

The Term 'Coffin' in the Semitic Languages

DAVID MARCUS
Columbia University

It is curious that despite much material evidence for the existence and use of coffins in the ancient Near East terms for 'coffin' are poorly attested in the Semitic languages. While for some peoples (such as the Israelites) this fact can be explained by burial customs which did not utilize coffins, for others (such as the Babylonians and Assyrians) the lack of terminology is most surprising. It is the intention of this paper to analyze terms for 'coffin' in Akkadian, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic. As is to be expected, it will be seen that in many of these languages terms for coffins derive from words for boxes.¹ This investigation will show once again the importance of employing the inductive as opposed to the etymological method in lexical studies.²

1. Akkadian

The word for 'coffin' in Akkadian is *arānu*. It occurs once in a short funerary inscription in which an unnamed Assyrian king³ describes the burial of his father: *aban arānu ašar tašlilt[i]*⁴ *ina erî dannî bābša aknukma udannina šipassa*⁵ *unūt hurāši kaspi mimma târsit*⁶ *kimahhi simat bēlūtīšu ša irammu maḥar dŠamaš ukallimma itti abi bānīya ana kimahhi aškun* "As regards the stone coffin, I sealed its opening at the lid with heavy copper and made the

1 Cf. the similar semantic development in Greek *larnax*, Latin *arca*, and English 'coffin' <Greek *kopbīnus* 'basket'.

2 For a classic formulation of this approach, see M. Held, *JAOS* 79 (1959), 169–76.

3 Either Esarhaddon or Ashurbanipal according to von Soden, *ZA* 43 (1936), 254.

4 From *šullulu* 'to roof' (von Soden, *ZA* 43 [1936], 255, n. 2; Labat, *Royaume*, 119; Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 244) rather than 'resting place' from *šalālu* 'to be at rest' (Meissner, *WZKM* 12 [1898], 62; Ebeling, *TuL*, 57; *CAD* A², 231). Cf. *gušūrē burāši tašlilti ekallāte unassih* "I tore up the juniper wood beams, the roofing of the palaces," *TCL* 3: 259 (Sargon).

5 For *šipassu* 'tag', see Kraus, *AbB* 1, 105:10–12 *pisanna ina kunukkika kunuk u šipassika idi* "Seal the basket with your seal and put your clay tags on it." Cf. *CAD* K, 137.

6 From *ersû* 'ready'; cf. *peti kimahhu ersû šukānū'a* "My grave is open, my finery already prepared," *BWL* 46:114 (Ludlul).

tags secure. I exhibited before Shamash, and placed with my real father in the tomb, the gold and silver equipment, whatever is prepared for a tomb, (and) his lordly insignia which he loved."⁷

Curiously enough this passage represents the only extant Akkadian text in which a word for coffin or sarcophagus is found. This fact is most remarkable considering the enormous amount of material evidence we possess for the existence and use of coffins in Mesopotamia. Excavations from numerous areas, and nearly all periods, have brought to light evidence not only for burial in reed mats, sherds, jars, urns, double-urns, etc., but also indicating that many different types of actual coffins were in use.⁸ These could be made of wicker-work, terra cotta, wood and occasionally stone or bronze, and had a variety of shapes, rectangular, oval, tub, trough, slipper, anthropoidal, etc.⁹ In the light of so much archaeological evidence it is thus incredible that only one text exists in the literature with a specific reference to a coffin.

It might be thought that analysis of contexts in which the verb *qebēru* 'to bury' occurs would yield terms for burial receptacles. Unfortunately, *qebēru* is only found in connection with burial locations like the earth (*eršetu*,¹⁰ *qaqqaru*),¹¹ dust (*eperu*),¹² meadow (*raqqatu*),¹³ house (*bītu*),¹⁴ palace (*ēkallu*),¹⁵ tomb or grave (*kimahhu*),¹⁶ *qabru*,¹⁷ *naqbaru*,¹⁸ etc.) but not with any burial containers other than the reed mat (*burû*).¹⁹

A similar search on the extant funerary inscriptions shows that one term *kimahhu* appears in all of them.²⁰ Consequently it had previously been thought that this term was also used for coffin.²¹ But there are many reasons why this cannot be so:

7 Ebeling, *TuL*, 57–58:6–18.

8 An indication of the enormous wealth of the material can be seen from selected works such as (for Ashur) A. Haller, *Die Gräber und Gräfte von Assur*, WDOG 65 (Berlin, 1954); (for Babylon) O. Reuther, *Die Innenstadt von Babylon*, WDOG 47 (Leipzig, 1926), 151–265; (for Nippur) J. P. Peters, *Nippur* (N.Y., 1904), 214–34; (for Ur) C. L. Wolley, *The Royal Cemetery*, UE 2 (London & Philadelphia, 1934), Chap. V, 135f. The material has been concisely surveyed by E. Strommenger and B. Hrouda in *RLA* III/8 (Berlin, 1971), 581–610.

9 For excellent illustrations of all these types of coffins, see Reuther, *Die Innenstadt*, plates 62–64, 67–72, 78–83, 85–87.

10 E.g., Oppenheim, *Dream-book*, 327:71.

11 E.g., *AKA* 249:59.

12 E.g., *AOB* 1, 24, v:18–19.

13 E.g., King, *Chron.*, 52:6.

14 E.g., Tadmor, *Eretz Israel* 5 (1958), 154:9.

15 E.g., King, *Chron.*, 52:4, 14.

16 E.g., Scheil, *RA* 18 (1921), 20, 15:3.

17 E.g., *AOAT* 1, 6:81.

18 E.g., Postgate, *Neo-Assyrian Royal Grants*, 29:55–64.

19 E.g., Landsberger, *Date Palm*, 33.

20 A list of the extant funerary inscriptions can now be conveniently found in Borger, *Handbuch*, III (1975), 39, # 22.

21 Clay, *YOS* 1, 61:43; Delitzsch, *HWB*, 587; Dossin, *Syria* 20 (1939), 106:27–28; Langdon, "Babylonian Eschatology," in *Briggs Festschrift* (N. Y., 1911), 146; Leander, *Sumerischen Lehnwörter*, 12; Luckenbill, *ARAB* II:#1133–35; *OIP* 2, 85:9; 99:46.

(1) *kimahhu* is never used with a determinative, something which would surely be expected for such an item and is indeed the case with *arānu*.

(2) The meaning 'coffin' does not fit many of the passages in which it occurs. For example, one text mentions somebody purchasing a house with a *kimahhu* in it;²² other texts speak of someone making a *kimahhu* in his house,²³ or of a *kimahhu* being opened in a house.²⁴ These texts simply refer to the occasional Babylonian practice of having family tombs at the back of their houses which, upon the death of a family member, could be opened for use.²⁵ Furthermore, many ritual texts mention the employment of certain plants growing from a *kimahhu* where only a translation of 'grave' not 'coffin' makes sense.²⁶

(3) In the burial inscription of the unnamed Assyrian king discussed above, *kimahhu* is clearly distinct from *arānu*. In fact, the text indicates that the placement of the funerary paraphernalia in the *kimahhu* was only done after the *arānu* 'coffin' was sealed so that *kimahhu* can only mean a tomb here.

(4) A number of texts list the rations which are to be provided for the *kimahhu*'s of certain deceased individuals,²⁷ a further corroboration that *kimahhu* means 'tomb'.

(5) The term *kimahhu* is found on inscriptions found in tombs not on coffins. For example, an inscription of Sennacherib found on bricks in his mausoleum reads: *ēkal šalāli kimah tapšuhti šubat dārāti ša dSîn-aḥḥē-erība šar kiššati šar māt Aššur* "The palace of rest, tomb of repose, the grave of Sennacherib, king of the universe, king of Assyria."²⁸ The apposition of *kimahhu* with *ēkallu* and *šubtu* and the absence of a determinative clearly indicate that *kimahhu* refers to a tomb not a coffin. The occurrence of *ēkallu* written on an inscription cut on two sides of the basalt sarcophagus of Shamshi-Adad V (*ēkal dŠamši-Adad šar kiššati* etc.)²⁹ simply means 'property of', the common indication of royal ownership particularly in this period.³⁰

On the analogy of *arānu*, which is primarily a box,³¹ we might expect other terms for boxes to denote a coffin as well. This is especially so with the word *quppu* which has a similar semantic range to *arānu*.³² Unfortunately, neither *quppu* nor any of the other terms in

22 Johns, *ADD* 326:7.

23 E.g., Labat, *Calendrier*, 104, #41:1.

24 E.g., *CT* 38, 18:119.

25 Johns, *ADD*, 3.

26 E.g., *ašāgu ša ina muḥḥi kimahḥi ašū* "The (false) carob which grows on the top of a grave," *AMT* 99, 3:r. 15; see Held, *AS* 16 (1965), 397, n. 18.

27 Ebeling, *Stiftungen*, 19, i:9; iii:6-7 (Queen Esharhamat); Weidner, *Afo* 13, 214:18 (Ashurbanipal); Bottéro, *ARM* 7, 58:3-4 (The bride Ahatani); Dossin, *Syria* 20 (1939), 106:28 (Yahdunlim, son of the king).

28 *OIP* 2, 151, no. 14:1-4. Cf. the parallel inscription (no. 13) which reads *ēkal tapšuhti* for our *kimah tapšuhti*.

29 A. Haller, *Die Gräber und Gräfte von Assur*, *WVDOG* 65 (Berlin, 1954), 176.

30 Cf. *CAD E*, 60.

31 For examples, see *AHW.*, 65a and *CAD A*², 231.

32 E.g. *quppu* is also used as a cashbox. For references see A. L. Oppenheim, *JNES* 6 (1947), 116-20; and *AHW.*, 928.

Akkadian for boxes or chests³³ occur in contexts where a meaning 'coffin' might be deduced.

2. Ugaritic

There is as yet no clearly recognizable word for 'coffin' in Ugaritic. Words which occur in close association with the verb *qbr* 'to bury' are *mdgt*, *knk*, and *hrt*. Because the first two words, which occur in lines 146–47 of the epic of Aqhat, are uncertain epigraphically³⁴, any interpretation of them is just speculative.³⁵ However, *hrt* is quite clear and occurs five times³⁶ as, for example, in the phrase *abky waqbrnh aštn bhrt ilm arš* "I will weep and bury him, place him in a *hrt* of the netherworld gods."³⁷ The word *hrt* occurs in the Akkadian texts from Ugarit as *hīritu* which is glossed to *bītu*: *šanītam app[ūnāma] ana pānī š[ībūti] Arsuwanu [] ittaši bīt [] y] ana qadu eqlētišu qadu dunnīšu qadu gabbi mimmišu bīti/hī-ri-ti u eqlēti ša uhrāya*³⁸ *u ittadiššu ana nidni Dalaptum kallatišu* "Furthermore, Arsuwana has transferred³⁹ before witnesses the estate of [] together with his fields, together with his fort, together with everything (even) the graves and fields of destiny to Dalaptum, his daughter-in-law, as a gift."⁴⁰ The meaning 'grave' was first assigned to this word by Gordon who also observed that in another text involving a similar transfer of property⁴¹ one of the more regular words for grave, *qubūru*, also glosses *bītu*.⁴² Hence the phrase *bhrt ilm arš* should be translated "in the grave of the netherworld gods."⁴³

Because there does exist in Ugaritic a word *arn* meaning 'box',⁴⁴ on the analogy of the semantic development of both Akkadian *arānu* and Hebrew *ārôn* from 'box' to 'coffin'⁴⁵ it is reasonable to assume that this would also have been the term used to express 'coffin' in Ugaritic.

33 Conveniently listed in A. Salonen, *Die Hausgeräte der alten Mesopotamier* (Helsinki, 1965), 1:196–204.

34 See Herdner, *CTA* II, fig. 61, where the *m* of *mdgt*, and the *n* and *k* of *knk* are unclear.

35 Some scholars have attempted renditions of *mdgt* by 'grave/coffin' (Gordon, *UT*, #1426), 'dark place' (Aistleitner, *Wörterbuch*, #729; Driver, *CML*, 161), and of *knk* by 'jar/urn for burial' (Gordon, *UT*, #1268 reading *kn[kn]*), 'shroud' (Driver, *CML*, 63, 145 reading *knrt*).

36 I*AB 5:5–6; IAB 1:16–18; ID 111–12, 126–27, 140–41.

37 ID 140–41, cf. ID 111–12, 126–27.

38 Gordon's reading in *Syria* 33 (1956), 102. Cf. *uhr̄yt* 'destiny' in IID, 6:35, and Arabic *al-uh̄rā* 'the hereafter'.

39 For the idiom *našū-nadānu* 'to transfer (property)' in the Akkadian texts from Ugarit, see Speiser, *JAOS* 75 (1955), 157–61, and C. J. Labuschagne in *The M. A. Beek Festschrift* (Assen, 1974), 176–80.

40 *PRU* III, 52:11–21.

41 *Syria* 33, (1956), 102.

42 *PRU* III, 51–52:8, 18.

43 For literature on this phrase, see de Moor, *Seasonal Pattern*, 184.

44 *PRU* V:50:5 and see Appendix.

45 For Akkadian, see *supra*, and for Hebrew, see *infra*.

3. Phoenician

In Phoenician there are two words for coffin, *'m* and *hlt*. The word *'m* occurs in Byblian, Standard Phoenician, and Punic.⁴⁶ Like its cognates it is also employed as a box and is attested on the seventh century ivory chest from Ur: *'rn [š] n⁴⁷ mgn 'mtb'l bt pt's 'mt '[dnn]*⁴⁸ *mtt l'štrt 'dty* "Amat-Baal, daughter of Pat-Esi, handmaid of [our lord] offered an ivory box as a gift to Ashtart, her lady."⁴⁹ An example of its occurrence as a coffin may be seen from the beginning of the Ahiiram inscription: *'rn z p'l [']tb'l bn 'h'rm mlk gbl l'h'rm 'bb* "The sarcophagus that Ittoba'al, son of Ahiiram, king of Byblos, made for Ahiiram, his father."⁵⁰ The other word for coffin, *hlt*, is found only in Standard Phoenician.⁵¹ It occurs by itself as, for example, in *wškb 'nk bhlt z wqbr z* "Now I am lying in this coffin and in this grave,"⁵² and together with *mškb* as, for example, in *w'l yš' 'yt hlt mškb w'l y'msn bmškb*⁵³ *z 'lt mškb šny* "Let him not take up the coffin in which I am resting,⁵⁴ and remove me from this resting place to another."⁵⁵

4. Hebrew

In Biblical Hebrew the word for coffin *'ārôn*⁵⁶ occurs only once in Gen. 50:26. The reason for this isolated occurrence is that coffins were not customary in Israel until just before

46 In Byblian, *KAI* 1:1, 2; 9A:2; 9B:4; 11:1; in the inscription published by J. Starcky, *Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph (Beirut)* 45 (1969), 262:1, 2. In Standard Phoenician, *KAI* 13:2, 3, 5. In Punic, *REŠ* 521 (*'m b'lttn bn 'bdmlqrt* "Ossuary of Baal-titton, son of Abdi-Milqart"), and *REŠ* 1582 (*h'rs 'rnt* 'coffin manufacturer').

47 Reading with H. L. Ginsberg (*JANES* 5 [1973], 141) who pointed out that the reading of the demonstrative *zn* (Donner-Röllig et al.) could only be valid were this text Byblian (since the demonstrative in Standard Phoenician is *z*). The occurrence, however, of forms with the third person singular pronominal suffix *y* (which does not occur in Byblian) shows that the inscription is not Byblian and so must be Standard Phoenician (Ginsberg, *JANES* 5 [1973], 142).

48 Restoration of E. Burrows, *JRAS* 1927, 791.

49 *KAI* 29:1–2.

50 *KAI* 1:1.

51 For this word in Sabaeen (*hlt*), see K. Conti Rossini, *Chrestomathia Arabica Meridionalis Epigraphica* (Rome, 1931), 156b, and in Aramaic, see *infra*.

52 *KAI* 14:3 and again by itself in line 11 and possibly *KAI* 37A:10.

53 The word *mškb* does not mean a coffin, but a resting place either in the sense of 'tomb' or 'grave' or in the sense of 'couch', 'bed', or 'bier'.

54 So Rosenthal in *ANET*³, 662, and Jean-Hoftijzer, *Dictionnaire*, 170.

55 *KAI* 14:5–6, and again together with *mškb* in lines 7 & 21.

56 The basic meaning of *'ārôn*, which occurs almost two-hundred times in the Hebrew Bible, is a box or chest serving sacred or secular purposes. It is used most frequently to denote the holy ark (Exod. 25:14, 15, 16 and passim) and to indicate a chest for money offerings (2 Kgs. 12:10, 11; 2 Chr. 24:8, 10, 11). Note that the suggested etymology of *'ārôn* from Akk. *erēnu* 'cedar' (so, e.g., M. Ellenbogen, *Foreign Words in the Old Testament* [London, 1962], 40) which had been correctly abandoned by Koehler-Baumgartner (*KB*², 138; *KB*³, 83) has been recently readvocated by N. M. Bronznick, *Leshonenu* 39 (1974/75), 190.

the destruction of the second Temple,⁵⁷ and so this coffin in the Joseph story is but a reflection of Egyptian practice.⁵⁸ In Post-Biblical Hebrew *'ārôn* is the common word for coffin and ossuary.⁵⁹ It is found a number of times on the inscriptions from Beth She'arim,⁶⁰ and throughout Talmudic literature.⁶¹

5. Aramaic

In early Aramaic the term 'coffin' is expressed by the Hebrew loanword *'arōnā'*.⁶² It is found in an Imperial Aramaic inscription,⁶³ Nabatean,⁶⁴ Targums Onkelos and Neofiti,⁶⁵ and the Palestinian Talmud.⁶⁶ Much more common in Talmudic Aramaic, however, is the Greek loanword *gelōsqemā'*⁶⁷ which is used by Pseudo-Jonathan and the Fragmentary Targum to render Hebrew *'ārôn* at Gen. 50:26.

In two ossuary inscriptions dating from the Herodian period the word *ḥlt*, attested already in Phoenician,⁶⁸ occurs. The first one is an inscription on an ossuary lid from a tomb at Jebel Ḥallet eṭ-Ṭūri, southeast of Jerusalem.⁶⁹ It reads: *kl dy 'nš mthnb ḥlth⁷⁰ db qrbn 'lh mn dbgwb* "All that a man may find-to-his-profit in this ossuary (is) an offering to God

57 E. L. Sukenik, *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (Jerusalem, 1965), 1:552 (in Hebrew).

58 Eisenstein, *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (1903), 4:142b.

59 A full treatment of the use of ossuaries in Talmudic times can be found in Eric M. Myers, *Jewish Ossuaries: Reburial and Rebirth*, *Bib. et Or.* 24 (Rome, 1971).

60 Published by N. Avigad, *IEJ* 7 (1957), 239–55.

61 See the standard lexica.

62 On this loan word in Aramaic, see most recently Abraham Tal (Rosenthal), *The Language of the Targum of the Former Prophets and its Position within the Aramaic Dialects* (Tel Aviv, 1975), 162 (in Hebrew). It is found with the meaning 'chest' in the fifth century inscriptions from Heliopolis: *wk't ybtw ln 'rwn* "So now let them send us a chest" (E. Bresciani and M. Kamil, *Le lettere aramaiche di Hermopoli*, *Memorie della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* VIII/xii/5 [Rome, 1966], 404, V:4), and occasionally in the Talmud. According to TB *Shabbat* 32a it was accounted a transgression to call the ark by Aramaic *'m'* (var. *'rwn'*; Rabinovicz, *Variae Lectiones, Tract. Sabbath.*, 64): *'l šqwryn l'rwn hqwdš 'm'* "Because they call the holy ark a chest" (Freedman, *Shabbath*, New Soncino Edition [London, 1972], ad loc.).

63 *CIS* II, 104, #111:4 *ln 'rnn* "these sarcophagi."

64 *CIS* II/1, 202, #173:1, and see J. Cantineau, *Le Nabatéen* (Paris, 1932), 2:67.

65 Gen. 50:26.

66 TP *Berachot* 5c:60–61. Note that the Aramaic plural *'rwnn* is found on the Hebrew inscriptions at Beth She'arim (Avigad, *IEJ* 7, 245).

67 From Greek *glōssokomon* (cf. Krauss, *Lehnwörter*, 2:175–76) which is also used by the LXX to render Heb. *'ārôn* 'cashbox' in 2 Chr. 24.

68 See *supra*.

69 J. T. Milik, *RB* 65 (1948), 409; J. Fitzmyer, *JBL* 78 (1959), 60–65.

70 Note the emphatic form of the noun with *b* instead of *'*; see also Fitzmyer, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 177: *JBL* 78 (1959), 62, n. 6.

from him who is within it."⁷¹ The second inscription was recently discovered at Giv'at ha-Mivtar in the northern part of Jerusalem.⁷² The first line reads: *ḥlt šlm brt š'wl* "The ossuary of Salome the daughter of Saul."⁷³ While the meaning of *ḥlt* in these inscriptions is clearly 'ossuary', elsewhere in Talmudic Aramaic *ḥlt* denotes a reed-basket.⁷⁴

It has been thought by some scholars⁷⁵ that in old Aramaic the word *'ršt*, occurring in the Nerab stelae,⁷⁶ also means coffin or sarcophagus. Many of these scholars equate *'ršt* with Akk. *eršu*, Ugar. *'rš*, and Heb. *'eres* 'bed'.⁷⁷ But, in the first place, this is phonologically very difficult,⁷⁸ and, in the second place, none of the equated words has that meaning. Nor is it more likely that *'ršt* is to be related to Akk. *eršetu* 'earth, ground' in a sense of grave,⁸⁰ as suggested years ago by Driver.⁸¹

6. Syriac

The most common words for 'coffin' in Syriac are *dūpnā*⁸² and *gelûsqemā*.⁸³ Although the Peshitta uses *'ārônā* as one of the words to express the 'ark' and 'cashbox',⁸⁴ it renders

71 Fitzmyer, *JBL* 78 (1959), 62.

72 J. Naveh, *IEJ* 20 (1970), 37.

73 Loc. cit.

74 See the standard lexica. This word comes into Akkadian as a loan in NB *ḫallatu* 'basket' (*AHW.*, 312a; *CAD* H, 44b; Salonen, *Hausgeräte* I:218).

75 Torrey, *ZA* 26 (1911), 90; Cook, *NSI*, 187; Jean-Hoftijzer, *Dictionnaire*, 26; Koopmans, *Chrestomathie* 2:92; Donner-Röllig, *KAI* II:275; Kaufman, *Akkadian Influences*, AS 19 (Chicago, 1974), 49.

76 *KAI* 225:4, 7, 12; 226:8.

77 E.g., Koopmans, *Chrestomathie* 2:92, cf. Cooke, *NSI*, 187.

78 One has to assume a dissimilation of ' to ' (in the vicinity of an original *ḫ*?), and assume an interchange of *ṣ* and *š* (as in *yīṣḫāq/yīṣḫāq*).

79 For example, see sub *eršu* in *CAD* E, 315f.

80 Cf. the use of *eršetu* with *qebēru* 'to bury', *CAD* E, 313b, and see on n. 10 *supra*.

81 *An. Or.* 12 (1935), 49; *PEQ* (1945), 11. For another possible Akkadian solution equating *'ršt* with *eṣittu* 'bone' of *YOS* 1, 43:5, 13, see Kaufman, *Akkadian Influences*, 50, n. 89.

82 For references, see Brockelmann, *Lexicon*, 162b. The equation there with Akkadian *d(ṭ)appanu* is erroneous. For a recent opinion that *dūpnā* is derived from the name of a wood (and not from a verb *dpn* 'to bury'), see N. M. Bronznick, *Leshonenu* 39 (1974/75), 190.

83 E.g. Overbeck, *Rabbula* 207:26–27 *wlywm' dbtrh srbbw strwby lgwšmb nqd' bglwsqm' dqys'* "On the following day they hastened to bury his pure body in a wooden coffin." This is, of course, a Greek loan word from *glōssokomon* (see note 67 *supra*). Less common are two other loan words *wāznā*/*āwzānā* (from Persian *'ābzān*) and *sundūqā* (from Arabic *ṣundūq*). For references see Brockelmann, *Lexicon*, ad loc.

84 The Peshitta uses both *qēbūtā* and *'ārônā* to render Heb. *'ārôn* in its meanings of ark and cashbox. For ark *qēbūtā* is used exclusively in the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Jeremiah, Psalms, and 1 Chronicles, and interchangeably with *'ārônā* in Samuel, Kings, and 2 Chronicles. For cashbox *qēbūtā* is used in 2 Chronicles and *'ārônā* in 2 Kings.

Hebrew *'ārôn* at Gen. 50:26 by *dūpnā*'. A form *'rn*' does occur once in the meaning of coffin in the Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels where the term is used to render Greek *soros*⁸⁵ at Luke 7:14.⁸⁶

7. Arabic

Since burial in coffins was not indigenous to the Arabs⁸⁷ it is not surprising to find that the regular terms for 'coffin' in classical Arabic, *tābūt* and *nāwūs*, are both loanwords.⁸⁸ Much rarer is another loanword *'irān* which was used, though not exclusively,⁸⁹ by mediaeval lexicographers such as Ibn Barūn⁹⁰ and Ibn Janāḥ⁹¹ in their desire to obtain cognates as close as possible to Hebrew words.⁹² It is interesting to observe, however, that Saadya translates Hebrew *'ārôn* at Gen. 50:26 by *ṣundūq*, a common Arabic word for 'box'.⁹³

In conclusion we present an interdialectal distribution of the term 'coffin' in the Semitic languages: Akkadian *arānu*, Ugaritic **arn*, Phoenician *'rn/ḥlt*, Hebrew *'ārôn*, Aramaic *'arōnā'/gelōsqemā'/ḥlt*, Syriac *dūpnā'/gelūsqemā*, Arabic *tābūt/nāwūs*.

85 Note that Greek *soros* is used by the LXX to translate Heb. *'ārôn* at Gen. 50:26.

86 A. S. Lewis & M. D. Gibson, *The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels* (London, 1899), 102, codex B. The citation in Brockelmann's *Lexicon*, 50b, of *'rn*' attested in the 1910 edition of the Sinai Palimpsest published by Mrs. Lewis (*The Old Syriac Gospels* [London, 1910], 139) is misleading because that edition has the *r* and *n* in brackets. In the earliest edition of the Palimpsest, Bensly did not read the word at all (R. L. Bensly, J. R. Harris, F. C. Burkitt, *The Four Gospels in Syriac* [London, 1894], 157). In the 1896 edition, Mrs. Lewis read *l'rw'n* on the basis of an emendation of Dr. E. Nestle (*Some Pages of the Four Gospels Re-Transcribed* [London, 1896], 140, text 69). It is interesting that all the major Peshitta versions to Luke 7:14 read *'arsā* 'bier' (e.g., Walton's *Polyglot*, Oxford, N. Y. Bible), and see Jennings, *Lexicon to the Syriac New Testament*, 168a.

87 See S. Lane-Poole in J. Hastings ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (N. Y., 1912), 4:501.

88 For the origin of *tābūt*, see A. Jeffrey, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* (Baroda, 1938), 88, and for the relationship of Egyptian *db't* to Hebrew *tēbāb*, see C. Cohen, *JANES* 4 (1972), 39–40, especially n. 14. The word *tābūt* is used by the Arabic versions of Walton's *Polyglot* and that published by the Bible societies in the Near East (Beirut, 1963) to translate Hebrew *'ārôn* at Gen. 50:26. For other references, see Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1/1:321b, and Blachère, Chouémi, & Denizeau, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français-Anglais*, 976. The word *nāwūs* comes from Greek *naos* 'temple'. For references, see Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1/8:2876b.

89 For example, it is used by Bar Bahlûl on the entry *dūpnā*' (Duval, *Lexicon Syriacum*, 1:546). The word is listed in Freytag, *Lexicon*, 29; Hava, *Dictionary*, 7a; and Blachère, Chouémi, & Denizeau, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français-Anglais*, 90 (citing the *Lisān al-'Arab*).

90 P. Wechter, *Ibn Barūn's Arabic Works on Hebrew Grammar and Lexicography* (Philadelphia, 1964), 71, rendering Heb. *'ārôn* at Gen. 50:26.

91 Note that although Ibn Janāḥ renders *'ārôn* at Gen. 50:26 by *'irān* he further explains it by *tābūt*; Neubauer, *Book of Hebrew Roots*, 68.

92 For this principle in general, see Wechter, *Ibn Barūn*, 54f. Surprisingly, the lexicographer Al-Fāsi does not discuss *'ārôn* in his dictionary even though the word is listed at the beginning of the chapter dealing with words commencing with *aleph* and *resh*, Skoss, *Kitāb Jāmi'al-Alfāz*, 1:145.

93 Note that Saadya and the Arabic version of Walton's *Polyglot* use *ṣundūq* to render Heb. *'ārôn* 'ark', and both the Walton and Beirut versions use it to translate *'ārōn* 'cashbox'.

Appendix: The Word *arn* in Ugaritic

In Ugaritic the word *arn* occurs once as a place name and once in the sense of a box. As a place name it is found in the phrase *špš arn* in *UT* 118:18–19, and refers to the Hittite deity, the Sun-goddess of Arinna: *blny argmn d[ybl n] qmd lšpš arn* "This is the tribute which Niqmaddu brought to the Sun-goddess of Arinna."¹ It occurs in the sense of a box in a short list itemizing the equipment of a certain craftsman called Kurwa:² *spr³ npš⁴ krw tt ḥtrm⁵ tn ksm⁶ spl⁷ mšlt⁸ wmqḥm⁹ wmdh¹⁰ arn wmnzm¹¹ tn ḥlpnm¹² tt mrḥm drb¹³ mrbd¹⁴ mškb¹⁵* "List of the gear of Kurwa: two sieves, two cups, a bowl, a mold, tongs, his measure, a box and balances, two knives, two lances, one chisel, bedding."¹⁵

The meaning of *arn* in this text may be a simple box, perhaps a container for the balances with which it is found. However, the occurrence in the list of so many terms which have to do with the job of a jeweller may mean that it has a more technical function.¹⁶

1 Contrast the renderings of A. van Selms 'the sun of Arinna' (*UF* 3 [1971], 246) and D. Pardee 'the "Sun"' (*UF* 6 [1974], 277). On this goddess which appears in the Akkadian texts from Ugarit as *dŠamaš al Arinna* (*PRU* IV, 65:12'; 99:55') and *dŠamšu al Arinna* (*PRU* IV, 51:19'), see Friedrich, *ZDMG* 96 (1942), 484; E. von Schuler, "Sonnengottheiten," in H. W. Haussig, ed., *Wörterbuch der Mythologie* (Stuttgart, 1965), I/1:197; M. Weinfeld, *UF* 4 (1972), 153–54, n. 169.

2 An Anatolian name, see Gröndahl, *Personnamen*, 279.

3 This word which heads many lists is found again before *npš* in *PRU* II, 109:1.

4 The meaning of *npš* as garment can be established only for its occurrences in the epic of Aqhat as, e.g., in *tlbš npš ḡzr . . . w'l tlbš npš att* "She puts on a youth's garb . . . and on top she dons a woman's garment" (*ID*:206–8) and in *PRU* II, 109:1 where it occurs together with *ḥpn* and *lpš*. In the other administrative texts its meaning is not so certain. In fact in two lists it is unlikely that *npš* has the meaning garment because in one it occurs in a list of vessels (*spl*, *mmsk*, etc.; *PRU* II, 103), and in the other it heads a list of weapons (*qšt*, *uṣpt*, *ql'*, *mrḥ*; *PRU* V, 47). Since in our text most of the items listed are apparently tools of a craftsman (jeweller?) we suggest for *npš* here a more general translation 'gear' or 'equipment'; cf. Dietrich & Loretz, *Bi. Or.* 23 (1966), 131.

5 Equals Late Hebrew *ḥšr* 'to sift' (cf. Greenfield, in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Semitic Studies* [Jerusalem, 1969], 99; Dietrich, Loretz & Sanmartín, *UF* 5 [1973], 89), not a 'kind of garment' (Gordon, *UT*, #1027), or a 'crocheted piece of attire' (de Moor, *Seasonal Pattern*, 210).

6 Dietrich, Loretz & Sanmartín (*UF* 5 [1973], 90), reading *kst* (with Virolleaud and Gordon), argue that it is a plural of *ks* (cf. *PRU* II, 114:5; RS 1957.701:rev. 4) and not of *kst* 'garment' (Gordon, *UT*, #1279; Dietrich & Loretz, *Bi. Or.* 23, 130), cf. Dahood, in L. R. Fisher, ed., *The Claremont Ras Shamra Tablets*, 34. But because *kst* is preceded by the masculine *tn* it cannot be the correct reading since *tn* is always followed by the dual indicator *m*, e.g., *tn alpm*, *tn bnšm*, *tn dbḥm*, *tn ḥblm*, *tn ḥršm* etc. We propose therefore to read *ksm* which is certainly possible from Virolleaud's transcription in *PRU* V, p. 65, and which form is found again in *UT* 1:9 and 3:19 (though *ksm* in these passages may mean 'portion' as in *IID*, 1:32–33; 2:4–5, 21–22).

7 Only here and *PRU* II, 103, where it occurs in a list after *npš*: *wnpš bt tn tlt mat wspl tlt mat* "Two or three hundred household *npš*'s and three hundred bowls" (16–17). In the Akkadian texts from Ugarit *saplu* denotes a large metal vessel, e.g., *1 saplu siparru 2 me'at šuqultašu* "One bronze bowl of two hundred shekels weight" (*PRU* III, 81:24), see also *AHW.*, 1027a.

8 Because it occurs with *lbš* in *PRU* V, 101:14: *lmm lbšm wmšlt*, and with *hpn* in *Ug.* V, 9, 1:19: *šb' mšlt arb' hpn*, it would seem that *mšlt* indicates some sort of garment (cf. de Moor, *UF* 2 [1970], 310). The problem is that a garment does not fit between a bowl (*spl*) and tongs (*mḫm*), so it is possible that *mšlt* has another meaning here. Gordon has posited both a pot (*UT*, #1424) and a commodity (*UT*, #1562). Dietrich and Loretz have suggested 'whetstone' on the basis of Akk. *mešēltu* (*Bi. Or.* 23 [1966], 131). Our suggestion is that it is a mold similar to the *tamšiltu*-mold used by the glassmaker (Oppenheim, *Glass and Glassmaking*, 70) and would be more suited to Kurwa's profession as a jeweller. In fact a double mold for casting jewellery was found at Ugarit; see Schaeffer, *The Cuneiform Texts of Ras Shamra-Ugarit* (London, 1936), plate xix, 2.

9 The administrative texts' equivalent of the epic *mšbḫm* (IIAB, 1:24–25; see Held, *JAOS* 79 [1959], 175), which occurs again in *PRU* II, 103, also with *npš* and *spl* (16, 17, 21). For a good illustration of a goldsmith using tongs, see A. Wilkinson, *Ancient Egyptian Jewellery* (London, 1971), 4, fig. 3.

10 The word *md* is related to Akk. *madādu* and Heb. *mādad* 'to measure', and is found frequently in the administrative texts as an occupational class, viz. 'surveyor' (*UT* 81:4; 114:4; 115:4; 300, 1:1; 305:13; *PRU* II, 54, 1:1, 11; II:1; *PRU* V, 12:25). According to Gordon (*UT*, #1424) and Dietrich, Loretz & Sanmartín (*UF* 5 [1973], 92) *md* is to be taken here as a cover 'a *mšlt* pot-&-tongs & its cover'. It is, however, much more likely that *md* represents a jeweller's tool, perhaps a measure. In Oppenheim's glass texts, measuring time and temperature in glass manufacture was done by means of measuring logs and placing them in the kiln; *Glass and Glassmaking*, 56, 58.

11 Equals Heb. *mo'znayīm*. The dual form occurs again in NK:33–37: *adnb yšt mšb mzm umb kp mzm iḫb yṯ'r mšrm aḫtḫ labn mzm* "Her father sets out the beam of the balances, her mother the tray of the scales, her brothers estimate the balances, her sisters the ingots on the scales." Several bronze scale-trays have been found at Ugarit together with sets of weights; see Schaeffer, *Cuneiform Texts*, 26–27, plate xx, 1.

12 That *hpn* means a cutting instrument is ascertained by its association with *hrt* 'plow' in *PRU* V, 52:4–7 and with *mḫ* 'lance' in our text. In fact in our text the two words *hpn* and *mḫ* are joined together on the tablet by two large wedges, a falling diagonal (\) in the first line and a rising diagonal (/) in the second. These same signs are used a number of times in a tribute list in *UT* 113 to indicate that two or three towns together share the burden of sending one archer (two towns, 22 & 23; 26 & 27; 53 & 54; 58 & 59; 63 & 64; 70 & 71; 72 & 73; 74 & 75; three towns, 13–15; 17–19; 50–52; 60–62; 65–67), so there can be little doubt that *hpn* and *mḫ* are to be connected together here. The word is to be related to Heb. *maḥšālāp* 'knife' which appears in a list of temple utensils in *Ezra* 1:9.

13 The word *drb* only occurs in this text. Gordon has suggested to translate 'of the chief' (*UT* #699). But *rb* as a noun is not elsewhere used alone. Thus it appears with *šrt*, *mit*, *qšt*, *kbnm*, *nqdm*, *spr*, etc. as 'chief' of these groups, but never by itself. Dahood in *UHP*, 17 has correctly related *drb* to Heb. *dorbān* 'goad' (1 Sam. 13:21); cf. Arab. *dariba* 'to be sharp'. However, because Kurwa was perhaps a jeweller we suggest that, unless this be a personal item like the following one, it was one of his tools, perhaps a chisel. We note that the chisel is a tool of the glassmaker (Oppenheim, *Glass and Glassmaking*, 56, 71) and that Egyptian jewellers did all their piercing and cutting with chisels (Wilkinson, *Ancient Egyptian Jewellery*, 6).

14 Literally 'covers of the bed', 'bed-covers' (*UT*, #2300; Dahood, *UHP*, 15). Cf. Heb. *marbād* 'cover' especially in *Prov.* 7:16 with '*eres* bed'.

15 *PRU* V, 50:1–10.

16 It is even remotely possible that *arn* is a cashbox which was used in both Mesopotamia and Israel for the collection of revenues by temple and secular authorities; see R. P. Dougherty, *AASOR* 5 (1925), 28, n. 16; A. L. Oppenheim, *JNES* 6 (1947), 116–20; David B. Weisberg, *Guild Structure and Political Allegiance in Early Achaemenid Mesopotamia*, *YNER* 1 (New Haven, 1967), 61. The donation of precious metals placed in the cashbox had to be evaluated, assayed, and recast, and this was the job of the goldsmith (Weisberg, *Guild Structure*, 61). Kurwa would then be a jeweller in the employ of a temple or palace foundry, and the *arn* would represent the cashbox, of which he had charge, to be placed in the temple or palace for public contributions. If this interpretation of *arn* as cashbox be correct it would mean that we would have at Ugarit evidence for a fiscal practice previously only known from the seventh century B. C., namely that of payments of revenue via a publically placed cashbox (see Oppenheim, *JNES* 6 [1947], 116–20).