

A Study of the Monetary Word 'BLṬT' in Ancient South Arabian Inscriptions in the Light of Old Mesopotamian Texts

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Abstract

The monetary term "blṭt" is frequently found in Ancient South Arabian Inscriptions (ASAI), both monumental and minuscule. However, the epigraphic data does not provide us with sufficient information to attribute the term to its possible origins. Therefore, it is not an easy task to deal only with Ancient South Arabian, especially because the Old Mesopotamian cuneiform archives are paradigmatic for analyzing the meaning and determining the origin of the term in question. This paper discusses the word "blṭt" as one of the monetary terms in Ancient South Arabian Inscriptions in the light of Akkadian (Babylonian and Assyrian) texts. It deals also with the different views of scholars on the origin, signs, and derivations of the word, because linguistic clues to the word are still odd. Another mysterious issue related to the word is the way in which it was transferred to Ancient South Arabian languages and its different derivations.

Keywords: Blṭt, Coins, Inscriptions, Ancient South Arabian, Akkadian, Assyrian

Introduction

The term "blṭt" has been previously investigated by a number of authors. The first reference to the word as a monetary term was by Irvine (1964). The term was recorded next by Beeston (1994) among other foreign words. The third mention was by Bron and Lemaire (1995). After that, it was studied by Stein (2010a) and by Frantsouzoff (2016). These previous studies were brief and ignored its Semitic origin. It may be suggested that the term in question was a loanword either from Akkadian, or perhaps from Aramaic. It was used in commercial texts as "credit item" and legal texts as "coming to life", and was subsequently transmitted to Ancient South Arabian as "blṭm".

The earliest record of the word "blṭt" in Ancient South Arabian inscriptions can be dated back to the Middle Sabaean period (third century B.C. – third century A.D.). The documents that record the emphatic letter 𐩧 (*t*) is linked to the coin known as "blṭt", that is attested in some wooden Ancient South Arabian inscriptions. The Sabaean coins known as "blṭt" were found in the al-Jawf area in the north of Yemen. They were dated to the period between 380 and 350 B.C. (Huth 2010: 89).

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The word "*bltt*" referring to a coin is recorded in more than twenty Sabaeen monumental *musnad* inscriptions, and more than twenty eight minuscule Sabaeen Zabour inscriptions⁽¹⁾, and two Minaean minuscule inscriptions (Stein 2010a, 317; Stein 2010b: 721; AHS 29/1, 30/1, 37/1), and recently in two Sabaeen and one Minaean minuscule inscriptions (Faḳ'as 6, 18, 5).

It was often recorded with adjectives describing some type of coins, such as *rdym* "complete, good coin" (CIH 73/ 9) and *mš'm* "fresh-minted, newly issued" (CIH 376/4) and *n'mt* "full value" (Ja 2855).

The frequent appearance of the term in Ancient South Arabian and Old Mesopotamian texts show the deep relationship between the inhabitants of those two cultures. This is due to the long-term historical and commercial relations with each other (see below).

Historical Background

The Sabaeans were mentioned in the inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.) during his campaign as showing signs of submission such as: bringing gold, silver, camels, all kinds of herbs, all kinds of spices as their tribute [they brought before] with one accord, [and kissed my feet] (Luckenbill 1926/1968, I, Nos. 799, 818; Klengel 1989: 461).

The Assyrian annals refer to the names of two Sabaeen rulers: It'amra in the reign of Sargon II (724-705 B.C.), and Karibi-ilu who was mentioned in cuneiform documents dated to 685 B.C. in the reign of Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.). The inscription dealt with celebrating laying the foundation of the Akitu temple of the New Year's feast in which Sennacherib received precious stones and herbs (Luckenbill 1927/1975, II, No. 440).⁽²⁾

It has been suggested that the Assyrian name "It'amra" in the inscription from the reign of Sargon II (Luckenbill 1927/1975, II, No. 18) can be identified as the Sabaeen ruler / king "Yt' mr byn / bn/ smh'ly / mkrb Sb'" who fortified a part of Ma'rib city (Garbini MM 1973: 1-2). The name "Karibi-ilu" is identified as the Sabaeen ruler / king "krb'l/ Wtr/ bn/ Dmr'ly/ mkrb/ Sb'". He was the most illustrious leader bearing this name, and one of the most powerful and important leaders of Saba', mainly, in its early history (Wissmann 1982: 147-149), and was recorded in (RES 3945)⁽³⁾ the so-called victory inscription. Both of the kings were recorded in other Sabaic inscriptions (for examples see Ja 541/ 1-2; MAFRAY-ad-Durayb 3/ 1-2 in csai).

The identification of "It'amra" as the Sabaeen ruler / king "Yt' mr byn / bn/ smh'ly / mkrb Sb'" stood until Iwona Gajda's study in 2003 presented another

(1)The term "Zabūr" refers to the Sabaeen wooden inscriptions.

(2) For more details see Grayson and Novonty 2014, Nos. 168, 103-108). Both of the Sabaeen rulers ruled in a late period of the eighth and the beginning of the seventh centuries B.C. (Ismā'il 2005: 55).

(3) The inscription was found in the "Imqḥ" Almaḳah temple in Sirwāḥ. The inscription recorded his successful wars in southern Arabia which were carried out to improve the water supply in the region (for a translation and further literature see W. Müller 1985; csai).

hypothesis. It focuses on the Mukarrib Saba' Yatha' amar Watar bin Yakrubmalik attested in the inscription (Autel AO 31929) who was to be set before Karib'il and might be a better candidate than "It'amra the Sabaeen" who ruled at the time of Sargon (Caubet and Gajda 2003: 1237-1238; see Nebes 2007: 30). This Mukarrib is also named in the inscription (DAI Şirwāḥ 2005–50).

The dating of Karib'il's reign could be established by identifying him with "Karibi-ilu king of Saba'" mentioned in an inscription of King Sennacherib (689 B.C.). The Assyrian inscription can be placed any time during the reign of Karib'il Watar. His reign is, therefore, indefinite in a period close to 689 B.C. (Caubet and Gajda 2003: 1224; Potts 2010: 37). However, the identification with Karib'il-Watar is still in doubt (see for example: de Maigret and Robin 1989: 263; Potts 2003).

"It'amra" together with "Samsi", the queen of Arabia, had been named in the Assyrian sources in a tribute context. They sent a tribute to Sargon II in 715 B.C. in the seventh year of his reign (Byrne 2003: 12-13; Elayi 2017: 80, 196-197, 277). They were also mentioned in the annals of Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C) in the ninth year of his reign. Because Samsi violated the oath of Shamash, she was defeated by Tiglath-Pileser III at mount Saqurri, possibly on the border of the Haurān region "Jebel a-Drūz" (Luckenbill 1926/1968, I, No. 778, see Nos. 817, 818; Potts 1988: 129).

Assyrian sources show another relation with Arabs: the Assyrian campaigns against the Arabs during Aššurbanipal's reign (668-627 B.C). The event named Yauta' son of Ḥaza'el king of Qedar who revolted against Esarhaddon's son, Aššurbanipal III, the king of the Neo-Assyrians, after a peace agreement with Esarhaddon (680-669 B.C.); Aššurbanipal defeated him. The same sources mentioned Abiyate' as submitting to Aššurbanipal, and he was given kingship over the Qedarites in place of Yauta'. He was required to pay more tribute such as "10 minas of gold, 1000 semi-precious stones, 50 camels and 1000 leather containers of aromatics" (Gerardi 1992: 71-73; Potts 2011: 89; according to Abiyate' see also Reed 2018: 173).

Trade Background

Commercial relations between Ancient South Arabia and Mesopotamia go back to as early as the beginning of the first millennium B.C. The Akkadian texts reveal active commercial relations with the Arabian Peninsula. The city of Gerrha, located on the Arabian Gulf, was one of the most famous commercial centers in the world in the third century B.C. This also emphasizes the significance of the Arabian Gulf in commerce and the relations between Southern Arabia and Mesopotamia (Al-Hāšimī 1985: 201-202, 212).

The Assyrian inscription from Suḥu cited a trade caravan specialized in selling gold and incense. This clearly showed the direction of trade from south to north Arabia along the so-called "incense route", from Saba' to the Levant and across (via Dūmah) to Mesopotamia (Kitchen 1994: 119; Byrne 2003: 14). The caravan trade started from Ḥaḍramaut passed through Arabia and ended at the

Mediterranean or in upper Mesopotamia. Along its way the caravan passed by South Arabian metropolises such as Qana', modern Bi'r 'Alī (Maraqten 1996: 227).

This has also been noted by Liverani (1992) and Potts (2003, 2011) in reference to the publication of a new cuneiform text from Sur Jar'a, in the Anah district of western Iraq from the middle eighth century B.C. The text was written by Ninurta-kudurri-usur, the governor of Suḥu⁽⁴⁾ and Mari. The inscription provides us with the earliest and clearest information about the South-Arabian caravan trade in Mesopotamia. It described the caravan trade in the Sur Jar'a which likely brought goods from Saba' to the area of Suḥu and Mari, and talked about a trade caravan coming from Sheba via Teimā' that was plundered by Suḥu troops (Liverani 1992: 111-115; Potts 2003: 199-201; Potts 2011: 88).

People from Teimā' (LÚte-ma-'a-a-a) and Sheba (LÚša-ba-'a-a-a), whose abode is far-away, whose messenger did not come to my presence, and who did not advance up to my presence: a caravan of theirs approached to the Martu-well and the Halatum-well, and (even) beyond, and entered the city of Hidanu. I got the news at noon in Kar-Apladad, I harnessed my yoke, in the night I crossed over the river, and on the next day before noon I reached Azlanu. Three days I remained in Azlanu, and on the 3rd day arrived. 100 of them I took alive, and 200 of their dromedaries with their loads: purple-wool, 'road'-wool, iron, and alabaster, all of their consignments I took away. A great booty I plundered and I took it inside Suḥu (Cavigneaux and Ismail 1990: 27-38 apud Liverani 1992: 111-112; See Potts 2003: 199-200; Kofoed 2005: 180-182).

In the first half of the first millennium B.C. the Assyrian sources recorded Sabaean camel caravans composed of 200 camels (Maraqten 1996: 215), as involved in the international trade of aromatic materials i.e. frankincense and myrrh. It had a role in monopolizing trade routes to Mesopotamia among other countries. The caravans did not only return with goods, but brought culture as well (Liverani 1992: 111-113).

The cultural influence was also clearly shown in the use of the word *mkr* to identify a trader in Sabaean (Beeston et al 1982: 85) as a loanword from Assyrian *makāru* B "to do business, to use (silver, etc.) in business transactions" (CAD, vol. 10, M part 1: 126-127). Assyrian during the mid-eighth century B.C., in the inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C) referred to the male dromedary as ANŠE.A.AB.BA or *ibilē*, the she-camel as SAL/MUNUS.ANŠE a-na-qa-a-te, and their young as ANŠE ba-ak-ka-ri that occurred after receiving the tribute from cities, peoples and tribes in Arabia, such as the Sabaean Tayma. That technical terminology was used instead of the Indo-Iranian lexeme loanword *udru* "camel / dromedary / Bactrian camel" in Akkadian, which first appeared on the broken obelisk (eleventh century B.C.) (Al-Zaidi 2017: 14).

(4)In the middle Euphrates valley, downstream from the present Syro-Iraqi border.

During the sixth century B.C, a new phase of commercial activity was observed in Ancient South Arabia as Minaean kings sent their trade caravans to Babylonia and Assyria (Potts 2010: 37). That could be offered as further testimony to relations between the two cultures.

Some South Arabian inscriptions, Minaean inscriptions (RES 3022; see also RES 2271/ 4-4; 2939) from Yṯl modern Barāqish, southern Jawf fixed the trade activity with Assyria:

1. 'mšdq/ bn/ Ḥm'tt/ d-yf'n/ w-s'd/ bn/ 'lg/ d-Dfgn/ kbry/ Mšrn/ w-M'n/
Mšrn ('sd) Mšr/ w-rtkl/ b-(')mh-smn/ Mšr/ w-'s²r/

'mšdq son of Ḥm'tt of (the tribe/clan) Yf'n and s'd son of 'lg of (the tribe/clan) Dfgn two Kabirs (officers) of Mšrn and Ma'in/Mšrn who traded together with them, in Egypt and Assyria.

"Bltt" in Akkadian Texts

Tracing the long history of the term indicates that the word *bltt* might have had its roots in Mesopotamia. The word was already recorded in Babylonian texts related to agriculture. Then it was transferred from Mesopotamia to South Arabia through mutual historical and cultural relations. In addition to this, the Babylonian king Nabonidus lived in Taymā' for about ten years. Also, many cities in South Arabia were located on the caravan spice road. It could be also assumed that the word *bltt* came from Mesopotamia to South Arabia through Aramaic, since both Aramaic and Sabaic have similar linguistic features, and the appearance of the Aramaeans in Mesopotamia can be dated back to the second millennium B.C. (Kottsieper and Stein 2014: 81, 82).

The trilateral Akkadian root "*b-l-t*" had various ranges of meaning, and is found in a number of Mesopotamian commercial and legal texts related to promising a vow. The legal texts contained the verb "*balātum*", with the basic stem means "coming to life" (Veenhof 1987: 46; CAD, vol. 2, B: 52). The following translation shows the basic meaning:

A: 9ff: "From the 1 talent 30 minas of silver, for which E has made out the bond of S, the tin and textiles from *ḥaḥḥum*, which E had included in those of his bond, that merchandise from *ḥaḥḥum* will be deducted as one brings it in. The merchandise then will belong to E. *As for the rest of the silver (debt), as soon as he has given it to him, there will be deducted tin from tin, copper from copper, textiles from textiles, gold from gold, from the 1 talent 30 minas of silver, whereupon E will give S his bond...in order to "kill" it*".

B: 5 ff: "We have settled the case. *As for the tablet of 1 talent 30 minas 3 shekels of silver, being the debt of S, the silver "came to life" and the tablet, consequently, "died".Kaspum iblaṭma tuppum imūt* (Veenhof 1987: 46).

The term "*balātum*" is also used to qualify a purchase or sale (Veenhof 1987:

51) in commercial activities and means "credit item" (CAD, vol. 2, B: 52): Kurub-Ištar asks his superiors to send him silver, for 'here I have discovered a buy *šabalāṭia* worth 10 or 15 minas of silver and I have borrowed silver at interest to be able to make the purchase' (TC 2, 22: 26–31), "*balluṭum*" means "made available to, counted as a credit for" the person involved, and the phrase "*balluṭakkumma*" means "it now counts as my credit" (BIN 4, 199: 1-8; see CAD, vol. 2, B: 52, no. 9), "deposited a certain amount of money", makes more sense. "*ib-la-aṭ-ma*" in an Old Assyrian context "*tuppum x kaspim ... kaspum ib-la-aṭ-ma tuppum imūt*" means "as the tablet concerning x silver, the silver became a credit item and the tablet worthless" (CAD, vol. 2, B: 58, no.4) and *ba-la-a-ṭim*: "*ištu ūmim ša bēlī ba-la-a-ṭim ūṣū šamū kajān zunnū mādu*" means "ever since my lord left on the journey for supplies / provision, the rainy season has set in and the rain are frequent" (CAD, vol. 2, B: 52, 4a).

Otherwise, the word "*bulluṭu*" equals one mina of silver, which was used as a means of payment and as a standard of value. In legal / judicial documents there was a term "heated gold", using an adjective to specify the quality of "*bulluṭu*". It was attested in penalty clauses that stipulate that whoever breaks the contract has to pay a certain sum of heated gold usually to god, here in favor of Issār of Arabail (Radner 1999: 133, 137, 153). Another use of "*bulluṭu*" shows the prices for male persons in silver equaling 63 shekels (Müller 2004: 192).

We can possibly rely on the content of the trilateral root *b-l-ṭ* mentioned in Akkadian idiomatic to understand the same expression in South Arabia with the minuscule / *Zabūr* word recorded in an economic context. Therefore, sending money was used in a context where the correspondent supports the recipients with money, therefore the sender props them up:

[*lmnyt/ wklbt/ wzdlt /⁵mn/ tmlt /wly/ lthywn/ w'n/ lkm/ mšt/ mkb/ blṭn/ rḥbt/ bmyrn*]

For Mnyt and Klbt and Zdlt in the presence of Tmlt, the protected person, in favor to live, and I am for you, I sent / drove *mkb* "weight-pieces / value" of money called "*blṭn*" that is enough to cereal crops (Faq'as 6/1-2).

In Middle Assyrian the word "*bulluṭum*" was used in legal contexts to mean "to guess / assess the value of" or "consider assets and credit balance", which shows use of the word in financial contexts, and refers to, somewhat, the balancing of items as administrative procedure and payments (Veenhof 1987: 49-51).

The term *ina pa-la-aṭuttēršu* meaning "he returns (the silver borrowed), in the sense of payment of a loan" was used in Middle Babylonian texts (CAD, vol. 2, B: 51).

(5) Faq'as believed that the term (*wly*) consisted of *w-*: conjunctive, *l-*: preposition and *y-*: singular first personal pronoun, basing his argument on the expression [*w'n lkm*], i.e. "I am for you". This appeared in the second line of the inscription. The context here is appropriate, and we consider it to be a word derived from the root *w- l-y* meaning "protected person, client of clan" (Beeston et al. 1982: 160).

In the context of promising vows, the Old Babylonian texts used the word in question in the phrase *dannūtu šalmūtu bal-[tu-tu]* to refer to the meaning of "loyalty by offering a vow" (CAD, vol. 2, B: 68-69; Veenhof 1987: 55, 56). In legal texts the expression *la ba-laṭ-su iqbīma zi-tim-šu ikkisu* was used to mean "to condemn him to death and they cut his throat" (CAD, vol. 2, B: 51). In the course of discussions about the Akkadian root *b-l-ṭ* related to the meaning "health and life" in a wide sense, a recent study by Aster and Berkovitz adopts the meaning of the CAD (vol. 2, B: 52-53) in a technical legal sense of remitting a punishment as "pardon" not in its general meaning (2018: 150; ft. 2). The texts are from the archive of Neo-Assyrian Royal inscriptions.

Concerning the attribution of the word to an Akkadian origin, we would like to refer to the word "*bōlēṭ*" recorded in Talmudic and Aramaic texts to mean "stamp, impression" and in this sense related to the word *blṭ*, the core of our study, in meaning and derivations (see Beeston 1937: 12; Irvine 1964: 20). "*bōlēṭ*" appeared in the period between the fourth century and first century B.C. (Post-Biblical Hebrew) to mean "production, clear, remarkable" (Klein 1987: 66). It should be noted here that the French word "*bulletin*" and the Italian word "*balletino*" meaning "cash receipt, seal, papers certified with a seal" (Klein 1987:66) might have originated from the Semitic root "*b-l-ṭ*".

It is useful to consider other technical terms such as "*biltu*" "tax payable to the king or other authority" in the inscriptions of Old Assyria and Old Babylon (CAD, vol. 2, B: 229, 232; see Rosenthal 1961 (1983): 57-58, no. 188; Blau 1970: 49, ft. 12). In Neo-Assyrian "*biltu ina dannite*" "heavy standard talent" is named in administrative texts (Fales 1996: 14), which makes sense of "*blt*", with normal *t*, and was used in Official Aramaic to mean: "type of taxes", which also parallel "*blh*"₂ (Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1955: 166, 167), otherwise "*belō*" (see Blau 1970: 49, ft. 12). Therefore, we can compare here both the Akkadian "*biltu*" and the Aramaic word "*blt*" with "*bltt*", which occurred in Sabaeen minuscule inscriptions as a kind of interchange meaning "coin" (X. BSB 59/ 1 in Stein 2010b: 228). Semantically, both "*biltu*" and "*blt*" have the same typology as South Arabian "*blṭ*". But Stein compared this word to that of Ge'ez "*ballata*" which means "cut meat into small pieces", and in this way implies that it was used for a coin. This gives the meaning of "half, small piece". It is similar to Sabaeen coins (Stein 2010a: 317).

The Concept of "*BLṬ*" in Ancient South Arabian Languages

"*Blṭ*" was described by Beeston (1994: 41) as "pallant (a coin)". His opinion was based on the fact that the earliest South Arabian coins were imitations of Athenian coins bearing the head of Pallas-Athene. Bron and Lemaire (1995), and Stein (2010a) presented the etymology and the history of the word "*bltt*" in Ancient South Arabian Inscriptions referring to a coin. They used "prominent, cut in relief" or "flat piece" to refer to the context on some coins, otherwise it shows a monetary system, since coins have some prominent feature like the wreath or crown of the head.

Some other scholars reject this assumption since no coins from Ancient South Arabia with the word "*blt*" have been recovered. They also reject the idea that it came from the Greek word Παλλάς⁽⁶⁾ which occurred on some Greek coins. In fact, it occurred only one time in a poem by Eubullus in the fourth century B.C. In addition, it is not related to the Arabic word "*balāt*"⁽⁷⁾ which comes originally from Greek πλατεία (Bron and Lemaire 1995:54-55; Stein 2010a: 318).

However, even though the etymology of this term is still unclear despite many hypotheses (see Frantsouzoff 2016: 87), the discovery of hundreds of wooden inscriptions gives us a slightly clearer picture.

In the light of those wooden inscriptions, Stein thinks that the word "*blt*" did not appear in the early Sabaeen period but was a part of the monetary system in the Middle Sabaeen period. He says that it equals three times the unit *nisf* "half" which had the symbol "N". Therefore, it has the value of three metal coins, i.e. a *tridrachm*. He also believes that the word "*blt*" could not have originated from Semitic languages. According to him it has no characteristics of Sabaeen and its occurrence in other Semitic languages is still mysterious. Thus, he thinks this word might have been borrowed from foreign languages (Stein 2010a: 307-318).

According to Irvine, the word "*blt*" was frequently used as a common word for coins in South Arabia. It was a standard denomination coin similar to the Latin "*nummus*" (1964: 22-24; ft. 3).

The Context of the Word "*BLT*" in South Arabian Inscriptions

1. Economic Context

The Ancient South Arabian inscriptions neither state nor provide the exact purchase price that would allow us to estimate the value of "*blt*". The inscriptions only mention the total amount of the price including profit: [*kl/blt/ml' w-rbh*] (Höfner 1981: 12, no GL 1200/7; Bron 1992: 57). Some inscriptions state the value of the goods sold in return for the unit "*blt*" (Bron and Lemaire 1995: 57; see Stein 2004: 336).

Some of the inscriptions use this word in agricultural contexts. For example, the coin "*bltm*" was used to identify the value of the wheat harvest promised to them by god from alluvial valley: [*šfthmw/ dbhw/ kwn/ myrn/ tmn/ brm/ bdhbn/*

(6) Some scholars have said that the word came via Phoenician and Greek traders and it is close to the Greek word Παλλάς "*Pallades*" (see Irvine 1964: 22-23; Biella 1982: 43-44; Rykmans, Müller and Abdallah 1994: 45). This view is based on the similarity of Sabaeen "*b*" and "*t*" to Greek π and δ (Jamme 1976: 128).

(7) The word *blt* in Ancient South Arabian inscriptions has been compared to the word *zalaṭa*, still in use today in Yemen (Barakāt 2003: 3027). A *zalaṭa* is a coin equaling one hundredth of a Yemeni Riyal. There are also some Yemeni expressions used in this regard like: *la tiglagish min zalaṭ* "don't bother yourself to pay money". A second expression "*niḡḡat 'alaika-z-zalaṭ*" means "your money was spent", and *ṣāhibuzalaṭ* is another expression meaning "a rich person" (Piamenta 1990: 204). A. Jamme connected the word *blt* to *balāt* in Arabic (1976:132). The word *ḥajar* was inscribed on a bronze mass used as a weight in Old South Arabia (Beeston et al. 1982: CIH 935, 67).

bbltm/ rdy] (CIH 73/7-9). The word "*blt*" was used to refer to a certain payment given in return for cultivation of certain crops in the side of the valley gifted to people by the god *lmqh* to *b'ly*: [*blt/ 'hdy/ 'b'ly/ wyhfr/ 'bn/ drh' l/ lhlk' mr/ bn/ 'nmtn/ whm' tt/ 'bd/ drh' l/ bn/ yd' 'b/ b'rd/ w'brt/ wdwwdt/ whb/ 'lmqh/ 'b'ly*] (CIH 376/ 4-8).⁽⁸⁾

It was also used in an inscription presenting a financial bond for a woman: [...*gdjd/ bt/ bn/ gwtm/ fqhm/ wtt/ bltn/ rdy..*] (Fa^cas 18/1-2), a financial receipt given in return for "*bnm*" a kind of product of a tree-plant such as storax perfume (frankincense): [*s'hdtk/ s'knm/ fg'nk/ bn/ str/ k'rhym/ dt/ s'k/ bfs' / f'rh/ s'k/ hn/ s'hdtk/ myr/ fdhn/ bkmmhw/ ymtr/ bnm/ bbltn*]⁽⁹⁾ (Fa^cas 5/2-4), and in the context of a pledge mentions a coin "*bltn*" in place of barley: [*whn/ t' d/ nmyr/ 'rb/ 'srt/ s'lt' / 'w/ rhn/ ws'lt' / bltn*]⁽¹⁰⁾ (Fa^cas 6/5-6).

In the same context "coin" was used in return for the agricultural crop (YM 11743). The word was also used in a document for estimating the price of a piece of a land (RES 4756/3) and settling the account of the debt, and estimating the amount of property tax (RES 4772), and as a payment for those having the same authority-status as the *qayls / member of the leading clan in the tribe* in return for accomplishing a mission. It was also mentioned in paying a ransom (Ja 2855; Ghul-Marib 2/3-5).

The word "*blt*" is used in declarations for paying debt in a document:

[1. *dkr/ zbym/ f'f'n/ kr' / kwhbyhw/ ws' b'nhw/ 2. wwfyhnhw/ 's'w' .../ 3. kl/ blt/ b' lmm/ wsnqtm/ dml' h/ slty/ 4. bltm/ d/ rdy*], \

1. The declaration of *Zbym/ F'f'n* that indeed occurred when he offered and paid over money 2. and fulfilled an obligation for *'s'w'* 3. every currency of *bltm* under the authority of a binding / constraining document, having thirty *bltm* / good-complete coin (Fa 30).

2. Religious Context

This word is found in three religious texts. In one of the texts the word was used to refer to fining someone who committed sacrilege or performed impiety and imposing on a guilty person accused of bad-mouthing in a holy place when the goddess was exalted (Nāmī 74; Beeston 1952: 146-147). In another text, the word "*bltm*" was used for a person who was caught using a holy pool belonging to the god "*nwšm*" (Robin and Ryckmans 1978: 45-46; Mazzini 2005: 95-123; Stein 2010a: 304). The third text referred to a statue made of silver equaling seven

(8) This inscription is from the city of Širwāh and dated to 200 B.C. (Irvine 1964: 19).

(9) These lines carry the sense of writing two financial documents-cheques in favor of "*bnm*" a kind of crop or other kind of tree-plant, mentioning the kind of coins "*blt*" as the price of the crops.

(10) When you return, we sold-measured (as value of) fourteen pieces of coins *s'lt'* of the kind of *bltn*, or give an equivalent amount of guarantee ransom accepted as an equivalent of that to be as a guarantee, otherwise (when you return we give you the price of the food which equals fourteen pieces of coins *bltn*).

hundred "*bltm*" dedicated to the god "*'lmqh*" (Ja 624/4-5).

Evidences of "*BLTT*" in South Arabian Inscriptions

First: It was used as a coin of unspecified value in the following inscriptions:

– Inscription no. 1: [12. *wḏy 's^lyn/ bhw/ qnym* 13. *f'w/ ḏydrmnhw/ w'w/ yḥdtn* 14. *qdmn/ lyhnkrn/ ḥms^l/ bltm* 15. *l'ḥt/ drm⁽¹¹⁾*] (RoRy1).

[12. Anyone who brought the live stocks into it "the pool" 13. or left "the live stocks" in it 14. in the following days, one should be punished with a fine equaling five "*bltm*" 15. for "each" occasion].

– Inscription no. 2: [*wl/ y'ḏbn/ šry/ bltm*] (Nāmī 74/13-14).

[To impose a fine of twenty pieces "of the coin *blt*".]

– Inscription no. 3: [4. *ḥqny/ 'lmqh/ ṭhwnb l'wm/ šlmn* 5. *ḏṣrfn/ ḏmdlthw/ s^lb' m'nm/ bltm*] (Ja 624).

[4. He offered to the god '*lmqh/ ṭhwn* the master of the temple, a statue which was made of silver of the value of "equaling" seven hundred *bltm*].

– Inscription no. 4: [5. *ymtr/ bnm/ bblttn*] (Faḡ 'as 5 =Y 19410).

[5. he buys the bushel of storax perfume (frankincense) by two pieces of the coin "*blt*".]

– Inscription no. 5⁽¹²⁾: [...(*b*)' *s^l/ blt/ ...*] (Gnoli 13/ 2).

[...(*b*)' *s^l* coin *blt/ ...*].

– Inscription no. 6: [5. *wbhn/ t'd/ 'wrd/ qnt/ š'r/ whn/ t'd/ nmyr/ 6. 'rb' / 'šrt/ s^ll't' 'w/ rhn/ ws^ll't/ bltn*] (Faḡ 'as 6).

[5. when you return, bring a bushel of barley and when you return, we will sell you "give you" food 6. in the value price of fourteen "*sl't*" (coin) or mortgage or the coin of "*blt*".]

Second: "*Blt*" appears as a coin described with the words "*rdym*", "*ḥy'lym*", "*n'mtm*" and "*wrq*".

– Inscription no. 1: [1. *ḏkr/ zbym/ f'f'n/ kr' / kwhbyhw/ ws^lb'nhw/ 2. wwfyhnhw/ 's^lw' / ḏy/ ḏkr/ wyh'n/ bn/ šrwḥ/ 'bdy/ 3. 'nnn/ ḏ/ ḏr'n/ kl/ blt/ b'lmn/ wšnqtm/ ḏml'h/ šlty/ 4. bltm/ ḏ/ rdym*] (Fa 30).

[1. Rumor / declaration of *Zbym f'f'n* indeed, when he offered and paid him money 2. and paid a debt / fulfilled an obligation of '*s^lw*' of the family *Yḏkr*, and *Yh'n* from *Širwāḥ* the two slaves 3. of '*nnn* of the family *ḏr'n* every 4. *bltm* / good-complete coin, by signature and binding / constraining document paid in full the

(11) The inscription talks about a rule preventing some groups of people such as people of *Drm* and *Mrt* and tribe of *Mdrn*, whether those men who carrying weapons or not, and their subjects, from building wall-stones around the pool that belongs to the god "*Nšwn*", and preventing them from watering the livestock or getting washed. Anyone who watered the cows or the asses or sheep, should scarify male-livestock to the god "*T'lb*", and scarify female-livestock to the god "*Nšwn*". And anyone who rejects the term of watering the livestock, he will buy from the god "*Nšwn*". And who gets washed in the pool, he will get laid down five times in the place. And whoever brings the livestock or leaves them, or occurred the deed in the future, he will pay a fine of five coins of "*blt*" each time.

(12) It is a shard of a Minaean inscription

thirty good-complete coins of *bltm*.

– Inscription no. 2: [8-9. *Myrn/ t̄mn/ brm/ d̄dhbn/ bblttm/ rdym*] (CIH 73). [8-9. selling a unit of measurement for wheat produced in the field of alluvial valley by currency good-complete coin *blttm*].

– Inscription no. 3: [4. *bltm/ rdym/ šbbm/ rmym*] (RES 4772).

[4. Currency of good-complete coin *bltm* to be paid immediately].

– Inscription no. 4: [1. *tny/ blttn/ rdwym*] (YM 11743).⁽¹³⁾

[1. Two good-complete pieces of coins].

– Inscription no. 5: [14. .../ *gdgd/ bt/ ġwtm/ fqhm/ wt̄ny/ blttn/ rd̄y*] (Faq'as 18=YM 10969).⁽¹⁴⁾

[14. .../ *Gdgd* daughter of *Ġwtm*, half and two good-complete coin *bltt*].

– Inscription no. 6: [3-4. *lfm/ bltm/ mš' m/ hy' lty m/ blt*] (CIH 376).

[3-4. A thousand good-complete *Hy' lty m* coins].

– Inscription no. 7: [1. *whmd' / wšdq / 'bkrb / bn / yqdm' l / 2. bn / 'nnn / l'ly / st / 'qyn / šrwḥ' / 3. rb' / m' n / bltm / n' mtm*] (Ja 2855; Stein 2010a: 303).

[1. *Bkrb* son of *Yqdm' l* 2. son of *'nnn* paid and fulfilled a duty to the administrators of *Širwāḥ* 3. City four hundred good-complete pieces of coins *bltt*].

– Inscription no. 8: [*wrbḥ / 'ḥd / zhrm / dml' hw / t̄mn / m' n / wt̄ny / 'lf / bltm / wrq / s' twḥb*] (Bron 1981: 163).

[He won a certification / document of a thousand coins *bltm*, and the claimed eight pieces of silver].

Third: The adjective *RDYM* “good-complete coin” replaced the word *BLTM* in the following inscriptions:

– Inscription no. 1: [5-6. *šlmn / d / šrfn / d / mdlthw / 'l(f)n / rdym*] (Ja 608).

[5-6. A pure silver statue equal to a thousand pieces of good-complete coins *rdym*].

– Inscription no. 2: [4-6. *šlmn / d / šrfn / d / mdlthw / 'rb' / m' nm / w' ḥd / 'lfm / rdym*] (Ja 609).

[4-6. A pure silver statue equal to fourteen hundred and one thousand pieces of good-complete coins *rdym*].

– Inscription no. 3: [*'šry / rdym*] (Stein 2010a: 304, no. 24/ 10).

[Twenty pieces of good-complete coins *rdym*].

– Inscription no. 4: [9. *w' ntmw / 'lmkmw / k(l?) w* 10. *m̄l / dgrfm / h' / fmn / 'l / d̄ḥdg / s' b' y* 11. *bltm / klm / ftdyn / s' 'lm / whbkm' h* 12. *w / f' rhnn / dt / tfnwnn / wrqnt*] (Stein 2004, no. 129)⁽¹⁵⁾.

[9. yet you know all (that)! and it 10. is a parable of the (clan) *GRFM* that saying: no one leaves (unpaid) seventy 11. *blt* (-coins), since for paying a demand you have (already) spent it [... the money?].

Conclusion

The designation of "*BLTT*" related to a coinage term in Ancient South Arabia

(13) Zabūr inscription.

(14) Zabūr inscription.

(15) Zabūr Mon. script. Sab.

has added a new insight to our understanding of the etymology of South Arabian coinage. This study clearly shows a Mesopotamian influence on the terminology of Ancient South Arabian coinage in the commercial world.

Based on context, a few words for Ancient South Arabian coinage refer to a monetary system, although they have never appeared on actual coins. These words have contributed to our understanding of the monetary system in Ancient South Arabia. This study has identified one of these words "*BLTT*".

In every context where the word "*BLTT*" has been used, it was considered to refer to a monetary system. The word "*BLTT*" not only helps us understand the monetary system in Ancient South Arabia, but also reveals a lot about the influence of Mesopotamian culture on South Arabian coinage and the commercial relations between the two civilizations.

Unfortunately, the present study cannot give a precise dating of the coins, but by comparing the styles and standards of other ancient monetary systems, we can say that these coins were issued over a long period of time since the 4th century B.C. until the end of the Himyaritic reign in the 6th century AD, assuming that the term went back to a Mesopotamian origin.

Further study on coinage systems is needed to gain more accurate information, including exact dating and usage of words.

Abbreviations:

- ATHS 29, 30, 37: Maraqtan 2014
 Autel AO 31929: Caubet, A. and Gajda, I. 2003. Pp. 1225-1233.
 BIN 4, 199: 1-8: Veenhof 1987 ft. 37: 63; ft. 39
 CAD: The Assyrian Dictionary. The Oriental Institute, Chicago
 CIH: Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum, pars quarta, Inscriptions Himyariticas et Sabaeas Contines. 1900-1969
 csai: on line site of Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions
 DAI Şirwāḥ 2005–50: Nebes, N. 2016.
 Fa 30: Ryckmans 1952.
 Faq'as: Faq'as, A. 2013.
 Garbini MM 1973: Garbini, G. 1973.
 Ghul-Marib 2/3-5: Bron 1992.
 Gnoli 13: Gnoli 1993
 Ja 541: Jamme, A. 1955.
 Ja 608, 609, 624: Jamme, A. 1962.
 Ja 2855: Jamme, A. 1976.
 Nāmī 74: Nāmī 1943, no. 74
 RES: Répertoire d'Épigraphie Sémitique
 RoRy1: Robin and Ryckmans 1978.
 TC 2, 22: Veenhof, K. 1987. Pp. 26-31.
 YM 11743: Ryckmans, Müller and Abdallah 1994.

دراسة لفظة "ب ل ط ت" الدالة على النقود في النقوش العربية الجنوبية في ضوء نصوص ما بين النهرين القديمة

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ملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى مناقشة لفظة "ب ل ط ت" الدالة على النقد في النقوش العربية الجنوبية (نقوش المسند والزبور). ولكن بما أن المعلومات المستقاة من النصوص النقشية كانت غير كافية لتأصيل المفردة، إضافة إلى أنه ليس من السهل البحث في هذا من خلال النصوص العربية الجنوبية فقط، فقد نوقشت في ضوء ورودها في نصوص بلاد ما بين النهرين، ثم كيفية انتقالها إلى العربية الجنوبية، وكيفية اشتقاقها، ودلالاتها، واستخداماتها. كما يتناول البحث وجهات نظر الدارسين في تأصيلها واشتقاقها، سيما وأن النقاش في هذه المسألة لم يُحسم بعد.

الكلمات الدالة: ب ل ط ت، نقود، نقوش، العربية الجنوبية، الأكادية، الآشورية.

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