

127) The sign maK — The MA₅-sign (KA × KU/ŠÈ) is attested with the syllabic value maK in a Late Babylonian manuscript of the Love Lyrics and in a Late Babylonian bilingual lamentation, as pointed out by Jursa (1995, 57 n. 110). A further example of the sign with this syllabic value occurs in a letter from the Babylonians to a Middle Elamite king, ll. 12' and 14', where it is used to write *imaggar* (in context: “will (it) agree?”). The relevant lines run as follows:¹⁾

10'. <i>su-gúl-lum u barbaru</i> (UR.BAR.RA) <i>ḥab-ba-a-tú i-ma-ag-ga-[ru</i> (... ..)]
11'. <i>kun</i> ¹ (AḤ)- <i>šil-lu</i> ¹ (KU) <i>ki-i-nu a-re-bi mut-tap-ri-šu i-ra-m[u</i> (... ..)]
12'. ¹ <i>i</i> ¹ - <i>mag-gàr a-re-bi šerru</i> (MUŠ) <i>mut</i> ¹ (ḤU)- <i>tab-bi-ik mar-tum</i> [(... ..)]
13'. ¹ UR ¹ .GI ⁷ <i>ka-si-is ešemti</i> ¹ (GÌR ¹ .PAD.DA) <i>i-ma-ag-ga-ár šikkû</i> ¹ (^d NIN[KILIM]) (... ..)]
14'. <i>i-mag-gàr mušḥuššu</i> (MUŠ.ḤUŠ) ¹⁶ <i>ḥab-ba-a-tum ta-bi-ik d[a-mi</i> (... ..)]
10'. Will livestock and thieving wolf agree? (... ..)]
11'. Will the firm thorn(-bush?) and winged crow love one other? [(... ..)]
12'. Will the crow agree with the snake that constantly spits poison? [(... ..)]
13'. Will the dog that gnaws bones agree with the mon[goose? (... ..)]
14'. Will the <i>mušḥuššu</i> agree with the b[lood]-shedding thief? [(... ..)]

The letter from the Babylonians to a Middle Elamite king is known from one manuscript, BM 35404, that probably dates to some point in the last three centuries BCE.²⁾ Since all known attestations of MA₅-sign with the value maK are found in Late Babylonian manuscripts, the value probably represents an invention of scholars of the Late Babylonian period. Another syllabic CVC value that seems to be an invention of Late Babylonian scholars is the value pašx for the GÍN-sign, which is attested in several colophons on Late Babylonian scholarly tablets.³⁾ As pointed out by Finkel (2007, 30-31), the value is probably derived from that the equation GÍN = *pāšu* (“axe”).

The choice of the MA₅-sign to represent the value maK is perhaps due to the reversal of the first two root consonants of its Akkadian equivalent, *qamû*, “to grind.”⁴⁾ On the use of “retrophony” in cuneiform see Beaulieu (1995, 6-7).

Notes

1. Earlier editions read *i-ma₅-gàr* (Brinkman 1968, 80-81; Lambert in Reynolds 1994, 574-579) while the earliest (mis)read *i-nak-kar* (Pinches 1897, 51-57; Jeremias 1917, 92-95).
2. Both the manuscript’s museum consignment, Sp. 2 987, and the fact that its signs LU, KU and ŠAR lack a top horizontal wedge are consistent with a date in the Hellenistic or Parthian eras: see Clancier (2009, 418-429) for the dates of the astronomical texts in the consignment and Frame & George (2005, 266) on the absence of a horizontal wedge as “suggestive of a date of writing somewhere in the twilight of cuneiform.”
3. Finkel (2007, 30) identifies four colophons in which the value appears in the formula *lâ i-pašx-šit*. Frame & George (2005, 265-270, see 270 ad l. 23) add a fifth one, Jiménez (2016, 228 n. 3) points out three more, and Reynolds (2019, 112 and 117 with n. 49) publishes a ninth example.
4. For the equation in lexical lists see CAD Q 78b.

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