

About This Guide

This annotation style guide was developed by Alex Forbes (forbal8@furman.edu) for the alignment of Akkadian and English, for use with the Ugarit Alignment Tool.

This guide addresses the structural linguistic differences between Akkadian, a semitic language used in Mesopotamia and beyond for 2,000 years, and English. It is designed to aid in the production of language alignments between Akkadian and English, but some sections can be helpful for aligning other semitic languages.

This style guide was developed from a corpus primarily composed of royal inscriptions from the Old Akkadian, Old Babylonian, Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Achaemenid, and Seleucid periods. In addition to this collection of royal inscriptions, several letters from the Old Akkadian period were also aligned, as well as a love poem.

Guidelines

1. Letters

Akkadian transliteration includes several phonetic letters that are not used in English. They will either be expressed as their phonetic equivalent ex. “Š”, or a recreation of that sound using the standard latin alphabet, ex. “Š” -> “sz”. Both of these forms are acceptable, though the phonetic equivalent is preferable.

2. Text Damage

Many cuneiform tablets have sustained damage in the millenia since their creation. In transliterations and translations of these texts, the damage is expressed by a series of periods “...”, or, if the text ends at a break, by adding “(rest broken)” at the end. Do not remove these expressions from an alignment, as that makes understanding the text more difficult. However, do not align these expressions, as they are not part of the original text.

If a character is clearly present but is not legible enough to define, transliterations will notate an “x” in its place. Do not align these characters, as they do not have a counterpart in translation, and do not express a meaning present in the original text.

Exception

If multiple damage symbols, not illegible characters, occur in a row, reduce the symbols to a singular example.

Ex. “... ..” → “...”.

3. Markers

Akkadian markers, such as “{d}-” or “-{ki}”, are usually expressed either as a superscript “^dAG-na-’i-id” or with brackets “{d}AG-na-’i-id”. Since Ugarit removes all superscripts, notate all markers with brackets, but do not align the brackets. Since these markers are considered part of the proper noun they modify, not a separate entity, they are to be aligned with the rest of the word, not by the meaning of the marker.

Ex. “^dAMAR.UTU” → “{d}AMAR.UTU”. “{d}AMAR.UTU” aligned as “d AMAR UTU” - “Marduk”, not “the god Marduk” or “god Marduk”.

4. Verb of Being

The Akkadian language has no verb to express being, it is instead implied. Thus, any English use of the verb of being is not directly translated from Akkadian, but understood from what the writers thought a reader should understand. The lack of a verb of being also means that some Akkadian sentences will not have a verb, they will simply include a subject and predicate juxtaposed, with an understood verb of being. Therefore, do not align verbs of being in the translations of Akkadian texts.

Ex. “anaku” - “I”, not “I am”.

Exceptions

When a verb of being in the translation is used to express a different time period or verb passivity, it should be aligned as part of the Akkadian verb.

Ex. “ap-pa-al-sa” - “it had been deposited”.

There is a verb that expresses existence, “l-ba-áš” - “there is”. However, this is not the same thing as a verb of being. Still, “l-ba-áš” may be aligned with an English verb of being, as that is typically how “l-ba-áš” is translated.

Ex. “l-ba-áš” - “there is”.

5. Articles

The Akkadian language includes no indefinite articles, and as such they are not to be aligned.

There are a few definite articles expressing demonstrative value. Therefore, these are to be aligned directly to the English definite article in a 1-1 alignment.

Ex. “ša” - “that”. Ex. “šu-a-ti” - “that”, “E “ - “temple”. Ex. “ul-lu-ú” - “that”.

6. Logographic Symbols

Logographic words are typically either expressed in transliteration by being capitalized ex. “DUMU”, or have underscores on either side ex. “_dumu_”. Both of these practices are acceptable, and both work in the alignment context, though capitalization is preferable. Align logographic words as if they are normal words.

Ex. “KUR” - “land”

Multi-segmented logographic words ex. “KA.DINGIR.RA.KI”, when expressed through capitalization, will be segmented by the Ugarit program ex. “KA.DINGIR.RA.KI” -> “KA . DINGIR . RA . KI”. Simply align the pieces of the word and match them with their English equivalent while leaving out the periods, as the periods do not exist in the original text, but are common practice in transliteration.

Ex. “KA DINGIR RA KI” aligned with “Babylon”.

7. Pronominal Suffixes

Pronominal suffixes such as “-ma, -ia, -su, -šu, -šu-un” are considered part of the word, and as such the pronouns they connect to in English are to be aligned with the word.

Ex. “še-NUMUN-šu” - “their seed”.

8. Nouns

In the case of noun cases such as the genitive or oblique, the noun should be aligned with the basic definition as well as any words that create the meaning of the case.

Ex. “be-lí” - “of lord”. Ex. “ka-la-mu” - “of all”.

9. Verbs

Since verbs in Akkadian contain (or at least agree with) their subject, if a separate word for the subject is not present, the subject should be aligned with the verb.

Ex. “ib-ni-ma” - “he built”. “ú-mal-li” - “I filled”.

Exception

In strings of verbs, redundant subjects will be dropped. In these cases, align the subject with the first verb.

Ex. “ar-ṣip ú-šak-lil” - “I built (and) completed”. Aligned as “ar-ṣip “ - I built” and “ú-šak-lil” - “completed”.

10. Phrasal Expressions

Phrasal Expressions are to be aligned in an N-N or N-1 format.

Ex. i-na u-mi-shu-ma - “At that time”. Ex. ni-iš qá-ti-ia - “my supplications” (lit. “lifting of my hands”). Ex. l-na qé-er-bi - “inside”. Ex. l-na i-di-ia - “my side”.