSS']

3. The sign *šəwâ* can also indicate the lack of a vowel under a letter at the end of a syllable or word, and thus is not pronounced. (When two *šəwâ*s occur together in the middle of a word the first closes a syllable, and so is silent, and the second opens a syllable and is pronounced. Under a doubled letter it is pronounced.)

OTHER SIGNS AND MARKS IN BA

1. At first sight the number of dots and dashes surrounding the consonants in a printed BA text can be overwhelming. You will soon learn to filter them out. (And EA texts are dot-free!)

   e.g. Daniel 2.13: וְדָתָא נֶפְקַת וְחַכִּימַיָּא מִתְקַטְּלִין וּבְעוֹ דָּנִיֵּאל וְחַבְרוֹהִי לְהִתְקְטָלָה׃

2. The dots in the centre of letters, known as *dāgēš*, indicate:
   a. EITHER the hard, non-aspirated, form of the BeGaDKePaT, בגדכפת, letters. (*Dāgēš lene.*)
   b. OR the doubling of a letter in pronunciation. (*Dāgēš forte.*)

3. A dot (known as *mappîq*) in the centre of a final ה , indicates that it is not silent, but audible.

4. The other small signs are a complex system of accents (sometimes called 'cantillation marks') which originally served to indicate:
   a. the tone syllable, to be stressed in pronunciation.
   b. the relationship of a word to those around it (conjunctive, disjunctive accents).
   c. punctuation (note especially *sillûq* ◌ under the last word of every verse, and *atnāḥ* ◌ at the main central break of a verse).
   d. and at a later date they were used as musical notation for chanting in synagogues.

WORD SEPARATION

In ancient Aramaic documents there is virtually no punctuation. However, from the C7 BCE on Aramaic scribes introduced the practice of separating words with blank spaces, replacing the earlier practice of separating words with three dots arranged in a vertical line—a practice that spread to archaic Greek— or with a short vertical line that steadily reduced in size until by the C8 BCE it was replaced by a single dot. (Jewish scribes using the old Hebrew script continued to use the dot even in the Dead Sea scrolls, and so also Samaritan scribes. But when using the Aramaic square script they also took over the Aramaic practice of using spaces. From the C4 BCE Phoenician and Punic scribes abandoned dots for *scriptio continua* —a step repeated by Latin scribes in C2 CE.)

STRESS / ACCENT IN BA

The main stress normally falls on the last syllable of a word.

Penultimate stress is found in certain forms with the endings ה◌ָ / ◌ָא , ◌ִי , or וֹ◌ .

e.g. אֲנַחְנָה , אַנְתִּי , כִּתְבַתִי , כְּתַבוּ , הַקְרִבוּהִי , עֲלוֹהִי .

Also in syllables where a vowel has been introduced to break up a consonant cluster.

e.g. קַיְט (cf. Syr. קַיְט), סְפַת (cf. Syr. סְפַת).

SEMITIC ROOTS

1. Most Semitic words are derived from a triliteral 'root' formed by three consonants, e.g. √KTB, √MLK, √QTL.
   [Linguists argue about whether the triliteral root was a development from a primitive biliteral root.]

2. Each root has one or more specific semantic ranges. e.g. √KTB > 'writing'; √MLK > 'kingship', 'counsel'. √QTL > 'killing'.

3. All forms of nouns, adjectives, verbs etc are produced by changing the vowels attached to these root letters, or by adding prefixes, suffixes, or infixes to them.

4. These vowel patterns and the use of prefixes/suffixes are often highly regular, and so linguistic function can often be predicted. For example:
   a. 1ə2a3 = S3M perfect (KəTaB, 'he wrote');

      b.   1ā2ē3 = SM act. participle (KāTēB, 'he is writing');

      c.   1ə2ā3ā' = definite noun (KəTāBā', 'the document, book');

      d.   yi12ə3ūn = P3M imperfect (yiKTəBūn, 'they will write').

5. Unfortunately this is less visually obvious in Achaemenid Aramaic, since the vowels are not written.

The first, second, and third root letters are referred to in grammars:

     EITHER by the notation I, II, III .

     OR by the names of the letters in a paradigmatic verb common in early Arabic and Hebrew grammarians, √P'L (Arabic √F'L), pronounced in Hebrew as Pē – 'Ayin – Lāmed.

Thus a verb whose root begins with an N may be referred to as a I N verb, or as a Pē-Nun verb; a root with a final Y is noted as III Y, or as Lāmed-Yod; a root with an identical second and third root letter may be described as a 'geminate verb', or as Double-'Ayin or 'Ayin-'Ayin, etc.