

**AN ASSYRIAN
GRAMMAR, FOR
COMPARATIVE PURPOSES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649052769

An Assyrian Grammar, for Comparative Purposes by A. H. Sayce

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

A. H. SAYCE

**AN ASSYRIAN
GRAMMAR, FOR
COMPARATIVE PURPOSES**

AN ASSYRIAN GRAMMAR.

AN
ASSYRIAN GRAMMAR,

FOR COMPARATIVE PURPOSES.



BY
A. H. SAYCE, M.A.,

FELLOW AND TUTOR OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD;
MEMBER OF THE GERMAN ORIENTAL SOCIETY,
AND OF THE SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY.



LONDON:
TRÜBNER & CO., 8 AND 60, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1872.

[*All Rights reserved.*]

PRINTED BY
STEPHEN ADWIN AND SONS, HERTFORD.

PREFACE.

THE distinction between the material and formal parts of a language is nowhere better illustrated than in the case of one which is being gradually recovered from its native records. A dictionary, in the true sense of the word, is impossible: we can have only a vocabulary which is being continually enlarged and corrected. But although the power of speech in producing new words is unlimited, the number of forms under which these words find expression is practically closely defined. A comparatively small number of written works will afford sufficient material for the outlines of a grammar: more extensive means of comparison serve merely for correction and greater detail. Until, however, we know all the actual forms possessed by a language at the various periods of its literary career, we cannot be said to have more than a general acquaintance even with its formative part; we can deal only with its coarser features, and these would be probably much modified by a more intimate knowledge of the niceties and finer texture of the grammar. And while this is of the highest importance for an accurate

interpretation of the language itself, it is of still higher importance for the purposes of comparative philology.

Assyrian, it is now recognized, is of the greatest value for Semitic philology. And the time has come when it is possible to give a grammar of the language which may bear some comparison with those of Hebrew or Ethiopic. Of course our acquaintance with the new study is constantly growing; but it is growing rather upon the side of the lexicon than of the grammar. In spite of the prejudice which naturally existed in the minds of Semitic scholars against an upstart science which threatened to dwarf the old objects of study, and the results of which were at once startling and revolutionary, while the decipherers were not always distinguished by scholarship or caution, the method of interpretation has at last won its way to general acknowledgment, so that even Ewald and Renan venture to use the statements of professed Assyriologists. Indeed, rational scepticism is no longer possible for any one who will take the trouble seriously to investigate the subject. The history of the decipherment need not be told over again. No scholar now questions the decipherment of the Persian inscriptions; and when this had once been accomplished, the translation of the Assyrian transcripts with their numerous proper names, and with the aid of the immense stores of comparison which the discoveries at Nineveh and elsewhere afforded, could only be a matter of time. The language dis-

closed was found to be Semitic in grammar and vocabulary, and the sporadic phenomena which at first offended Semitic scholars have turned out either to be errors on the part of the decipherers, or to admit of sufficient explanation. The contents of the inscriptions, again, have thoroughly verified the method of interpretation. Not only are they consistent, but the names and facts are such as are required by historical criticism. The greatest stumbling-block in the way of the sceptics has proved to be one of the most striking verifications of the method. It was urged that the existence of polyphones—that is, characters with more than one value—was sufficient to condemn the whole theory. Polyphones, however, actually exist in Japanese for the same reason that they existed in Assyrian;¹ and we find that the Assyrians, in their use of polyphones, observed certain general laws, so that the transliteration of a word (unless it be a native proper name) is very rarely doubtful. Still these polyphones were felt by the Assyrians themselves to be the weak point in their system of writing, and Assur-bani-pal accordingly caused syllabaries to be drawn up in which the several

¹ See Léon de Roany, "Archives Paléographiques," 2^{me} Livraison, pp. 90-100. This is referred to by Mahaffy, "Prolegomena to Ancient History," p. 207, whose Fourth Essay on the History of Cuneiform Decipherment is very good, and suited to the popular understanding. The want of acquaintance with Assyrian on the part of the author, however, has led to a few mistakes, most of which I have pointed out in the *Academy*, December 16th, 1871, p. 584.

signs have their different phonetic values attached. Now the various powers which the decipherers assigned to the same character are found assigned to it in the native syllabaries. Thus the character which by itself denotes a lion is variously used as *ur*, *liq*, *tas*; and a syllabary gives us the same sign explained *u-ri*, *li+iq*, and *ta-as*. The syllabaries also explain the origin of these polyphones. The cuneiform characters were primarily hieroglyphics (like the Chinese), and were invented by a Turanian population of Babylonia. These in their several dialects¹ assigned various names to the object denoted by the same hieroglyphic, and when the latter came to be used as a phonetic character, the various names became so many phonetic sounds. Every character, however, continued to be employed as an ideograph as well as phonetically; consequently when the Semitic Assyrians adopted the written system of their Turanian predecessors, they translated the Accadian word into their own language, and in some cases employed this (stripped of its grammatical inflexion) as a new phonetic value.

The tablets also give other evidence in favour of our system of interpretation. Some of them contain lists of Assyrian synonymes, and each synonyme is often a well-known Semitic word. Thus *bi-is-ru* (𐎠𐎢𐎺) is equated with *se-ru* (𐎶𐎺), and *si-ru* (𐎶𐎺𐎠) with *su-u-ru* (𐎶𐎺𐎠).

¹ Berosus ap. Syncelli Chron. p. 28:—*ἐν δὲ τῇ Βαβυλωνί καὶ πλεῖστος ἀνθρώπων γενέσθαι ἄλλοθενῶν κατοικησάντων τῆν Χαλδαίαν.*