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Fondata nel 1980 da Mario Alinei / *Founded in 1980 by Mario Alinei*

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A Study in Jewish-Language Dialectology and Ethnozoology: Names for the Fishes Folk-Taxa of the River Tigris in Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic and in Zakho Jewish Neo-Aramaic, with the Linnaean Species Illustrated, and with Considerations on Antiquity

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Abstract

This article is concerned with the names of freshwater fishes in the Judaeo-Arabic and Jewish Neo-Aramaic of the Jews who used to live in Iraq until their exodus in 1950-1951. This writer's mother remembers how, passing by the place in Baghdad where Jews deprived of their citizenship and assets were gathered and about to be bussed away, she overheard a turban-wearing man in a taxi telling the driver: "God is sending them to Palestine in order to kill them all there". We consider the Judaeo-Arabic of Baghdad, and the Judaeo-Aramaic of Zakho in northwest Iraqi Kurdistan, both places being on the river Tigris. We try to recover whatever it is still possible to salvage. In the main, we are concerned with fishes those two Jewish communities used to eat, as they were kosher (having both fins and scales) and were edible indeed. For the most part, those Jews arrived into Israel as refugees, whereas others left for, or ended up in, places like Britain, the United States, and other countries. The many Iraqi Jews who moved to Iran, and lived there until Iran's Jewry, too, dwindled drastically in the Khomeinist period that still persists, presumably had access to at least some of the freshwater fish species of Iraq, and the habitat, not infrequently, encompasses both those countries. Elsewhere, those fish species are unavailable in the food market (not so their zoological relatives). The survival of the fish names along with their semantic denotation is starkly different in the case of Baghdadi Judaeo-Aramaic and Zakho Jewish Neo-Aramaic. For Baghdad, we know the semantic identity of the "canonical" five fishes that a prominent rabbi recorded as being eaten by Baghdad's Jews. As for Zakho, only part of the fish names have been recovered, but their semantic identities are mainly lost. An informant in Jerusalem, supplied with sketches of Mesopotamian freshwater fishes (from a paper by Giovanni Oman), discussed with other members of her community these drawings and tried to label them with fish names. Their feedback is unreliable, yet quite interesting, as the way they appear to have reasoned displays phenomena of (naive) folk-biological classification known to anthropologists, such as referring to different species as being "male" or "female".

Keywords: Language death - lexicography - ethnozoology - Jewish languages - Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic - Zakho Jewish Neo-Aramaic - fish names

1. Introduction

The present study combines lexicography and ethnozoology. In particular, “ethnoichthyology” for a particular culture is an area of research in which anthropologists have been active (e.g., Morrill 1967); as for ichtyonymy (fish names), this, too, is a disciplinary area, practised by philologists and e.g., classicists (e.g., Thompson 1947, Saint-Denis 1943, Battisti 1960–1961, 1962, Strömberg 1943). Suffice it to mention the many papers by Paul Barbier fils (1905 sqq) on Romance fish names (cf. Rossi 1984, Tuailon 1984, Secretan 1988, Pepe 1971, Massignon 1965, La Medica 1969, Martínez Gonzales 1989, Franceschini 1998); Dirk Boutkan’s papers about Germanic fish names (1999a, 1999b, 2000);¹ Giovanni Oman’s many studies about Arabic fish names; and Brent Berlin’s works on ethnobiological classification, including on fishes (Berlin 1992, 2005). Cătălina Vătăcescu (1995) compared Latinate fish names in Albanian, to ones in Romanian. Cf. e.g. Hinze (1984). Of course, there also is the ethnology of fishers (Benozzo 2010). Philology in its broader sense is also concerned with subjects such as “Floridiano Malatesta da Rimini e i trattati di ittologia della metà del Cinquecento” (Grieco 2001); or then “A note on the Assyrian ‘goat-fish’, ‘fish-man’ and ‘fish-woman’” (Green 1986), which is in archaeology, like Elizabeth Douglas Van Buren’s (1948), “Fish-Offerings in Ancient Mesopotamia”; Van Buren (1949) is *The Fauna of Ancient Mesopotamia as Represented in Art*. Van Neer (1994) is on prehistoric fishing in the Nile. Europe’s medieval imaginary about fishes is the subject of Zug Tucci (1985). See the *Appendix*.

The Judaeo-Arabic and Neo-Aramaic dialects of the Jews who used to live in Iraq are dying out. Their respective sublexicon of the riverine fishes of Mesopotamia that speakers used to eat is one in which competence has faded away quickly, because of the unavailability of those items from material culture. We reconstruct with certainty the identities of the fishes from the river Tigris eaten by Jews in Baghdad. In contrast, only a list of fish names in Zakho Jewish Neo-Aramaic has been recovered, but recovering the denotation has proven to be too hard to be reliable: a group of informants discussed a list of names by trying to map

¹ Also see Mallory’s paper (1983) “Proto-Indo-European and Kurgan Fauna, 2: Fish”.

them to a chart of sketches of fish species shown in profile, but the informants appear to have tried to recreate lexical meaning, including by processes known to folklorists as occurring in folk-categorisation. The gradual demise of a dialect does involve a reorganisation of residual knowledge, and this, by itself, is a subject deserving research. It is a *desideratum* to reach firmer ground, by comparison to the ichthyonymy of Iraq's Christian Neo-Aramaic dialects.

Iraq used to have Jewish communities speaking Judaeo-Arabic or (in the north, in Kurdistan) Judaeo-Aramaic. Within Iraq, they came to a harrowing end. Iraqi-born Jews, after their relocation, have continued to speak their respective dialects among themselves and, only sometimes, to their children, but authentic competence is dying out with the exiles. There is a particular sublexicon of those dialects whose knowledge has failed to survive, because the things named have not been available to speakers of those dialects outside Iraq: namely, the names for the freshwater fish species of Mesopotamia. It so happens that a prominent rabbi preserved, in his writings, the names in Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic (BJA)² of the five "canonical" fishes from the river Tigris eaten by Jews in Baghdad, and the identities of those fishes can be ascertained with relative ease; we do so in this study. Reconstructing the list of fish names, and, which is much more difficult, the precise zoological identities of the fish species named, has proven to be quite arduous in the case of the most prominent of the Jewish Neo-Aramaic dialects of Iraqi Kurdistan: the one of the town of Zakho, near the Turkish border. It is probably too late to reconstruct accurately the signifiers and especially the signifieds of the riverine fishes in Zakho Jewish Neo-Aramaic (ZJNA). Informants were either too old for doing more than provide a list of terms (Hezy Mutzafi interviewed an old man and obtained from him a tentative list)³, or then for biographical reasons (such as exposure to extensive language contact when young) only display authentic competence in part of their vernacular, even when the individual was so enterprising as to author a dialectal bilingual dictionary.

Nevertheless, we report about an attempt involving a group of speakers who attempted (arguably at least in part, by recreation) to come up

² On Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic, see Mansour (1991), Blanc (1964), and e.g. Nissan (2017 [2018] a).

³ I am grateful to Hezy Mutzafi for giving me permission to use his data, and for his feedback.

with identification for a list of ZJNA fish names. The gradual demise of a dialect does involve a reorganisation of residual knowledge, and this, by itself, is a subject deserving research. I asked a speaker of the dialect (not the same interviewed by Mutzafi, and not as authentic: her knowledge may have been influenced by a period of her childhood in Baghdad, and by having lived since then in Jerusalem) to consult other speakers who deliberated about illustrations (drawings) of fish species from the Tigris, trying to match them with the list of fish-names she managed to provide. Their feedback appears to have combined bits of information with creative reconstruction.

Their having interacted among themselves and deliberated would invalidate testimony in court because of confabulation. In sociolinguistics instead, how they went about trying to recover a lost part of their moribund dialect is quite interesting, all the more so as one can detect processes akin to ones of folk-classification as reflected in what is known from the historical linguistics of other languages. Besides, note a study by Boster and Johnson (1989), “Form or Function: A Comparison of Expert and Novice Judgments of Similarity Among Fish”. Baghdadi Judeo-Arabic fish names are identified with certainty. For ZJNA we only have a “folk-reconstruction”, and a desideratum would be to find out in Christian Neo-Aramaic dialects from Iraqi Kurdistan about the denotation of their own fish names⁴.

⁴ This article of 58 pages is a much extended version of Nissan (2019), which has meanwhile appeared in Paris in a thematic issue of the journal *La Linguistique* [= *Linguistique fonctionnelle*], and comprises 32 pages. The Paris journal had decided to omit most illustrations from the paper (and later reinstated them). There being a double version, this one considerably augmented, has kindly been agreed by both the guest editor of the Paris journal, Georgette Choukroun, and the regular editor of *Quaderni di Semantica*, Francesco Benozzo. Two main differences between the two papers are that firstly, this one includes (in the *Introduction* and the *Appendix*) a detailed overview of the scholarly literature about vernacular fish names, and that secondly, the present paper also comprises Sections 5, 6, and 7, concerned with Antiquity, namely: “Judean or Israelite Fishermen in Ancient Mesopotamia, upon the Evidence of Cuneiform Records”, “D’Arcy Wentworth Thompson about the *bunnī* Fish”, and “The *gaṭṭān* Fish in *The Home of Fish*, a Sumerian Literary Text”. Besides, the footnotes in Nissan (2019) are not as detailed as here.

2. Fish Species Eaten by Jews in Baghdad

The five fish species that Baghdadi Jews ate were listed by a popular ritualist, best known as *Ben Iṣ Ḥay* after the title of one of his books⁵. Rabbi Joseph Ḥayyim al-Ḥakham⁶ of Baghdad was born in 1834, and died in 1909. The book *Ben Iṣ Ḥay* is in Hebrew, and is a collection of nearly 100 lessons on essential ritual topics its author taught as sermons on Saturdays on two consecutive years. That book, of 1896, was published posthumously in Baghdad in the year 5672 *Anno Mundi* (i.e., 1911/12). In the 1986 edition with vowel “pointing” (diacritical marks) added, the reconstructed pronunciation of Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic is not always correct: in such *Fremdwörter* in the Hebrew text, the vowel diacritical marks are not to be trusted. In that edition, the *locus* under discussion is on p. 174. That fish list has not eluded Iraqi Jewish ethnography: Avishur (1994, p. 168, n. 152) quoted that list of fishes. One of the fish names from *Ben Iṣ Ḥay* does not appear in Giovanni Oman’s (1984) list of Mesopotamian riverine fishes and their local names.

Discussing (in Hebrew) Iraqi Judaeo-Arabic folk songs, Avishur (1994, p. 168, n. 151) stated: “The *bunni* fish is the most appreciated of the fishes of Iraq; R. Joseph Ḥayyim testifies to that”, then quoted from *Ben Iṣ Ḥay*. The passage states:

As for fishes that are found in our city of Baghdad (let her prosper), which are eaten [by Jews], they are five species: one of them is the one called in Arabic <bny> [not <byny>, *pace* the 1986 edition] *bānnī*, which is the most excellent of them all; and the second one is the one called <šbwṭ> *šābbūt*⁷; and the third one is the one called <’bw swwyp> *’abū swēf*; and the fourth one is the one called <byz> *bāzz*; and the fifth one is the one called <gṭ’n> [*gṭān = gattān*]⁸.

The passage in *Ben Iṣ Ḥay* is in Hebrew (even though the sermon was given in Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic), but the zoonyms are in the dialect. It

⁵ His other works (apart from his hymnography) were mystical or halakhic (i.e., in Jewish jurisprudence) for a rabbinic audience, thus not easily accessible. His main responsa book is *Rav Pe’alim*; it is for the specialist in rabbinics.

⁶ *Al-Ḥakham* is the family name, even though it names his profession: his was a rabbinic lineage.

⁷ The phonetic realisation of the /b/ is “emphatic” (velarised), [b̤], by attraction to the final [t̤].

⁸ The two alternative pronunciations in the brackets were indicated to me by my late uncle, Edward Benjamin (Adwar Nissim ben Yamin ben Yosef).

so happen that the fish names as listed have the same names in Baghdadi Muslim Arabic⁹ (which is a Bedouinised Central Iraqi dialect, unlike the Baghdadi Jewish and Christian Arabic dialects, which are similar and related to northern Iraqi Arabic dialects such as that of Mosul. Probably also the Baghdadi Muslim Arabic dialect of the Abbasid period was still similar to these).

We know that the *bənnī* (*bunnī*) is *Barbus sharpeyi*¹⁰, that the *šəḅḅūt* is *Barbus* (or *Tor*) *grypus*, that the *bəzz* (/bizz/) is *Lucioarbus exocinus*, and that the *gṭān* or *gattān* is *Luciobarbus xanthopterus*. All of these are cyprinid fishes¹¹. As noted in Zivotofsky and Amar (2006)¹², and as obvious to generations of Iraqi Jews, the *šəḅḅūt* is the same fish species

⁹ This can be easily seen from the [g] in *gṭān* = *gattān*. Note in general that both Arabic /q/ and Hebrew /q/ are [q] in BJA, but BJA also has [g] for Arabic /q/ in loanwords from (or code-switching to) Muslim Baghdadi Arabic or any variety of Muslim Iraqi Arabic. A lexicalised collocation in BJA is *səməək məzgūf* ‘fish on the spit’, with [g] precisely because the past participle for ‘on the spit’ is a loanword from Muslim Iraqi Arabic (but to write that [g] down, BJA speakers would use not the Arabic letter *qūf*, but rather the letter *jīm* with a diacritical mark to make it [g] rather than its ordinary Iraqi phonetic value [dʒ]).

¹⁰ The species *Barbus sharpeyi* does not have a filament in the oral region, or anywhere else in its outer morphology, so (by assuming, which is reasonable to do, that this was the same species referred to by the Aramaic name *binita* in the Babylonian Talmud: by comparison, it was probably pronounced *binniṯa*) one may discount Jastrow (1903, p. 163, s.v. *bina* III) appearing to relate *bina* “a thin thing, hair” to *binita*. Nevertheless, note that Jastrow (1903, p. 163, s.v. *binita*) has, apart from the main acceptance as a fish name (which he believed to be a collective name for “a small fish”), also an acceptance “name of a worm” (as in the Babylonian Talmud at *Makkot* 16b, one finds *binita de-bei kerabba*, literally “binita of the house of a cabbage”, which Jastrow renders as “a worm found between cabbage”. There also is a third acceptance of *binita*, “hair”, a more usual term for this being *binta*. As for Jastrow’s third lexeme for *bina*, “a thin thing, hair”, he also gives a compound *bina demayya* (i.e. “a thin thing/hair of water”) which Jastrow translated as “leech”.

¹¹ The entire family *Cyprinidae* is known in Modern Standard Arabic as *šabbūṭiyyāt*.

¹² “There is little question that the true identity of the talmudic shibuta is the Iraqi shabout, a type of carp known today by the binomial designation *B. grypus*. It meets all of the Talmudic descriptions: it is common, tasty, relatively large, found in Iraq and not the Mediterranean, and most importantly, there appears to be a continuous local tradition regarding its identity” (Zivotofsky and Amar 2006, p. 362). Confusingly, zoologists in Israel have been using the reapplied fish name *šibbūt* in order to denote the cod, a marine fish. That is the Israeli Hebrew standard name for ‘cod’ (the genus *Gadus*).

that the Babylonian Talmud calls in Aramaic *šibbuṭa*¹³. “In modern times, the most popular freshwater fish in southern Iraq is *B. sharpeyi*”, i.e., the *bunnī* (Zivotofsky and Amar 2006, p. 362). In all likelihood, this is the *binita*, or should we rather say, /binnita/, of the Middle Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud.

I reckon that *'abū swēf* is apparently identical with *χᾶšnī* = *'abū χrēza*. This is the outcome of a discussion with Brian Coad, who, questioned, replied and in an email dated 19 December 2011, stated: “No firm idea – the following is a suggestions or two:” The first suggestion was *Mystus pelusius*, which is non-kosher (but nevertheless, is quite interesting for our purposes: in Mosul is it called¹⁴ *yahudi*, i.e., “Jew”, because of an apparently derogatory semantic motivation)¹⁵. Coad’s second suggestion is the right identification: it is the mugilid fish *Liza abu* (known to some in English as the *Abu mullet*; a scientific synonym is *Mugil pseudotelestes*)¹⁶. As for the first suggestion, *Mystus pelusius*, which is a spiny catfish and is certainly not kosher, it may be that its inclusion in the email was by selecting contiguous entries in the book Coad (2010), where the two related families appear successively indeed¹⁷.

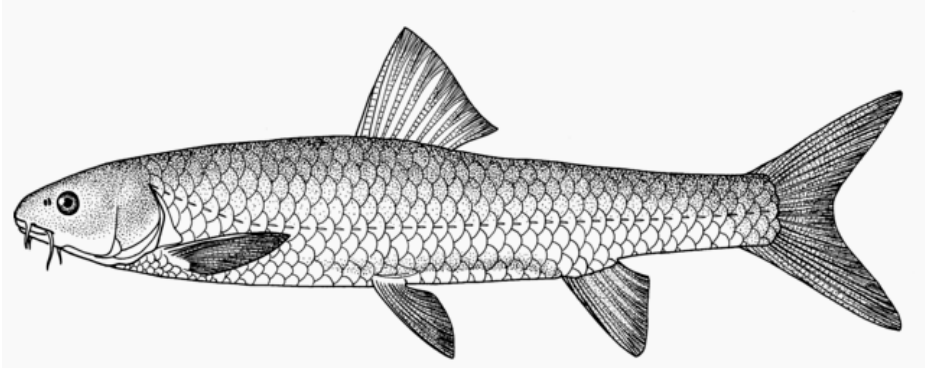
¹³ I checked with Brian Coad, who remarked to me (email of 16 December 2011): “*Luciobarbus esocinus* is the correct name for *bizz*, also called Tigris salmon”. Moreover, Coad (2010, p. 108) states that this fish is also called *Euphrates salmon*.

¹⁴ Its usual Iraqi Arabic name, *'abū zummēr*, literally means “the one with the barbell”.

¹⁵ The likely reason is that also some Muslims consider catfish to be unclean and impermissible for eating, and this combines with anti-Jewish prejudice. In particular, it is in Imami Shiism that catfish are definitely impermissible, and that Jews are ritually defiling by direct contact, or if one of the faithful becomes wet with water that was touched by a Jew. That kind of anti-Jewish semantic motivation is also found within Italo-Romance. In Italian, there exists a regional name *giudè* or *giudì* (literally, ‘Jew’; see Devoto and Oli 1967, Vol. 1, p. 1175, s.v. 2 *giudè*) denoting two different fishes: the fish that in standard Italian is known as *pesce martello*, i.e., the hammer-fish (*Sphyrna zigaena*); and a fish with a huge fanged mouth, *Lophius* (known in English as *angler*), which in standard Italian is known as *rana pescatrice* (lit., “fishing frog”, f.) or *pesce rana* (lit., “frog fish”), or *coda di rospo* (lit., “toad tail”), and in Israeli Hebrew as /ḥakkay/ (lit., “angler”) or /šed-yam/ (lit., “sea devil”).

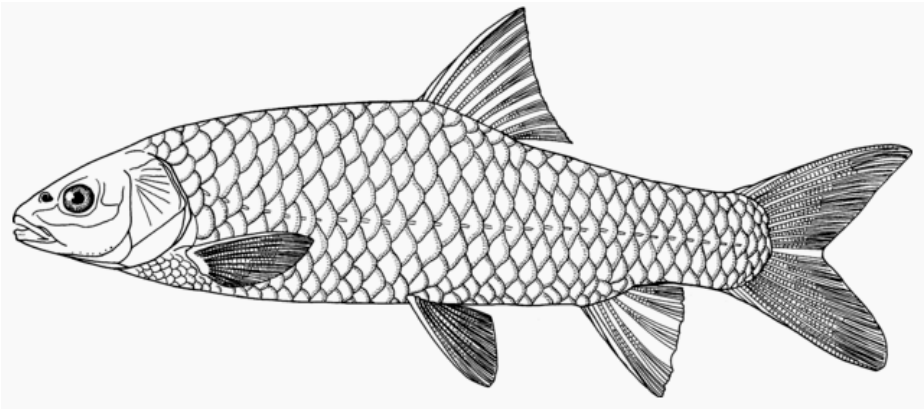
¹⁶ That same fish is also known in Iraq as *khishni* (*χᾶšnī*), i.e. literally, “rough”, “coarse”, feminine. That semantic motivation becomes clear once one considers the description in Coad (2010, p. 230): “Scales are strongly ctenoid on the exposed part and the fish feels rough to touch when rubbed from tail to head”.

¹⁷ The “missing” fish from Rabbi Ḥayyim’s list of five kosher fishes eaten in Baghdad appears to be the species *Liza abu* indeed. It is a species with conspicuous scales,

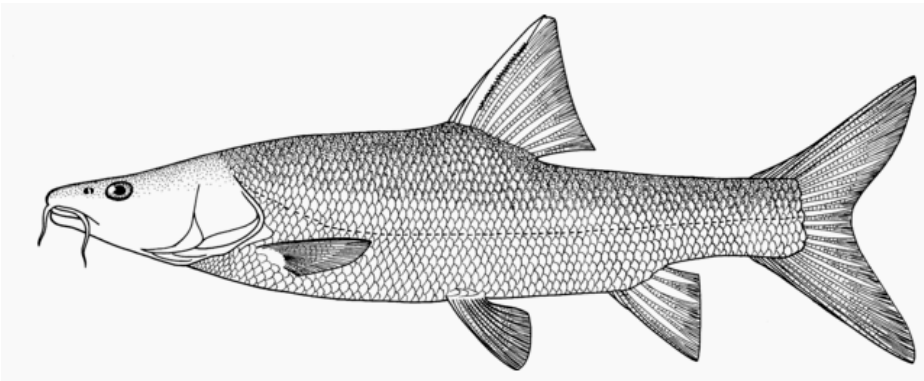


The five fishes eaten by Jews in Baghdad. The *šəbbūt* fish, i.e., *Barbus (Tor) grypus*. By kind permission of Brian Coad. Drawing by S. Laurie-Bourque.
©Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa, Ontario.

and it is a rather conspicuous option in the Iraqi fish market. It would be very strange indeed if *Liza abu* was omitted from Rabbi Joseph Hayyim's list. My mother, faced with this possible identification, recalled indeed that this was one of the fishes eaten by her family in Baghdad (where she was born in the late 1920s, and dwelt until early December 1951). She recalled that this was a tasty fish, with white flesh. (She did not name this fish.) I pointed out to her that her brother, years earlier, when I asked him about the '*abū swēf*' fish, explained that this is a fish full of bones (but was he interpreting the name etymologically, or was rather reminiscing about the fish so denoted?) She retorted that there are a lot of bones indeed, but that they are easy to take out, as they are attached to the spine: you can take out most bones along with the spine. I tried to check this with Dr. Coad, who replied as follows: "The bones could well be removed with the spine if they are ribs but mullets may have intermuscular bones not so easily removed" (email of 9 February 2012). When in the evening I mentioned this to my mother, concerning intramuscular bones that would be left in that fish once bones are removed along with the spine of the fish species I had discussed with her early on, she replied: "Of course. Small ones".

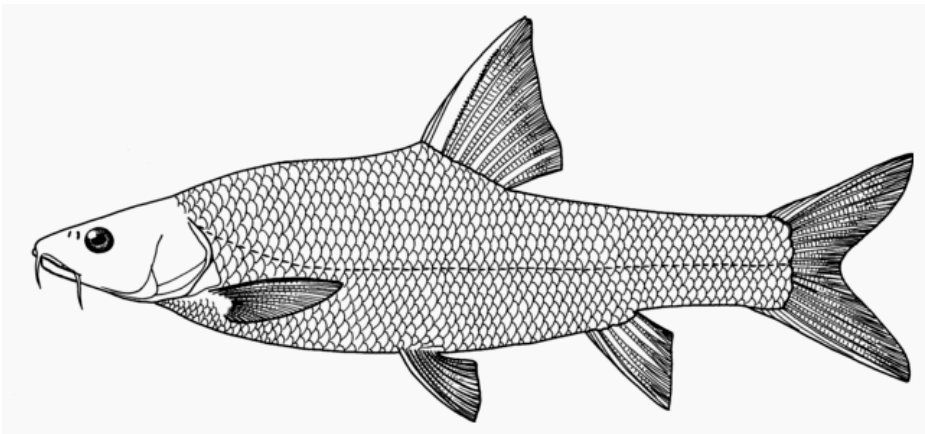


The *bənnī* (*bunnī*) fish, i.e., *Barbus sharpeyi*.¹⁸ By kind permission of Brian Coad.
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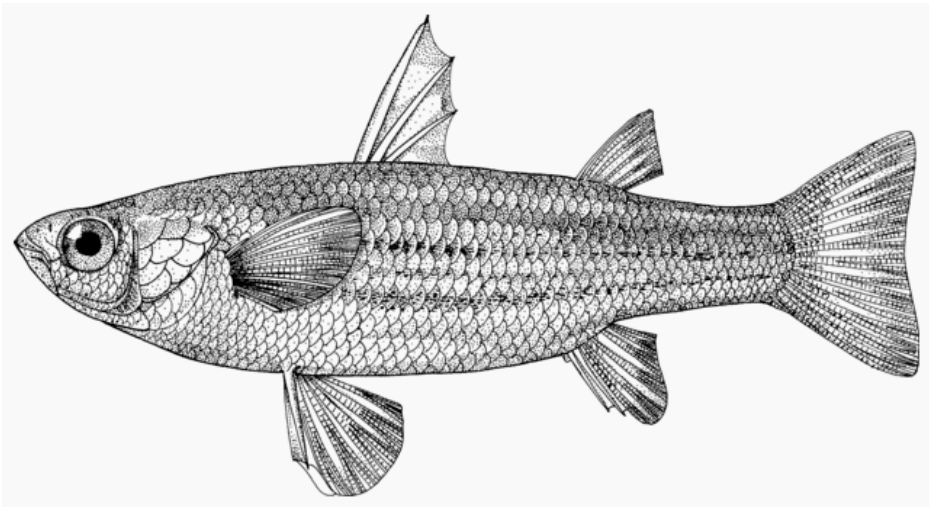


The *bəzz* (*bizzl*) fish, i.e., *Luciobarbus exocinus*. By kind permission of Brian Coad. Drawing
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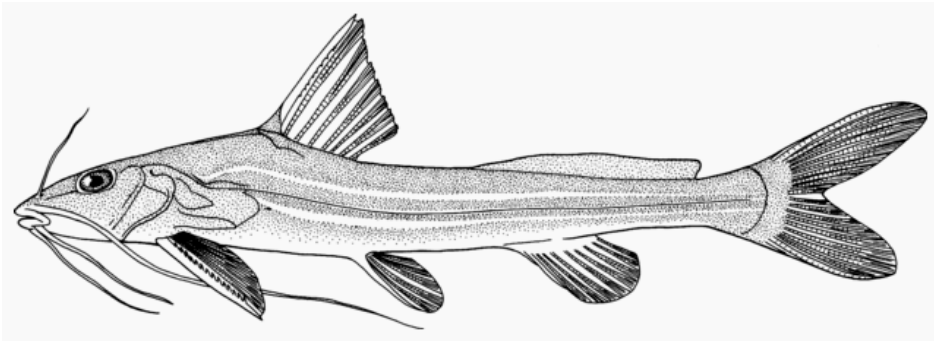
¹⁸ The species *Barbus sharpeyi* does not have a filament in the oral region, or anywhere else in its outer morphology.



The *gaṭṭān* fish, i.e., *Barbus xanthopterus*. By kind permission of Brian Coad.
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An Abu mullet, a mugilid fish of the species *Liza abu*, known in Iraqi Arabic as *ḫəšnī* = '*abū ḫrēza*'. We identified it with the fish known to Baghdadi Jews by the name '*abū swēf*'. By kind permission of Brian Coad. ©Canadian Museum of Nature.



The bagrid catfish *Mystus pelusius*, a non-kosher fish that in Mosul Arabic is known to non-Jews by the name *yahūdī* ('Jew'), and in Aleppo Arabic as *zugzug*. In Khuzestan it is called by the Arabic name *abū-zummayr*. In Abadani Persian, it is known as *mahi nish dor*, and elsewhere in Persian *sag mahi* (literally, 'dog fish'), or more generally, as "gorbeh mahi, meaning catfish" (Brian Coad's email of 19 December 2011, corresponding to text in his book). Image reproduced by kind permission of Brian Coad. ©Canadian Museum of Nature.

In Rabbi Joseph Ḥayyim's personal library, he allegedly (Zohar 2001) had the Hebrew zoological lexicon by Shalom Ya'akov Abramowitsch (1862–1872), who after publishing it (introducing much Modern Hebrew neologised zoonymy) went on to become the famous novelist Mendele Mokher Sfarim. But Abramowitsch's zoology book (a reworking of a German work) and Hebrew neologisms had no impact on the practical instructions given concerning animals in *Ben Iṣ Ḥay*; such textual *loci* about animals sometimes imply important local information, e.g., on some urban Jews raising gazelles in long balconies or on the flat roof (see Amar and Nissan 2008).

It must be said that in a passage in *Ben Iṣ Ḥay* — at Year Two, parashah of *Ēmōr*, §18, i.e., the same context as the passage we quoted earlier — an identification with the talmudic *šibbuta* (assumed to be the same as Baghdad's šəḇḇūṭ) was made (which we now know was an error) with another talmudic fish name: "The kind called <šbwṭ> is the one mentioned in the Gemara at *Qiddūšīn*, Ch. 2, at the beginning [i.e., *Babylonian Talmud*, *Qiddushin*, 41a]: [where it says,] Raba salted *šibbutā*. This is the *qōlyās hā'ispānīn* mentioned at *Shabbath*, folio 145 [side b]". But

historically, “the *qōlyās* (κολίας) of the Spaniards” was an imported marine fish, exported from the western Mediterranean to Syria and the Land of Israel as part of the trade inside the Roman Empire¹⁹. Feliks (1972, pp. 144–145) and Dor (1997, p. 176) identified *qōlyās hā’ispānīn* with the species *Scomber scomber*, i.e., the Spanish Mackerel.

3. *The Zakho Jewish Neo-Aramaic Fish Names Obtained by Hezy Mutzafi from Zaki Levy*

Zakho is a town in the northwest of Iraqi Kurdistan. In 2011, at a time when the project reported about in Section 4 below had already been done, I learned from Hezy Mutzafi about Zakho Jewish Neo-Aramaic (ZJNA) fish names he had obtained nearly five or six years earlier, by interviewing an old informant, Zaki Levy, already very old at the time of the interview, who had always lived in Zakho before leaving for Israel, and was an expert on fish from Zakho’s river, the Khabur. Mutzafi had been able to put together a list of fish names, but unable to identify the fish species thus denoted²⁰.

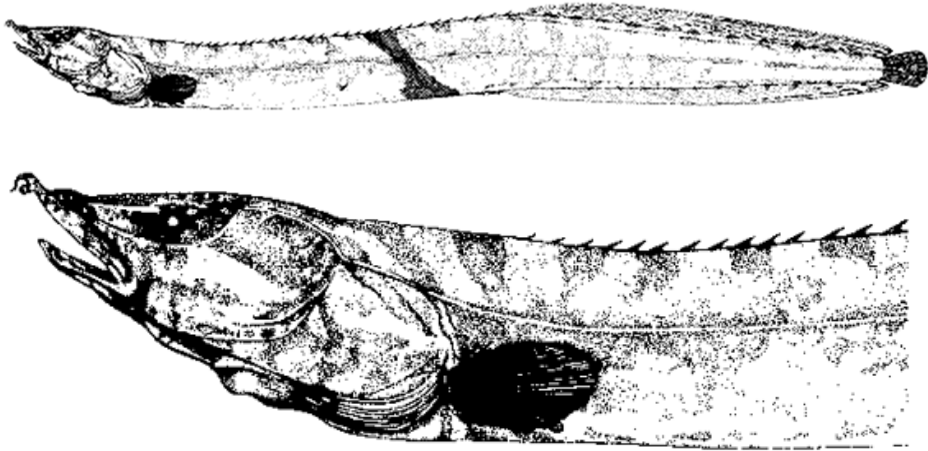
The list of fish names supplied by Zaki Levy included *zulaya*, *dāmbak*, *bazriya*, *‘afriya*, *qāšāš*, *dušattike*, *nuqra*, *farxa*, *mehe*, *šaqla*, *naqor*, *karsehla*, as well as names for non-kosher ones: *qaša*, *nunisat suraye*, and *marmasirka*²¹. Concerning the latter, in the same email in which he first gave me the list Mutzafi felt able to state: “this is an eel-like elongated fish that looks like an eel, although I’m not sure eels live in these waters” (email to Nissan of 24 November 2011). Moreover (*ibid.*): “There are no other fishes in the Khabur according to Levy, but it might be he doesn’t recall something. Anyway when I asked him he rejected the existence [of] large fishes like the shabbuT and bizz and also the qaTTan (gaTTan) and jirri”.

¹⁹ Preserved fish from the Mediterranean was traded by the Roman Empire also to northern places such as Germany. It is now thought that this may have propagated some kinds of intestinal parasites.

²⁰ “I’m afraid my knowledge of Zakho fish names is restricted almost only to the names themselves. I should have spent more time with Zaki Levy 5–6 years ago, but after the 1st session (which wasn’t dedicated only to animal names) he lost interest, and I didn’t want to press him” (Mutzafi to Nissan in an email of 2 December 2011). Mutzafi however was able to signal to me Coad’s book (2010), quite important a source.

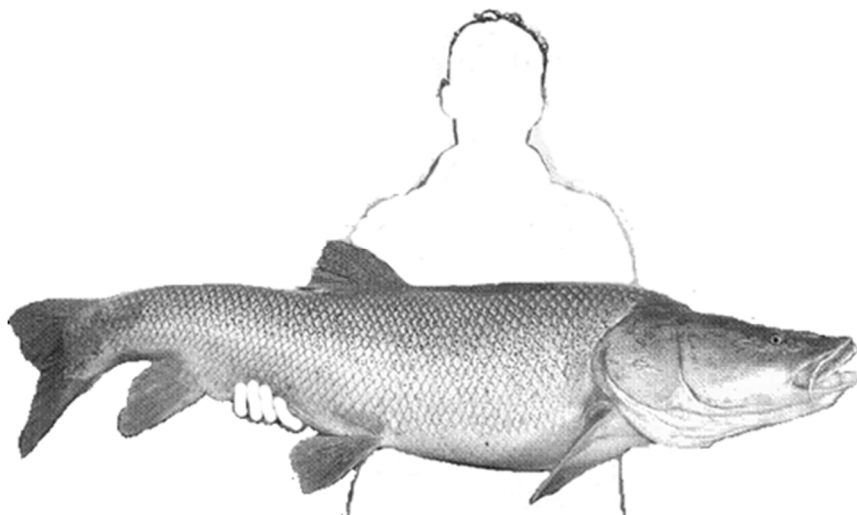
²¹ Mutzafi checked and retouched in early July 2018 the transcription of that list he gave me in 2011.

The *jirrī* [ʿdʒərri] (a masculine Arabic noun for ‘catfish’), feminine *jəḡḡəyyi* in BJA, is non-kosher. Concerning the *marmasirka*, I feel able to identify it with the genus *Mastacembelus* (or *Mastacembelus*: the Near Eastern species is *M. mastecembelus*), known in English as the Mesopotamian spiny eel, an Iraqi freshwater fish that looks like an eel outwardly. Giovanni Oman listed (1984, p. 105, §28) the outwardly eel-like fish *Mastacembelus halepensis* or *Mastacembelus mastacembelus*. Oman’s entry lists several transcriptions from Iraqi Arabic for what basically are two names: *marmarič*, and *salbūḥ ’abū siyān* (literally, “worm father of filth”»), that is, “worm digging in the mud/filth”, but it is a fish, not a worm). From my Baghdadi-born mother, who is aware of the term (but was unaware of the looks of that fish), I understand that Iraqi Arabic *zalbūḥ ’abū syān* is known to BJA speakers.



The Mesopotamian spiny eel (*Mastecembelus mastecembelus*). From Coad (2010, p. 259). We propose that this is the fish called *marmasirka* in ZJNA. Courtesy of Brian Coad. ©Canadian Museum of Nature.

The *šabbūṭ*, *bizz*, and *gaṭṭān* (these are their Arabic names: see in the previous section) are kosher fishes appreciated by the Jews of Baghdad, as well as by other Iraqis. It is especially the *bizz* fish that is famous for the large size it may attain (refer to the figure on the next page).



A much modified version of the colour photograph of a large *bazz* fish (phonemically in Iraqi Arabic: /bizz/)²² held by a British army sergeant, from the cover of Coad (2010). The landscape and the man's portrait were whitened out by myself, in order to protect the privacy of the soldier in the photograph (the fish was found in the pool outside one of Saddam Hussein's palaces, and after being photographed, the fish was thrown back into the pool).²³ This image is used with Brian Coad's permission. The contour of the man's silhouette conveys an idea of the size of this giant specimen of a *bizz*.

²² I am concerned with the fish called /bizz/ [bəzz] in Iraqi Arabic. (In Syrian Arabic, the same word means '[a woman's] breast', 'teat'.) Of the *bizz* fish, Brian Coad states (2010, p.109): "This species is characterised by large size, a long, tapering and depressed head (rather pike-like in shape, hence the scientific name [i.e., *Barbus esocinus* < *esox* 'pike', and *Luciobarbus esocinus* < *lucius* 'pike']), two pairs of barbels, lateral line scale count high (62–78)". Like the pike, the *bizz* "is a predator on other fishes" (*ibid.*, p. 110). "Anglers and commercial fishermen seek this fish in the Iranian Zagros Mountains using ducklings (!) as bait. Baits in Iraq have included balls of dough and dates, chicken and sheep livers, flies and spoons, and bread" (*ibid.*, p. 111). "This species is in heavy demand on fish markets and is heavily exploited in the Dukan and Derbendikhan reservoirs as evidenced by absence of older fish in catches. It is the most valuable fish caught in Iraq" (*ibid.*, p. 110). Coad remarked to me *in litteram* (email of 16 December 2011): "*Luciobarbus esocinus* is the correct name for *bizz*, also called Tigris salmon. A colour photo is on the front page of my Iraq book." The reference is Coad's (2010) *Freshwater Fishes of Iraq*. "The man holding the giant *bizz* is a British army sergeant in Baghdad at one of Saddam Hussein's palace ponds" (B. Coad, email of 9 February 2012).

²³ Presumably to the chagrin of the other fish in the pool, as this one would predate on them again.

If at Zakho, no large fish used to be caught, we are left to wonder: this is close to the spawning area of fish, so fingerlings and juveniles of no or little commercial interest may be found, but surely mature specimens (other than ones attaining large size, or of species that might attain a large size) can be found? For the very reason that a spawning area requires fertile adult fish. Some fish can be expected to mature locally, but do fish swim upstream through the river at Zakho? In his enumeration of the most important spawning areas of fish in Iraq, Coad (2010) mentions “the Khabour River about 30 km above Sakho between Zorawa and Gund Nazi” (*ibid.*, p. 116; cf. p. 153). Moreover, this is not to say that that large fish is not to be found in Iraqi Kurdistan in general. Coad (2010, p. 110) mentions a specimen of *Barbus esocinus* (Arabic *bizz*) which was “up to two yards (1.83 m) as evidenced by a photograph of a specimen draped over a donkey in Iraqi Kurdistan”.

4. ZJNA Informants Groping for Fish Identifications Come Up with a Freshly Developed Folk-Taxonomy

The Jewish community of Zakho is the subject of Gavish (2010). Part of that community, relocated to Israel, now lives in Jerusalem. The vicissitudes of the lexicography of ZJNA, to the extent that it was done by non-academics from within that community, reflects the decay associated with both dislocation and the “restorations” that prelude to language demise. One such dictionary was compiled by Varda Shilo (1995). The standard dictionary for that vernacular is now Yona Sabar’s (2002): a distinguished academic (at the University of California, Los Angeles) who is also a member of the speaking community (he was born in Zakho in 1938, and moved to Israel in 1951), his dictionary covers Iraqi Kurdistan “based on old manuscripts, Bible translations, recorded folktales, and diverse registers of everyday speech”.

As sometimes happens with speakers of a dwindling vernacular, the earlier lexicographer (in this case, Shilo, a brave member of her community, but with no academic training) captured her own knowledge of her vernacular, and her self — her cognitive map, and how she copes with the community’s dislocation from Zakho to Israel — is very much reflected in the lexicon the way she wrote it down. This has historically happened also in past generations for other vernaculars mutating for the printed word, with intellectuals trying to revive a non-official language with dwindling speaking communities: such languages “live” insofar

their speakers, or the enterprising and creative among them, give them a shape. All the more so, a dislocated vernacular only survives under linguistic and other pressures from the environment, and not infrequently, there is an idiolectal and also neologising facet to how speakers use or reason about their vernacular. This pattern is found indeed in Shilo's (1985) dictionary of ZJNA, in which one can find in "vol. 1: 394 helicopter = "mfarfranta" and hundreds of such ghost-words" (H. Mutzafi, email to E. Nissan on 9 December 2011). Mind you: by itself, provided (and crucially so) that you are aware, this is not necessarily a pitfall; rather, it is a work of love for the sake of making her vernacular still adequately usable, and lines her up with "language revivers"²⁴; it also makes her dictionary quite interesting in respect of the cognition and sociology of language, if less useful for historical linguistics, as it is unreliable for the *état de langue* before the exodus of her community from Zakho.

Around 1999, I urged Shilo that we should try and recover zoonyms she had not recorded, and something I deemed more easily available was names for riverine fishes. In this, Shilo was more (and less) than an informant: she did work that if done by academically trained staff would be considered ethnography, but she lacked critical distance. It must be recognised however that circumstances dictated that her own ("second-tier") informants engaged in discussions — focused on drawings of Iraqi fishes from an article by Giovanni Oman²⁵ (1984) with which I provided her (Coad 2010 was not yet available) — and unavoidably, there was a prominent confabulative or renarrativising²⁶ element in how she with her informants or discussants came up with identifications. All of this is of

²⁴ Ghil'ad Zuckermann holds the Chair of Linguistics and Endangered Languages at the University of Adelaide, in Southern Australia. An expert in language planning, including of Israeli Hebrew and other modern languages, he is involved in attempts by Australian Aborigine communities to revive their ancestral languages. He retorts to critics of the non-authenticity of present-day Aboriginal vernaculars, by objecting that only by accepting the modified features of the contemporary *état de langue* can one succeed in maintaining and furthering language use. The case of what he calls "Israeli" is his model, but he has also used data, in his writings, from the modernisation of Chinese, Japanese, Turkish, and Icelandic.

²⁵ An academic in Naples, Giovanni Oman (whose background is in Malta) published several works about fish names in Arabic from different areas. His work however (e.g., Oman 1966, 1982, 1992) was not quite a dialectologist's, as he relied on lists of fish names in use in this or that country.

²⁶ Narrative knowing in relation to the human sciences is the subject of Polkinghorne (1988).

great interest to both cognitive linguistics, and the sociology of language (this was, so to speak, the post mortem examination of too decayed a body of a technical sublexicon from the vernacular). Of course, the shortcoming is that without further corroboration, we cannot be sure as to how solid a grasp, if any, we are getting on the past *état de langue* of the ZJNA lexicon of riverine fishes.

The elicitation process for the identification, as the reader will soon realise from the rest of this study, proved to be quicksands. Why it was so is of interest to the sociology of language, rather than to what the actual *état de langue* of ZJNA used to be, before it was uprooted from its locale around 1950-1951. That was of course a catastrophe date in the sense in which historians employ that term, and unsurprisingly, fifty years later speakers of the vernacular trying to negotiate the identities of what used to be the freshwater²⁷ fishes their vernaculars used to know about, showed the effects of the proneness to decay of human memory²⁸.

The following is my translation from the relevant portion in a Hebrew letter sent to me by Shilo and dated 3 August 1999. Fish names are transcribed from Shilo's own spelling in 'pointed' Hebrew, hence vowel length reflects nothing else than the conventional length associated with the particular vowel diacritical mark from the Hebrew writing (even though pronunciation is now undifferentiated), except in that when an [a] is the ending of *-iya* as opposed to *-iye*, Shilo indicated it with a *qāmāṣ* Hebrew diacritical mark, but nevertheless it is transcribed here as a short vowel. Sometimes Shilo's spelling has the letter contain an unambiguous *dāgēš* dot, indicating that the consonant is double, but with this diacritical mark in Hebrew there may be ambiguity in transliteration when it may rather impose the stop phonetic value, where Hebrew phonology and morphology would have allophony (i.e., the bilabial [p] instead of [f], or [k] instead of [x], or [b] instead of [v]).

Now, on our topic: concerning fishes, I was too young to know the various kinds of fish, and this is one of the reasons I didn't answer your questions immediately. In

²⁷ Apart from rivers, in northwestern Iraq there also is Qadisia Lake.

²⁸ Moreover: unless you are an angler, or are standing at the supermarket in front of the fish desk with the products on sale labelled for the convenience of customers, are you, the reader, confident about the fish names in your own first language (or in the language of the environment where you live), and are you able to associate the signifiers to the signifieds? That may be a tall order for many, perhaps most.

fact, I wanted to do some homework, and inquired with people who used to be in proximity of fish and of the river; this used to be their pet subject, and they knew quite well the names for fishes, and also described to me how they used to look like: *šātīke* [corrigé: *šattīke*], which resembles the *šabūtī* [sic] whose size it also resembles. *Dimmbāk* [Mutzafi spells it *dāmbak*], which is a broader fish, its scales are black, and is kosher, and weighs up to one kilo and a half. *Nāqōr*, this one has yellowish scales.

Šahāpāre [*shāhparra*], *bāzriye*, *‘afriya*, *falīt-* *‘afriya*, *bazriya* [again!], *dū-šātīke* [corrigé: *dū-šattīke*] all of these are light-coloured fishes, whose scales are golden and/or silver-coloured. As for their size, they weighed up to 2 kg, or then they didn’t manage to grow more, because they were caught earlier.

Šaqlā, long and slim, has grey scales. It was apparently given that name because of its aspect, because *šaqlā* in [Neo-]Aramaic means a long stick. The largest fish of them all used to be the *mehe*. Whenever the name *mehe* was mentioned, it became known that a large fish was caught. Its weight was up to 14 kg. The little fish [referred to by the Israeli Hebrew <dygym>], we used to call them *zūlāye*. The sea-snake [referred to by the Israeli Hebrew <nhš-ym>, but could the eel be intended?], we used to call it *marmasīrkā*. The crab [Hebrew <srtn>], we used to call it *sarāṭān* [thus, like the Arabic and BJA for both ‘crab’ and ‘cancer’, but this is a lapsus].

This was a treasure that used to exist in the river of Zakho [i.e., the Khabur], which to my regret, by now has been caused to dry up by Saddam Hussein, and what is left is barely a shallow creek.

The name *dū-šattīke* appears to denote a different kind (or perhaps a hyponym?) than *šattīke*. In an email from Los Angeles of 18 October 2011, UCLA’s Prof. Yona Sabar remarked to me: “most of the names seem to be Anatolian (not Iraqi) Arabic²⁹, some with Kurdish suffixes, e.g. Shattike < Arabic shatt = river+ K –ke. Some of them may be found in my dictionary, e.g. Dimbak (p. 142); shahparra = snappir (Persian) (p. 293)”. (“K” stands for ‘Kurdish’. As for *snappir*, this is a Hebrew *definiens*, = ‘fin’, used in the email by code-switching). Cf. in BJA, *dāmbag* for ‘drum’.

When eliciting the Neo-Aramaic terminology from Shilo, it was of some use that apart from her fluency in her own native vernacular, she is fluent as well in the Arabic dialect of Iraqi Jews. (She is, as well, a published author on her communal cuisine.) A letter dated 30 June 1999, which I sent to Shilo, had elaborated on a few zoonyms; the denotatum

²⁹ Mesopotamian Arabic dialects include a major group, called the *qaltu* dialects (from *qaltu* being the word for ‘I said’), as opposed to the *galt* group. Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic is one of those dialects. Otto Jastrow considered Anatolian Arabic to be one of the three subgroups of the Mesopotamian *qaltu* dialects.

of the Hebrew term for ‘chameleon’ which I had previously used required clarifications I went on to give. To the letter, I joined copy. To the letter, he joined copy of Giovanni Oman’s paper of 1984, even though its language (Italian) was not accessible to the addressee. The reason for that *modus operandi* was that ten of the species entries listed and discussed by Oman include a drawing of the given species of fish.

In the letter, I was asking Shilo to focus on the illustrations, disregarding the text. However, because of her fluency (i.e., her ability to undertake a conversation) in the Judaeo-Arabic of the Baghdadi Jews, I transcribed into a “pointed”³⁰ Hebrew spelling a given form of the Iraqi Arabic variant terms listed by Oman in the various entries. This may not be the best lab practice, as it may contaminate the data going to be obtained, but resorting to descriptors exploiting dyglossia (Shilo’s Arabic is Iraqi Arabic, not Anatolian Arabic, presumably because of the impact of the Iraqi state) was nevertheless a realistic step, meant to make sure that recollection be enhanced by leads. The word form was selected by me so that either it would conform to the Iraqi Judaeo-Arabic form (if known), or would somewhat come close to the dialect on phonological grounds (unless this would have entailed a gross interference with the word forms listed by Oman). The Hebrew transliteration itself could only be an approximation, given the range of spellings available with the usual diacritical marks.

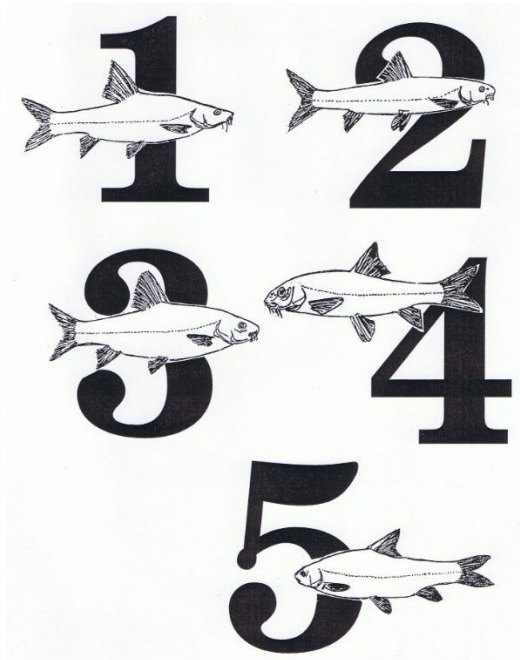
In her letter of 3 August 1999, Shilo was not conforming to the format proposed by me when I sent her Oman’s paper; namely, she was not providing the feedback fish drawing by fish drawing. It wouldn’t be until over one year later that that kind of feedback would be eventually obtained (at the long last Shilo was able to return to me my copy of Oman’s paper, with her own added annotations to the fish images: this was to take place in her letter dated 16 September 2000). These circumstances in her organisation of the knowledge are to be applauded, as in fact her letter of 3 August 1999 comes fairly close to an outline of a folk taxonomy, whereas Oman’s framework is Linnaean (in Oman 1984 and in his other fish lexicons).

Pictorial descriptions cannot be assumed to be projected in a straightforward manner onto informants’ cognitive maps. In the context of the sociology of language, the attempts by the informants to recover the denotations of their list of fish names are quite interesting, regardless of the

³⁰ I.e., with diacritical marks standing for vowels.

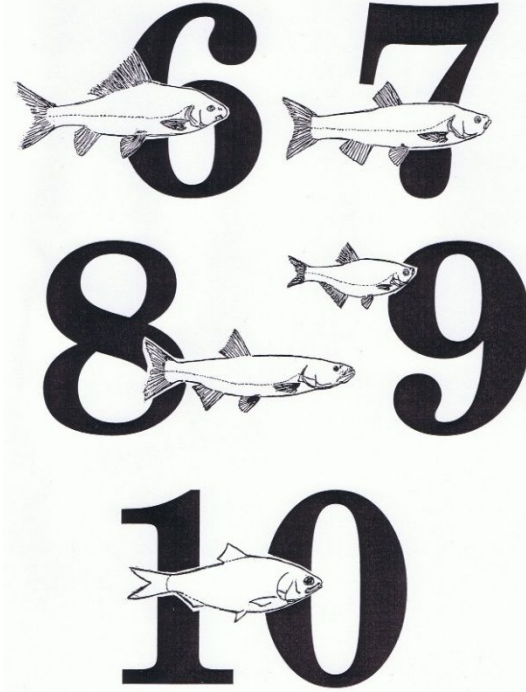
fact that they did not manage to enrich lexicography credibly. In an annotation on top of the page on p. 102 in her copy of Oman's paper (1984), she states: "After a detailed consultation with my sister and other competent people, I annotate for you the definitive names for fish, close to the drawings, and am sending this to you".

The page, which is neither the first nor the last in the paper where drawings appear and which she annotated, is perhaps significant, because the first drawing annotated there is at Giovanni Oman's item 14, depicted here in Drawing 8, and for which (just like for Drawing 2, i.e., the fish image pasted over a big 2 digit in the present study), Shilo pencilled in an identification as a "male" *dū-ṣaṭṭīke* fish³¹. Both fishes are likewise slender in those drawings, but quite importantly to the zoologist, the ventral fins are quite different. Apparently this wasn't an overriding criterion at the present, residual state of the folk-zoology in the culture of the given community.



Species under discussion. Drawings based on Oman 1984 (modified). Continued.

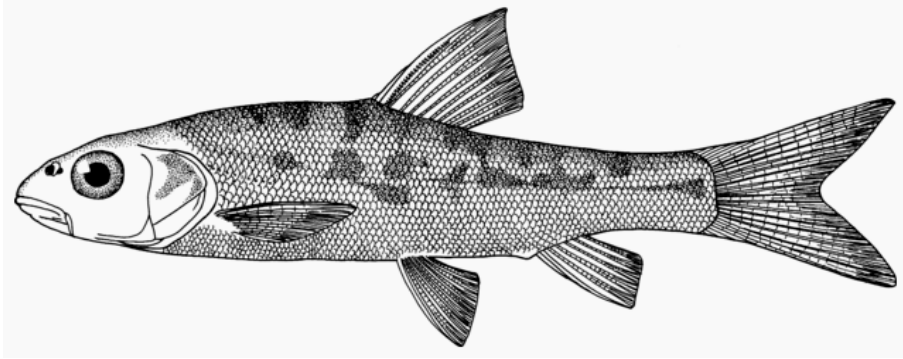
³¹ Shilo annotated as a "male" *dū-ṣaṭṭīke* fish both Drawings 2 and 8.



Species under discussion. Drawings based on Oman 1984 (modified).

The “female” *dū-šaṭṭīke* was supplied as a feedback annotation to Drawing 5 (the fish sketch pasted over the number 5). Apparently, two of the drawings were found to resemble most the concept, from the culture (and its recollected material culture), whose name in Zakho used to be *dū-šaṭṭīke*, and a classification of the drawings has emerged, where a distinguishing criterion is by identifying the drawing for a male and the drawing for a female of the given fish kind³².

³² The first entry on p. 100 in Oman (1984) is §10, for the species *Barbus belayewi*. Oman lists two Arabic names from Iraq, spelled *Toueni*, *Bartin*. A synonym is *twena*, which is also an Iraqi Jewish family name. Oman’s (1984) illustration for his §10 is as in Drawing 5. Shilo’s annotation for this picture of a fish is Zakho Jewish Neo-Aramaic *dū-šaṭṭīke nqbh* (where ⟨nqbh⟩, i.e., *nkevá*, is her Hebrew explanation that this is a “female”). In contrast, a “male” *dū-šaṭṭīke* is Shilo’s annotation to Drawing 2, illustrating Giovanni Oman’s §5.



The *twēna* fish (*Capoeta damascina* = *Barbus belaweyi*), kosher and eaten by Jews; “Common names. Toueni; toyueni; twena; bertin; bartin; tin; zardah masih; tela shami” (Coad 2010, p. 150). Courtesy of Brian Coad.

©Canadian Museum of Nature.

In BJA, the masculine noun *dāmbag* means ‘drum’. In the Jewish Neo-Aramaic of Zakho, the word that Shilo spells in Hebrew as *dimbag* (or even *dimmbag*) names a fish kind. Mutzafi spells it *dāmbak*. On p. 101 in Giovanni Oman’s paper (1984), three drawings appear, which correspond here to Drawings 5, 6, and 7, respectively of his §§10, 11, and 13. Shilo’s annotations identify them as (in that order): a “female” *dū-šattīke*, a “male” *dimmbag*, and a “female” *dimmbag*. The species *Cyprinion macrostomus*, at §11 in Oman’s paper of 1984, is the fish in Drawing 6, which Shilo annotated, on her copy of Oman’ (1984), as a “male” *dimmbag*. The Iraqi Arabic name listed for this species by Giovanni Oman is to be retranscribed as *ḥmāriyya šafrā*. [Besides, in Oman’s (1984) quite short entry for §12, for the species *Leuciscus orientalis*, he only cites a name, *Chub*. Another species of the genus *Leuciscus*, at §13, is the fish in Drawing 7, which Shilo annotated as *dimbag nqbh* (the second word being Hebrew for “female”), but which according to Giovanni Oman is *Leuciscus orientalis*, the Iraqi Arabic names for which appear in Oman (1984, p. 102): *bar’ān abyad* (presumably to be interpreted as *bar’ān ’ābyad*), lit. “a white *bar’ān* fish”.]

In November 2011, I inquired with Mutzafi concerning the identifications of “the fishes *dimbak* and *du-shattike*. Again, those identifications need verification”, i.e., Shilo’s identifications as provided at this place in an earlier draft. My question also concerned the identification of a drawing with the *mehe* fish, for which see further on in the present study. Mutzafi provided in his email to me of 2 December 2011 this important reply, based on his own interview with Zaki Levy in the mid-2000s: “I wish I could help here, but all I can add is that Zaki said *dimbak* is similar to Hebrew *amnun* = local Arabic *mushT* and *mehe* is called *’ammu:r* in local Arabic”. By local Arabic (based on what Mutzafi had written earlier in his email) what is meant is Arabic as spoken by Arabs in Israel. Of course, Levy’s ability to provide those correspondences is extremely important for us in turn being able to come up with credible identifications. There is, however, an important problem. The fish called *amnūn* in Israeli Hebrew, and

The fish drawings may have sometimes been misleading for the informants, who were trying to negotiate the identities of the fish kinds represented. Granted that the identifications may have been factually wrong, what is really of interest here is the attempt to categorise a fish kind as being male rather than female. Generally speaking, this is a phenomenon known from folk-zoologies worldwide³³, even though in the case at hand, the informants may have been primarily trying to reason, rather than to primarily recover from memory. This is confabulation, a well-known problem with witness evidence in a forensic context as well. Arguably, this procedure of those informants is enlightening about cultural practices in ordering the folk-zoological repertoire.

Importantly, Oman's (1984) §3, the entry with the first drawing, is also the first entry that elicited a pencilled annotation from Shilo. Evidently, she was responding (as expected) to the pictures, and to no other entry than those endowed with a drawing. In our own table of fish drawings, adapted from Oman's paper, this first fish image is pasted on a large number **1** and will henceforth be referred to as Drawing 1.

mušf by the Arabs in Israel and not infrequently by Israeli Hebrew speakers, is the genus *Tilapia* which belongs to the family *Cichlidae*.

In Oman (1984), no cichlid fish taxon appears among the fishes of Iraq. This strongly suggests that Zaki Levy, once he was in Israel, tried to approximate (not to identify!), and indeed, in his interview with Mutzafi, he was *likening* the *dimbak* to the Israeli *amnun*. He was not identifying the two. Nevertheless, the very fact that we now know that we need to identify the *dimbak* with a fish resembling *Tilapia* is an important cue. *Tilapia* species as found in Israel have a large dorsal fin, growing longer on the back, and the body is full. This fish is popular with the Israeli public, especially so the *amnun ha-Yarden*, i.e., the species *T. aurea*. Israel is the northernmost country where the *Tilapia*, a tropical fish, is found in a natural habitat. It lives in Africa and South America. The *amnun* is referred to, by English-speakers in Israel, as 'St. Peter fish', but this is not the fish from the North Sea that Britons know by that name, and which is *Zeus faber* (in Italian it is known as *pesce San Pietro*, it is found in the Mediterranean, and Israeli zoologists call it *moríg*). The likely reason for 'St. Peter fish' being transferred to the *Tilapia* in Israel is the wish to reconcile the Christian legend about St. Peter printing his fingers on the sides of the fish bearing his name. *Zeus faber* has two black spots on its sides (the rest of its body being rather transparent, thus mimetising it as it approaches its prey), but *Zeus faber* is a marine fish, whereas *Tilapia* is found in the Sea of Galilee, where St. Peter was a fisher.

³³ And also from folk-botany. In Italian, the fennel (*finocchio*) — whose bulbous sprout is eaten — is called *finocchio maschio* (literally, "male fennel") if the bulbous sprout is more rounded, whereas it is called *finocchio femmina* (literally, "female fennel") if it is of the broader type.

According to Shilo, Drawing 1 depicts the fish called *nāqōr* in Zakho Jewish Neo-Aramaic. That this term does not denote all species of the genus *Barbus* is made clear by her subsequently providing different names to drawings that represent different species of that genus.

Whereas semantic shifts are commonplace in dialectology worldwide, and it quite possible that different vernaculars would use the same (or a cognate) name for different species, it is nevertheless not unlikely that misidentification occurred, based on what was perceived in the drawings, and on the dynamics of the discussion, i.e., on what was debated before by the informants: once they had pinpointed a few identities for part of the drawings, their further identifications were per force no longer independent, but conditioned by the previous sequence of ratiocinative steps.

Were it not the case that, as per Zaki Levy's testimony to Mutzafi, the shabbut fish did not exist in the river Khabur in Zakho, we could not solve the following puzzle. Upon receiving Shilo's annotated copy of Oman (1984), to whose figures but not whose Italian text she and her own "second-tier" informants had access, I found it surprising and perplexing that Shilo and the informants she consulted did not come up with an identification of Oman's (1984) drawing which stands for the signified of Iraqi Arabic *šabbūt* and BJA *šəḅḅūt* by naming their obvious cognate in their own vernacular, namely, Zakho Neo-Aramaic³⁴ *šabūtī*, which however is a ghost-word.

Mutzafi found many ghost-words in her dictionary. It may be that she adopts a puristic attitude of a sort: during a phone conversation of ours in 2000, among the other things Shilo criticised the dictionary of another native lexicographer, Mordekhay Yonah (1999), and suggested, in simpler terms, that the other author was perhaps an exponent of a "younger" generation of speakers (not necessarily biographically younger) whose competence of the dialect was reflecting relexification inroads of co-ter-

³⁴ Here the transcription is based on Shilo's own Hebrew spelling, with the letter *bet* not bearing a *dageš* diacritical mark for gemination. Concerning the treatment of etymologically double consonants in Neo-Aramaic, consider the following informal remark, from an email of 15 March 2006 from Geoffrey Khan to Nissan: "The issue of consonant gemination (doubling) in Syriac and Neo-Aramaic is a rather complex story. In very broad terms, it tended to be lost more in the Western Syriac pronunciation than in the Eastern, though even in the Eastern it was largely lost in the Neo-Aramaic dialects. For further details, see my grammars".

ritorial languages (Kurdish and Arabic), as well as relexification by semantic expansion of a Neo-Aramaic term where distinctions and nuances had previously existed. Once one realises that for biographical reasons (she also lived in Baghdad), her own knowledge of her dialect cannot be pristine, one also comes to realise how some speakers who cherish their disappearing vernacular come to idealise as well as (re)create an *état de langue* (and neologise) — and this belief is a non-negligible facet, of interest to the sociology of language decline before its demise.³⁵

It is at Drawing 3, corresponding to Giovanni Oman's §8 for *Barbus kersin*, that one finds again Shilo's annotations. Oman had listed the Iraqi Arabic name *barsam* along with a synonymous cluster of variants *ḡissan* and *ḡassan* or *gassan* (where, in Oman's transcription, ḡ stands for [ḡ]). For the corresponding Drawing 3, Shilo's provides two different Neo-Aramaic synonyms from Zakho: *'afriyya* and *'afriṭā*³⁶.

³⁵ She also criticised Mordekhay Yonah publicly because in his dictionary, he claimed that his dictionary was the first for the Zakho dialect. Her dictionary was published first. In response, he stated to a newspaper that her dictionary was unworthy of that name. Rightfully incensed, she took him to court over this. An acquaintance told me that Yonah's grandson was stating in class that his granddad was "copying" a book. Obviously, he was *using* for orientation, rather than *copying*, her dictionary.

³⁶ At Oman's (1984) §15, the species *Alburnus caeruleous* is dealt with. Refer to Drawing 9, from which it is apparent that (at any rate according to the illustrations in Oman's paper, where this fish gets the second, and last, illustration on p. 102) this is the relatively shortest fish kind of those depicted in Oman's paper and (as we had to depend upon his drawings) in ours as well. The name from Oman (1984) is to be retranscribed as *laṣṣāfa* in Iraqi Arabic. Shilo's identification of Drawing 9 proposes that this is a small individual of another kind, which she had already mentioned when she identified Drawing 3 as depicting what is called *'afriyya* in Zakho Jewish Neo-Aramaic, apparently from Anatolian Arabic: and indeed, in Oman's whole paper on Iraqi fish-names (1984), no *'afriyya* appears. Shilo's annotation on Drawing 9 states, in Hebrew: "a small *'afriyya*, male or female" (‹pryh qtnh, zkr 'w nqbh.›).

In Oman (1984), only one taxon is included in the section for *Clupeidae*, and it is given (at §18) with a multitude of synonymised scientific names: *Hilsa hilsa* or *Clupea hilsa*, *Clupea palash*, *Hilsa macrura*, or *Clupandon* (sic) *ilisha*. Refer to Drawing 10. Giovanni Oman lists the Italian name, *cheppia*, the French name, *alose*, and the English name, *shad*. Based on four different sources, he goes on to list Iraqi Arabic names of two lexical types, the main one being *šbūr*.

Shilo identified Drawing 10 as *'afriyya*, with an explanation of which kind of *'afriyya* this is. (She may have been influenced by the fact that she had identified Drawing 9 as "a small *'afriyya*, male or female"). Shilo's Hebrew annotation in full reads: ‹‹pryh 'w bgdwl qr'w lw mhh 'w pryt'› ("[It is an] *'afriyya*, but if large, they used to call it a *mehe* or *'afriṭā*"). She transcribes in Hebrew script *'afriṭā*, with a dot in the

Their respective word-forms suggest that the former is borrowed from (Anatolian) Arabic, and the latter is an Aramaic term, perhaps autochthonous, or then a derivational adaptation. Interestingly, in the form *'afrītā*, which she transcribed into the Hebrew alphabet with vowel diacritical marks, she inserted the dot of a *dāgēš* in the letter for <ṭ>, so the phonetic value is [t], not the allophone [ʁ] or [s]. It is not necessarily the case that the annotation is a correct identification³⁷.

In his email to me of 2 December 2011, Mutzafi wrote: “I checked what Zaki said again and he said &afriya with &ayin and 1 y. [Thus, *'afriya*, not *'afriyya*.] He added that it was a yellow or golden fish and the Arabs in Israel call &afrit”. The latter identification on the part of Zaki Levy, an expert in fishes who once he moved to Israel also came to know the local fishes and the local names for them, is quite important, as it enables to be confident about what in ZJNA the noun *'afriya* actually denotes. This frees us from the need to consider whether the identification with Drawing 3, as indicated by Shilo, is correct, other than in order to be better able to evaluate how accurate we could expect other such identifications of drawings to be³⁸.

Hebrew letter <ṭ>: we have already discussed this spelling when pointing out that for Drawing 3, she provided two equivalent names: *'afriyya*, and *'afrītā*. On top of the page on p. 103 in her copy of Oman (1984), Shilo provides an annotation that supplements what she wrote above the drawing corresponding to Drawing 10: “[The name] *mehe* means a large fish. They didn’t ascribe any importance to its shape. You are right about that we didn’t use to have the dolphin. *Mehe* is a large fish”. This alludes to previous correspondence, in which I had asked Shilo to reassess an identification she had given of *mehe* as “dolphin” (Hebrew <dwlpyn>, *dolfin*). Clearly it is not the dolphin. From the probable cognacy with Farsi *māhi* ‘fish’ we do not learn much about the identity of the fish kind called *mehe* in ZJNA.

³⁷ The drawing of the body of this fish is relatively uncrowded by details, and this may give an impression of a larger body; which perhaps is why, under Shilo’s pencilled annotation, a previous one that was deleted is visible, and is *mehe*; we had already found this fish name in a passage from a letter of hers, as quoted above: *mehe* is a distinctively large fish. One would propose that having rejected this identification, Shilo deleted the word and provided the identification with *'afriya* and *'afrītā*. (Again: Zaki Levy indicated to Mutzafi *'afriya* but not *'afrītā*. Apparently the latter should not be retained.)

³⁸ Concerning Zaki Levy’s mention of the fish-name *'afrīt* from among the Arabs of Israel, note that this is an Arabic (almost) homophone (are speakers alert to this?): in Arabic, an *'ifrīt* (sometimes called *'afrīt*; a female is called *'ifrīta*) is either a jinn, or a kind of a jinn.

Entry 9 in Oman's paper (1984), *Barbus barbulus*, on the evidence of Drawing 4 got its scientific name for the species because of its conspicuous moustache-like filaments, which are more prominent than in other Iraqi species of the genus *Barbus*. In the drawing, it would appear to be amenable to be anthropomorphically interpreted as displaying a sulking or anguished distorted expression.³⁹ Shilo's annotation to Drawing 4 is elaborate. The descriptor from the Zakho Neo-Aramaic vernacular is *nāqōr mārēq simbele*. Underneath, Shilo provides a Hebrew explanatory translation: «nqr šyš lw špm», *naqór šeyyēš lo safám*, i.e., «*nāqōr* that has a moustache». In his email to me of 2 December 2011, Mutzafi answered my question about this, with this reply: «naqor mare simbele means that naqor is a fish with barbules, possibly larger barbules than other barbled fishes around. simbele literally means "moustache"».

5. Judean or Israelite Fishermen in Ancient Mesopotamia, upon the Evidence of Cuneiform Records

What is now modern Iraq was home to one of the world's oldest and most historically significant Jewish communities. The earliest records of Jewish interaction with Gentiles inside Mesopotamia (apart from the Hebrew Bible) are Neo-Assyrian or Neo- or Late Babylonian (NA or N/LB) texts of deeds in cuneiform script. Jewish settlement began during the Exile after the Assyrian conquest of the northern Kingdom of Israel, and then, over a century later, after the fall of the Kingdom of Judaea (586 BCE), but some Israelite or even Judean exiles to Assyria went there a few years before the Israelite kingdom collapsed. The prosopography of

³⁹ This would justify one of the two Arabic names that Oman gives: *'abū barātim*. (Cf. in BJA *yibārtəm*, 'he sulks', 'he will sulk', 'he is used to sulk', but this may be unrelated.) Apparently the plural noun *barātim* is motivated by the symmetry of the sides of the head, in particular of the cheeks and of the arrangement of the barbs in this fish species. The other name listed by Oman is *nebbāš* or *nabbāš*, already found in Oman's (1984) §4, and which literally means 'digger' in Arabic.

ca. 231 identifiable Judeans or Israelites⁴⁰ from the cuneiform records was researched by Ran Zadok (2002).⁴¹

It is also possible to learn something about the professions of the Judean or Israelite persons mentioned.⁴² Nevertheless: “On the whole, the socio-economic status of the Israelites and Judeans in Mesopotamia is necessarily distorted by the Assyro-Babylonian documentation, which generally contains much information on agriculture, but less on arts and the crafts” (Zadok 2002, p. 63). Zadok (*ibid.*, p. 43) lists four Judean fishermen (nos. 135–138) from Tituru in the Nippur region of Babylonia, from a cuneiform document from 419/8 B.C.E. This was in the late Achaemenid period, under Persian domination. Zadok (*ibid.*, p. 55) calculates those four fishermen as 6.25% of the 64 individuals in his data from Babylonia whose occupations or professions are known. Bear in mind that in Babylonia, “the abundant corpus of cuneiform documents

⁴⁰ “The actual number of the Israelite-Judeans in Mesopotamia must be higher taking into account not only the voluntary adoption of Akkadian names by deportees in Mesopotamia, but also the Assyro-Babylonian practice of replacing the original names of hostages from vassal and other conquered kingdoms, as well as those of other prisoners of war, with Akkadian ones” (Zadok 2002, p. 18).

⁴¹ Zadok (2002, pp. 10–11) gives a total of “no less than 231 Israelites and Judeans (with various degrees of plausibility) who lived in Mesopotamia between ca. 710 and ca. 350 B.C.E. (Judeans lived in Assyria since the deportation by Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E.). This is — in my opinion — a maximum number. The percentage of homonymous individuals, who may be physically identical with each other, is very low in Assyria [...] and negligible in Babylonia. The number of individuals who are doubtfully Israelite/Judean in Assyria is very small.” Assyria carried out radical deportation, and sought total assimilation of the deportees. In contrast, the Babylonians carried out selective deportations, and did not seek to fully integrate foreigners in their midst. Having mentioned “material on the non-assimilating tendencies and segregation of the Babylonian society”, Zadok asks (2002, p. 58): “Is this analogy (regarding rarity of intermarriage) between the Babylonian civic-temple community and the Judean one — which was established and subsequently led by Babylonian Jews, merely accidental?” Both in Ezra’s times and according to tractate *Qiddushin* of the Babylonian Talmud, they took pride in lineage and the lack of admixtures. Still, by talmudic times conversions to Judaism were widespread in Mesopotamia, especially through slavery.

⁴² For example, in Assyria and other parts of upper Mesopotamia (what is now mainly Iraqi Kurdistan), Zadok found (2002, p. 50) 16 or 17 charioteers, one archer, one cohort commander, one bodyguard, between one and three men who held unspecified military posts, one chief of accounts, one overseer of estates, one merchant or commercial agent, one master builder, as well as a presumed subordinate of the chief of construction, and a man “in charge of the king’s (?) poultry (?)”, with names identifiable as Israelite or Judean.

was exclusively written by scribes who were members of the urban Babylonian élite. The non-Babylonians, who were mostly Arameans, used the services of the alphabet scribes ([singular] *sepīru*); they wrote in Aramaic on perishable materials. The Judeans were well-represented among this special group of scribes” (*ibid.*, p. 56). The cuneiform record even made it possible to better understand the phonology of a Hebrew name known from the Bible as that of a prophet.⁴³ Zadok pointed out that an Athaliah was the Assyrian king Sargon II’s wife (*ibid.*, p. 12).

As for the Kingdom of Israel that was destroyed by the Assyrians, Shalom Paul (1978) interpreted some difficult terms in *Amos* 4:2 as fishing imagery, and the discussion is rather cogent, and makes reference to fishing techniques as known from ancient Mesopotamia. (The prophet Amos himself was particular about being characterised professionally not as a prophet, but as a cattle-herder and picker of sicamore-fruits.) Paul concludes (1978, p. 190): “Thus the proposed translation for this difficult verse in Amos — ‘And you will be transported in baskets and the very last one of you in fishermen’s pots’ — now adds a further image to the other symbols for the catching of fish employed in connection with captive Israel (cf. Jer[emiah] 16:16 and Hab[akkuk] 1:14)”.

6. *D’Arcy Wentworth Thompson about the bunnī Fish*

“Greek or so-called Greek fish-names come to us mostly through Opiian (the Cilician), through Athenaeus and his cosmopolitan friends, and from parts of Aristotle’s *Natural History*, which parts (especially the Ninth Book) are often of doubtful authenticity or alien origin. Indeed the well-known fact that the eel is the only fish mentioned in Homer might suggest that the early Greeks cared little for fish, and that their language was far from rich in words relating thereto” (Thompson 1928, p. 22). This is quoted from D’Arcy Wentworth Thompson’s erudite and tantalising paper “On Egyptian Fish-Names Used by Greek Writers”. “From Herodotus, Strabo, Diodorus, Athenaeus and Xenocrates we can compile

⁴³ The spelling *Na-ah-hu-u[m]* proves, as pointed out by Zadok (2002, p. 13), that the middle radical consonant in the Biblical anthroponym $\langle n\dot{h}wm \rangle$ is double. In fact, whereas “both the Hebrew and Greek alphabets are incapable of expressing the gemination of the middle radical”, because according to the Masoretic tradition, the Hebrew letter *het* never ever take the *dageš* (a diacritical mark that, which is extremely rare, the letters *reš* and even *aleph* are allowed to take, in the text of Scripture).

a long list of Egyptian fishes, but of many of these we are told nothing but their names” (*ibid.*, p. 22). Thompson impressively elucidated several such names. Thompson (1860–1948) is quite prominent an authority on both bird-names and fish-names in ancient Greek. In Thompson (1928), he proved capable of also handling both Coptic and ancient Egyptian, the latter as written in hieroglyphs, as well as Arabic. On top of this, his ability to match zoological characteristics explains his clear lasting value as a scholar.

On p. 26, Thompson (1928) discussed identifications of the Greek fish-name *λεπιδωτός* and pointed out that sundry scholars believed that this was the fish called *bunnī* in Arabic. I quote the relevant passage by Thompson below:

A very sacred fish was the great Nile Perch, *Perca (Lates) niloticus*, L., which Sonnini¹ was the first to identify with the *λάτος* of the Greeks, worshipped at Esneh or Latopolis. This fish is much prized for eating; according to Cuvier and Valenciennes “tous les auteurs reconnaissent que *Lates niloticus* est le meilleur des poissons du Nil; seul le ‘bolty’ (*Tilapia nilotica*) peut lui être comparé.”

One of its names among the fellaheen near Cairo is *Keshr*, *قشر*, which signifies “fish-scales”; and here M. Gaillard asks: “A-t-on donné ce nom au *Lates* parcequ’il est couvert d’un grand nombre d’écailles, ou bien y a-t-il quelque rapport entre ce nom et les sphères remplies d’écailles de *Lates* qui ont été trouvées ensevelies dans le sable de la nécropole d’Esneh, au milieu des millions de momies de ce poisson²?” In either case this Arab name *Keshr* (it is only one of several) lends itself to close comparison with *λεπιδωτός*.

Athenaeus treats *λάτος* separately (311 f), and neither asserts nor denies its identity with *λεπιδωτός*. At Asyût the fish is still called *lâtes*, *لاطس*.

A third identification of *λεπιδωτός* remains. Sonnini (*op. cit.*) identified it with the *bynni*, *بني*, *Cyprinus (Barbus) bynni*, Forskål: and Geoffroy St. Hilaire³ adopted the same identification, on the ground that “la carpe qui peut justifier le nom de l’écailleuse par excellence, celle en laquelle on admire les écailles les plus larges et les plus beaux reflets argentés, est indubitablement l’espèce publiée par Forskål sous le nom de *Cyprinus binny*.” With this identification MM. Boulenger, Gaillard and Lorentz all agree.

The reference to Sonnini, in Thompson’s note 1 on p. 26, is to *Voyage dans la Haute et Basse Égypte*, 1799, III. That naturalist and traveller was Charles Sigisbert Sonnini (1751–1812). After his voyage to Egypt, he was sent to China. His *Voyage dans la haute et basse Égypte: fait par ordre de l’ancien gouvernement, et contenant des observations de tous genres* (in three volumes, with forty engravings, some folded, by J.B.P. Tardieu) was published in Paris in 1799, “Chez F. Buisson, Imprimeur-Libraire, rue Hautefeuille, no. 20. an 7 de la République”. Sonnini also published a treatise in thirteen volumes in ichthyology: *Histoire naturelle générale et particulière des poissons: Ouvrage faisant suite à*

l'histoire naturelle générale et particulière composée par L. de Buffon et mise dans un nouvel ordre par C.S. Sonnini. It was published in Paris by Dufart, in 1803–1804 (an XI – an XII).

7. *The gaṭṭān Fish in The Home of Fish, a Sumerian Literary Text*

The cuisine of ancient Sumer was discussed by Henry Limet (1987); more in general, that of ancient Mesopotamia, by Bottéro (1985). “What, then, were the items that made up the Sumerian diet in the Ur III period? The oldest lexical lists begin with the terms for water, bread, beer, and soup. Other texts include various types of oil, meat, fish and poultry, fruits, vegetables, dairy products, cereal grains, and a wide variety of herbs and spices” (Limet 1987, p. 133). “The Sumerians appreciated poultry and fish, though these are seldom included in the texts. This may be because many of the texts from this period are economic tablets, records of transactions of either the temple or palace. Birds and fish were beyond the control of both institutions; they were not, therefore, quantifiable items for the scribe to record. The many canals contained masses of fish, while game was plentiful as well. And all peasants were capable of raising poultry outside their homes” (*ibid.*, p. 137). [This reference to poultry in the Sumerian period is an anachronism⁴⁴, if anything, more generally “fowl” should have been used.] “Fish were also on the royal

⁴⁴ Concerning birds, and poultry, in ancient Mesopotamia, Rosemary Ellison states (1984, p. 94): “Birds and their eggs played only a secondary role as a food source, and textual references to them are rare. But bird bones have been found on many sites and it is probable that birds were eaten. The most frequently mentioned ones were the goose and the duck, and doves or pigeons. The DAR.LUGAL.MUŠEN/*tarlugallu* has been identified as the cock (family *Gallus*) and the DAR.MUŠEN/*tarru* may be the hen (or at least the female of the *tarlugallu*). The DAR.ME. LUH.HA.MUŠEN/*šulāmu, šallāmdu* etc., has also been identified as the domestic hen. The association with Meluhha suggests that the bird was brought from the Indus Valley area, probably as a novelty, but the scarcity of references in economic texts and the lack of representations suggest that it was not common until later. One of the earliest pictures of a cock with its distinctive head and tail comes from Aššur in the Middle Assyrian period. Other sure representations are much later. References to possible hens in the Near East outside Mesopotamia, nearly all date from the mid-second millennium onwards”. As for the country name *Meluhha*, note that it was reapplied to Nubia (as being an ally of Egypt) in the official Assyrian account of King Sennacherib third military campaign, the one that also targeted King Hezekiah’s Jerusalem (Laato 1995, p. 117).

table. Again, it is difficult for modern historians to identify exact species, although the documents list many different kinds of fish (Limet 1976: number 93). The Sumerians enjoyed saltwater and freshwater fish but preferred those that had been raised in ‘fish ponds’. These ponds were actually reservoirs that held water before it was released into the canals” (*ibid.*). “For the distinction between ‘salt-water fish’ and ‘pond fish’, see Delaporte (1912: numbers 7091, 8812) and Salonen (1970: 198)” (Limet 1987, p. 140, note 3).

In her article “Methods of Food Preparation in Mesopotamia (c. 3000–600 BC)”, Rosemary Ellison explained (1984, p. 89):

This study was carried out to discover what foodstuffs could be obtained in Mesopotamia c. 3000-600 BC and how they were prepared. [...] The textual material does not always complement the archaeological testimony, so that in some periods most information for food stuffs is drawn mainly from the documents while for others it has come from excavated remains. In addition, the amount of evidence varies from place to place and period to period—for example there is more textual evidence for fish at Lagaš in the mid-third millennium than there is at any other place or time.

Furthermore, Ellison stated (1984, pp. 93–94):

The textual evidence shows that many different types of fish were known and utilized. Texts from Lagaš (Early Dynastic III) mention at least 20 sorts, some of which were also described as being salted or dried. Later in the third millennium and in the second, the number of named fish and the quantities mentioned in texts drop considerably but the continued discovery of fish-hooks in the second and first millennia indicate that fish continued to be caught. The Neo-Assyrian reliefs depict the rivers and canals being full of different sorts of fish but although the texts of this period show that taxes and tribute were being paid in fish, the numbers recorded are not quite as large as those in the third millennium and the fish are nearly always called ‘fish’ without the species being given. This however may only reflect a difference in attitude between an area dominated by rivers, canals, lakes and marshes where fishing was a main industry (i.e. the cities of third millennium Sumer) and an area (Assyria) which drew its supplies from an empire and in which fishing played a minor part.

Some species of fish can be identified in the texts. Identification on reliefs are more uncertain because of the lack of specific features depicted. Of the fish-names which can be identified, the most common are types of barbel, a member of the Cyprinidae family to which the carp belongs.

In “The Home of the Fish. A New Sumerian Literary Composition”, M. Civil (1961) provided for the first time a translation of that literary text, with copious annotation in endnotes. The paper began as follows (*ibid.*, p. 154):

This curious composition, translated here for the first time, has a certain number of unusual features not found elsewhere in Mesopotamian literature. The poem is a monologue by a deity, in all probability Nanše (see commentary on line 153) who, as “mother of the fish”, has built a new house for them, and invites all of them to come and spend the night there, where they will find a comfortable place of rest and will be safe and secure from all the animals which usually prey on them. It is always difficult to place works of Mesopotamian literature in the categories devised by classical rhetoricians. The anthropomorphic descriptions place our composition close to the fable, but it cannot be considered as such, because the classical definition of a fable always includes some kind of action, and no action at all is involved in our text. In some other respects we may consider our poem as lyrical: it is based on the author’s sentiments evoked by the multiple aspects of aquatic life, and on the emotional appeal of a “sweet home”. Other secondary themes interwoven with this are the “naming of the fish” — to be compared perhaps with Adam naming all living creatures in the Garden of Eden or, more probably, it is simply a display of erudition — and the attempt to explain how water birds prey on fish, in spite of the fact that both of them are under Nanše’s protection.

At the beginning of the commentary, Civil subdivided the literary text into six parts (Civil 1961, p. 166):

This long monologue can be divided as follows:

- 1–13. Description of the newly built house for the fish.
- 14–23. Invitation to all relatives and friends of the fish to come to the house.
- 24–51. Invitation to the fish to spend the night in the house.
- 67–117 and Fragment G. Description and names of the incoming fish.
- 137–148. Description and names of the birds and animals which prey on fish.
- 149–153. Conclusion: the house gives safety to the fish, thus rejoicing Nanše.

The following is a sample from Civil (1961, p. 161):

- 67 The fish who
- 68 May all kinds of fishes also enter with you, oh my fish,
- 69 The one who (has) nice “beards,” eats the sweet plants,
- 70 My s u ḥ u r - g a l - fish, may he also enter with you, oh my fish;
- 71 The one who eats the “inside”-reeds, to the mouth(?) [. . .],
- 72 My s u ḥ u r - t u r - fish, may he also enter with you, oh my fish;
- 73 The one who (has) big lips, sucks the z i -reeds,
- 74 [. . . .]
- 75 His food [. . . .]

- 76 My g u d -fish, may he also enter with you, oh my fish;
 77 A black punting-pole, engendered in the fields,
 78 A farrowing sow, who in the river banks takes away the dough,
 79 My g ú - b í - fish, may he also enter with you, oh my fish;
 80 The one who (has) a horned tail, a horned back, goes out from the plants,
 81 My š E + S U Ĥ U R - g a l -fish, may he also enter with you, oh my fish;
 82 The fish who in his *muttering* (is) like a crying child,
 83 My š E + S U Ĥ U R . S U M -fish, may he also enter with you, oh my fish;

Concerning line 81, Civil felt able to suggest an identification of that Sumerian fish-name with the Iraqi riverine fish known as *gattān*, which we discussed (*Luciobarbus xanthopterus*). The following is quoted from Civil (1961, p. 170):

As for s u ĥ u r (Akk. *puradu*, 𒌦 XVIII 3), in the Sumerian literary texts, it is the most commonly mentioned fish, as a typical dweller of the marshes, we also find it often in the economic texts, brought sometimes by fishermen of the g ú - e d i - n a (some references in Deimel, *Or* 21 [1926] 75). One could suggest for s u ĥ u r an identification with a species of *Barbus* (“barbel”)—a fish with two barbels on each side of the mouth—because of the mention of the “beards” in the preceding line. If this identification is correct, the adjective g a l is well applied to *Barbus seich*. (Arab. *gatan*); very large individuals of this species are found in Mesopotamia, with a length of from four to six feet and weight well above 140 lb.¹¹ For the association of the s u ĥ u r -fish with the ú - l à l -plants, cf.: é - m u [x¹ [s u ĥ] u r - m á š - b i ú - l à l s u ģ i m - š i - s ù - e “Enki and the World Order” 96, and: s u ĥ u r k u a ú - l à l e - n e m u - u n - n a - è “Eridu Hymn” 78, etc.

The Sumerian adjective *gal* denotes ‘big’.

8. Concluding Remarks

In this study, we made a special effort to satisfy dialectological as well as zoological identification requirements, and have therefore resorted to zoological illustrations copiously. A considerably simplified version has just appeared (in the early summer of 2019) in a thematic issue about Jewish languages of the journal *Linguistique fonctionnelle*, and that simplified version caters to a readership not particular about the requirements of ethnozoological identification. Here instead, apart from

more emphasis about the zoological identification along with zoological illustrations, three sections about antiquity were added.

In the present article, we have considered in Sec. 2 the Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic names of fishes from the river Tigris eaten by the Jews of Baghdad; a form of some of such names is found in the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud, and this is culturally significant well beyond the confines of the modern community of Baghdad. Sections 3 and 4 instead are concerned with reconstructing the signifier/signified relation of names for fishes of the river Tigris in the Neo-Aramaic dialect of the Jews of Zakho (ZJNA).⁴⁵ This proved to be quite challenging,⁴⁶ and informants engaged in attempts at recovery that are arguably of interest to linguists and folklorists because of how folk-biology categorisation patterns exhibited, even as we cannot be sure about what the lexical semantics of those fish names actually used to be. Thus, the situation is radically different for what we know of the ethnozoological lexicon of Baghdad Jews and Zakho Jews, even though the river is the same. I came across a statement to the effect that fish was not a favourite with Kurdish Jews, relatively to the attitudes of other Iraqi Jews; and also across the claim that specimen in Zakho of the same fish species were expected to be smaller than as could be found in Baghdad (I cannot verify whether the two claims are objectively true).

There is a small number of scholars who have published extensively about the names of animals or plants as found in the rabbinic literature. Of my own work, see e.g. Nissan (2011), in zoonymy, as opposed to myself (2012, 2013–2014 [2014], 2015–2016), on Jewish zoological lore, or to Israeli Hebrew neologisation in the lexicon of zoology (Nissan 2013 [2014], 2014a, Nissan and Zuckermann 2013 [2014], 2014), or Hebrew modern literary zoonymy (Nissan 2014b). Nissan (2007) is a survey of early rabbinic involvement in the natural science, and of modern research into this, including rabbinic botany and zoology. In a historical perspective, when it comes to Aramaic fish-names, one must consider the by now one-century old, unrivalled, dense study, by Immanuel Löw (1854–1944), of Aramaic names for fish in Aramaic sources, be they from Jewish literature, or Syriac, in relation to parallels from the Arabic

⁴⁵ Neo-Aramaic in Zakho is treated e.g. in Polotsky (1967), Sabar (1988a, 1988b). Sabar (2002) is the best ZJNA dictionary.

⁴⁶ Techniques of obtaining data in ethnosciences are the subject of e.g. Pignato (1981).

lexicon, as well as (when appropriate) to Greek lexical items that can be shown to have been borrowed. Löw (1906) — an early publication of the essay “Aramäische Fischnamen” — appeared in the same book as an essay by Arthur Hjelt (1906) on Syriac names for plants (a search of the British COPAC database would only return for this an offprint on hold at the University of Manchester library). “Aramäische Fischnamen” is now accessible in Löw (1969, pp. 3–24). I was referred to that posthumous book by the late Yehuda Feliks, an authority on biblical or rabbinic plant names, whose pupils Zohar Amar and Avraham Ofir Shemesh (with whom I have co-authored sometimes) are active in both ethnozoology and ethnobotany of the Jews, as well as in the historical *materia medica* of Jews. Also see Löw’s monumental work on names for plants in Jewish sources (Löw 1924–1934), and Ludwig Lewysohn’s (1858) *Die Zoologie des Talmuds*. Assyrian fish names are the subject of Holma (1912), Scheil (1918), Salonen (1970).⁴⁷ Cf. Salonen (1973, 1976), and Landsberger with Draffkorn Kilmer (1960–1962), on ancient Mesopotamian zoology. Pre-Sargonic Assyrian bird names documented in Ebla and Fara are the subject of Pettinato (1978). Militarev and Kogan (2005) is the volume on animal names of their *Semitic Etymological Dictionary*. Malouf (1932) is an important Arabic zoological dictionary. Talshir (1981) is authoritative about animal names in the Bible as translated into Samaritan Middle Aramaic. I wish to dedicate this paper to the memory of David Talshir, deceased in 2018.

Nissan (2017 [2018], b, and in press: a, b) and Nissan and Burgaretta (2017 [2018], and 2017-2018) have researched names of animals or plants as found in works in the medieval Hebrew *belles lettres*, concerning dialectal Italian names for plants or animals found there. Reuven Kiperwasser and Dan Shapira (2008, 2012, 2014) have discussed how in late antique Mesopotamia, mythological animals from Iranian culture entered the Babylonian Talmud. The name of the gigantic bird *pušqanša* from talmudic lore was discussed by Gershenson (1994).

Bottéro (1985) discussed the cuisine of ancient Mesopotamia. The impact of language contact on the kitchen sublexicon (fish in particular) was discussed for Old English in Milani (1983). Cf. Johann Jakob Kohler’s 1906 book *Die altenglischen Fischnamen*. Likewise, there are Italianisms in the lexicon of fishes in the Balkans (Pepe 1971). We have already mentioned, in the introduction, that John Boster and Jeffrey

⁴⁷ Cf. Seidl’s paper (2006) “The rôles played by fish on Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals”.

Johnson published an article (1989) entitled “Form or Function: A Comparison of Expert and Novice Judgments of Similarity Among Fish”; this is a subject of particular relevance for my present study. In the scholarly literature, one comes across a study of 1919 by E.W. Gudger, “On the Use of the Sucking-Fish for Catching Fish and Turtles: Studies in *Echeneis* or *Remora*, III”, in which he felt able to conclude (*ibid.*, p. 521) with “To the present writer, all the evidence at hand sustains and confirms the stories of the living fishhook from the time of Columbus to the present day”. He had sought evidence empirically, with experiments such as the following: “My opportunities for making such experiments have unfortunately been very few. At Tortugas in 1914, I pulled on the tail of a sucking-fish, stuck fast to the glass wall of the aquarium, so hard that its muscles could be heard to crack, and I had to desist for fear of pulling the tail off. In 1913 in the Bight of Cape Lookout, N.C., we caught a 27.25 inch *Echeneis* having a sucking disk 6 inches long by 2.13 wide. When, stuck to the wet deck, I pulled on this fish so hard that I feared that I would tear it in two, but it resisted all efforts to pull it off backwards — a pull of possibly 50 pounds. On pulling upwards on it, it held fast until the disk began to tear loose, from the head” (*ibid.*, p. 517).

The Babylonian Talmud was produced in southern and central Iraq during the centuries before the Islamic conquest (633–656 CE). It contains both fish names, and interesting information about circumstances in which fish was caught, even in irrigation channels. Moshe Beer’s treatment of fish and fishing in his book (1982) reconstructing the socioeconomics of Jewish life in Mesopotamia in talmudic times is fairly extensive. According to the index (Beer 1982, p. 426), fish and fishery are dealt with on pp. 116, 150–153, 295, 298, 303, and 304. Based on a passage in tractate *Baba Bathra*, 54a, Beer remarks (1982, p. 150): “Fish were so abundant, that it would happen sometimes that on opening a channel carrying water from the river into a field for irrigation purposes, fish would be dragged by the stream”. Interestingly, even with modern water conduits, in the early and mid twentieth century this was definitely the case in urban suburbia in Iraq’s capital: with pipes carrying water directly from the River Tigris into the gardens or vegetable plots of villas in Baghdad (as opposed to water for drinking), small fish would often come out from the tap. (This remark is based on the recollections reported to me by my mother).

Let us say something about fish entrapped in muddy pools, in Gaonic hermeneutics, i.e., as interpreted by the Geonim, the spiritual leaders of

Mesopotamian (and world) Jewry at the time of the Abbasid Caliphate. In his book about the socioeconomics of Mesopotamian Jewry in talmudic times, Beer (1982) elaborates on methods of fishing, of keeping live fish, and of storage. He also deals with economic and dietary realia. When it comes to specific fish kinds, he singles out for discussion the small fish of the kind or category known as *hṛsn* — these were not suitable for conservation once they had been captured (Beer 1982, p. 153, fn. 137). There is a description of the practice of salting and drying of fish in general. In fn. 136, Beer is concerned with a kind of *binnītā* that was geographically localised and was referred to (in tractate *Mak-koth*, 16b, of the Babylonian Talmud) by the descriptor *bynit' dby kr'b'* (*binnītā de-bēi qērābā*) which on the face of it could be understood to mean such kind of fish as found in a given town; or rather (which applies here) in a given category of pools; in fact, the descriptor of the place is a genitival compound comprising the word for 'house', this being typical of toponomastics but also occurring in references to something which can contain (and this may be a pool). Beer quotes from (and provides references about) a Gaonic responsum that explains *bynit' dby kr'b'* (*binnītā de-bēi qērābā*) by describing (presumably, based on material culture in early Islamic Mesopotamia, as accessible to authors in the age of the Jewish Babylonian Gaonate)⁴⁸ the phenomenon by which river floods would on occasion cause fish to become entrapped, yet survive in muddy pools; such fish was forbidden for consumption as non-kosher, lest it may fall into the category of such a *šereš* ('swarming kind') "which swarms in the earth", thus making its fish anatomy irrelevant for the purposes of allowing feeding on it. By this line of reasoning, indeed, "fish" not only has to be endowed with the anatomy of a fish, but also has to belong to the ecological, behavioural category of animals which swarm in water.

Jewish reflection about fish names by an individually known author perhaps begins with the prominent biblical exegete and Hebrew grammarian Rabbi David Ḳimḥi (or Radaḳ, b. 1160?, d. 1235?). Notwithstanding the biblical tradition about Adam bestowing upon animal kinds their names, David Ḳimḥi's commentary to *Genesis* 2:19 claims: "But He did not bring [to Adam] the fishes (*et ha-dagim*: the fish kinds), because they would have died, and therefore [they got] their names from

⁴⁸ A *ga'ón* was the director of a major rabbinic academy.

the fishers, and vary from place to place”. See Jernudd and Thuan (1984) on the sociolinguistics of naming fish.

Also note that one of ichthyology’s pioneers was a German Jew, the physician Marcus Elieser [Eliezer] Bloch (1723–1799). Concerning Bloch, Altmann stated (1998, p. 346): “his magnum opus in twelve volumes, with four hundred and twenty-two magnificent illustrations, counted King Frederick the Great among its sponsors”. Bloch “remained a loyal member of the Berlin [Jewish] community, and throughout his life retained a keen interest in Jewish literature. These men were extraordinary figures, however. As avant-couriers, they indicated the shape of things-to-come but did not constitute a movement. In the 1770’s the picture changed: a more or less cohesive group of Maskilim⁴⁹ began to come into being”. Bloch’s *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte der Fische* “with 432 excellent copper etching plates of fish,⁵⁰ [was] published in Berlin between 1781–1795 in 12 volumes. This was the most important work on ichthyology in the 18th century”. Publication was in Berlin: Aus Kosten der Verfassers, und in Commission in der Buchhandlung der Realschule, 1785–1795. It also appeared in French translation (made by Jean Charles Thibault de Laveaux), in ten volumes, as *Ichtyologie, ou histoire naturelle, générale et particulière des poissons. Avec des figures enluminées, etc.* “par Marc Éliésér Block” (Berlin, Chez l’Auteur, et chez François de La Garde, Paris, 1801).⁵¹ The French edition was soon followed by a competing work, Sonnini’s (1803–1804) *Histoire naturelle générale et particulière des poissons*, which we have already mentioned.

Going back to the specific concerns of the present article, let us state a *desideratum*. As things stand, and because of the generational turnover, it can be expected that one can rather obtain more reliable data through comparison with data resulting from field research with Christian speakers of Neo-Aramaic vernaculars in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is easy to see that whereas from 1948 to Saddam’s fall, Iraq could be expected to be a lethal destination for a researcher working with an Iraqi-born Israeli community, in contrast Iraqi Kurdistan under Kurdish autonomy has been not as inaccessible, but the period of Isis rule and genocidal intent has further

⁴⁹ The Maskilim (of the Berlin Haskalah) were advocates of acculturation of the Jews to German or general European culture through emphasis on general education; they would often (though in the beginning not all of them) require religious obligations to be relaxed. I discussed that movement in part of Nissan (2015).

⁵⁰ See copper engravings at <http://www.philographikon.com/blochfish.html>

⁵¹ <http://www.philographikon.com/blochfish.html>

compromised what could be hopefully extracted from Neo-Aramaic speaking Christian Iraqi villagers, when it comes to the sublexicon of riverine fishes. Even communities not evicted were being subjected to language loss through language contact and generational turnover.

Appendix: A Quick Overview of Scholarship into Fish-Names

In this Appendix, we provide a survey that supplements the first paragraph of the introductory section, as well as references given in the concluding remarks. This overview is representative, rather than exhaustive.

The onomasiology of fishing and fishes is how vernaculars, or languages (or, then, linguemes, i.e., clusters of variants regardless of stratification into dominant variant versus dialects) name concepts within a given semantic area. Because of the importance of fishing in human foraging, a practice older than the entrenchment of agriculture in what we can gather of the (pre)history of human cultures,⁵² the study of the lexicon of fishery provides important cues to scholarship's epistemic conduits to cultural reconstruction in remote times; this has been applying, in particular, to the cultures of Northern Europe. Two volumes by Mario Alinei (1996, 2000) on the prehistory of European languages have relevant sections and passages on this.⁵³ Such is the case of the names for 'salmon', "ben noto tema di ricerca IE!", i.e., "a well-known topic in Indo-European studies!" (Alinei 1996, p. 579; cf. Alinei 2000, pp. 546–547). A specific study of names for salmonid fish is Diebold (1985).

Sometimes, in research into fish names, concern in language contacts is foregrounded: this is admittedly the case of Celestina Milani's study (1983) into names for fishes within Middle English kitchen or cuisine terminology (cf. Cochran 1984). Some other times, the perspective is that of protolanguages: Mallory (1983) for Proto-Indo-European (cf. Seebold 1985); Boutkan (1999a, 1999b, 2000) for fish-names found in Germanic languages or historically occurring in texts (such as in Old Saxon

⁵² Even a popularistic presentation could tell that as early as the Neolithic, there was a gradual shift in "economic life from universal dependence on hunter-gathering to nearly universal dependence on farming and herding. Only fishing remained, as it still does today, a vestige of hunter-gatherer culture" (Buzan and Segal 1998, p. 67).

⁵³ See in particular, in Alinei (1996), Ch. XVI, Sec. 7.3 (pp. 576–581); and in Alinei (2000), pp. 303, 428–431 (Ch. XI, Sec. 2.2.1.4), 448–450 (Ch. XI, Sec. 2.3.2.3), 546–548 (Ch. XII, Sec. 3.2.3), 837–838 (Ch. XX, Sec. 3.2.3), 802, 866–869.

glosses), and whose etymology is reconstructed as being pre-Germanic; or then, it is cross-linguistic in a phylogenetic perspective (Bammesberger 1996). Franceschini's (1998) is a comparatist Romance perspective on the terminology of fishing. Tuaillon (1984) considered Romance terms for fish. Vinja (1968, 1976) is concerned with Romance names for given kinds of fish. Duponchel, who researched fish-names in Ivory Coast's Alladian, considered a list of 151 terms, outlined the folk taxonomy that emerges from that sublexicon, and also considered the names in colloquial French from Abidjan (Duponchel 1971a, 1971b), also discussed how intercultural contact affects neologisation in Alladian (Duponchel 1970).

In a historical perspective, when it comes to Aramaic fish-names, one must consider (as said) the by now one-century old, unrivalled, dense study, by Immanuel Löw (1854–1944), of Aramaic names for fish in Aramaic sources, be they from Jewish literature, or Syriac, in relation to parallels from the Arabic lexicon, as well as (when appropriate) to Greek lexical items that can be shown to have been borrowed. Löw (1906) — an early publication of the essay “Aramäische Fischnamen” — appeared in the same book as an essay by Arthur Hjelt (1906) on Syriac names for plants (a search of the British COPAC database would only return for this an offprint on hold at the University of Manchester library.) “Aramäische Fischnamen” is now accessible in Löw (1969, pp. 3–24).

Brent Berlin (2005) discussed size-symbolic properties of fish names. Saint-Denis (1943) discussed some fish names from Classical Latin, but his *magnum opus* on the subject is Saint-Denis (1947), supplemented by Saint-Denis (1966). Fluck (1974) was concerned with German fishing terms; Ribí (1939, 1942), with German fish names; Goltz (1981), with Low German fishing terms. Old English fish-names were investigated by Kohler (1906), cf. Whitman (1907); some late Middle English fish-names, by Mills (1964). German and Polish terms for hunting and fishing are covered by Cierpiał (1978). Eichler (1963) was concerned with German and Slavic names for fishing instruments. Baltic fish-names and bird-names are covered in Urbutis (1981). Latvian fish-names are the subject of Hinze (1984). René L'Hermitte (1963) summarised in little more than one page a study, then presented in full in L'Hermitte (1964), concerning such Russian fish-names that end in *-ga*. An example of such terms is *beluga* for a sturgeon species. Alain Le Berre (1972) supplied a diachronic lexicon of Breton fish-names (with nearly

1200 entries), based on the chronology of the occurrence in the textual corpus.

The terminology of inshore fishing in England and Wales (in English and Welsh), is the subject of Elmer (1973). Newfoundland English and French fishery and fishing terms, of Kirwin (1980). Salmon fishing terms in Columbia English, of Harris and Kess (1975). Battisti (1960–1961, 1962) discussed borrowing from Greek in Latin fish-names. Wagner (1942–1943) researched Sardinian fish-names; cf. Cavallo (2009), on fishers in Sardinian ponds. Fish-names from Andalusia and the Canary Islands are the subject of Martínez Gonzales (1989). Massignon (1965) studied fish-names from Corsican Italian. Catalan names for sea fishes were researched by Secretan (1988); cf. Schuchardt (1923), Duran i Ordinyana (1998). Griera (1923) is on Catalan fishing terms; cf. Griera (1950). Dalbera (1994) discussed Occitan fish-names and bird-names. Western Rhaeto-Romance fish-names are discussed by Toth (1991) and Landfors (1990); whereas the names from Friuli (a region in northeastern Italy) for freshwater fishes are the subject of Botner Picecco (1988/89). Gian Domenico Zucca (who when signing his papers adds his family dialectal nickname “u Stuk” to his family name) has published several articles about popular culture in a town in Piedmont, Italy — Castellazzo Bormida (*Bormida* is stressed on the antepenult) — and Zucca u Stuk (2003) is concerned in particular with the riverine fishes in local popular culture. Pepe (1971) researched fish-names from languages of the Balkans, being Italian loanwords. Vita (1973) discussed dialectal Italian fish-names in relation to Latin. La Medica (1969) discussed dialectal Italian fish-names of Greek origin. Pepe (1971), Vita (1973), La Medica (1969), and Botner Picecco (1988/89) are Laurea dissertations from the University of Padua. Salted fish, as well as the olive oil industry, in Roman-age Andalusia and Morocco, are the subject of Ponsich (1988), reviewed in Curtis (1991). Vătăcescu (1995) compared Albanian to Romanian fish-names.

Thompson (1947) and Strömberg (1943) are important resources for Greek fish-names. Cf. Lacroix (1937); Wood (1927–1928). Concerning *Le Vocabulaire des animaux marins en latin classique* by de Saint-Denis (1947), Alfred Andrews concluded a book review (1950, p. 336) by claiming: “To summarize, the book is a convenient and fairly reliable reference for the general meanings of classical Latin names of aquatic fauna, but it should be shelved with Thompson’s *Glossary of Greek Fishes* on one side and a good French dictionary on the other. It is of

little value to the ichthyologist who desires precise scientific identifications, and to the philologist who wishes full data on the history of the names. It is especially useful for the completeness of Latin citations, unmatched in any similar work". By Saint-Denis and Latin fish-names, also see his supplement to his dictionary (Saint-Denis 1966), and his paper on Pliny's fishes (Saint-Denis 1944); also see Cotte's (1944) *Poissons et animaux aquatiques au temps de Pline*. Cf. Saint-Denis (1943), on some Latin fish-names. Some papers by Alfred Andrews (1948, 1949, 1955) are concerned with particular fish-names in Greek and Latin. Schmid (1909) was concerned with fishes in Ovid's *Halieuticon*.

Bantu fish-names from Gabon are the subject of Mouguiama-Daouda (2007). Allegedly onomatopoeic etymologies have been proposed even for some fish-names (Bédard 1992), notwithstanding the proverbial muteness of fish (except grunters and the like); note however that Alinei (1983, p. 242) has cogently criticised onomatopoeia being invoked to explain out bird-names.

The section devoted to food ("Scrivere e ragionare sul cibo") in a paper collection in historiography, Laurioux and Moulinier-Brogi (2001), begins with two articles about fish: Catoni (2001), concerned with fish in Siena from the end of the 13th century to the late 15th century, and Grieco (2001) about treatises about fishes from the middle of the 16th century, in relation to a member of the ruling dynasty of Rimini, also in central Italy. By the way, another article from the same section is about eating and commensality of Jews and Christians (Sansy 2001). In relation to the subject of Grieco's paper, also consider a book-length article by Rossi (1984), which discusses the names for fishes, crustaceans, and molluscs in Italian-language 16th-century culinary, dietetic or medical treatises.

Sometimes cooked fish and fowl are presented by reference to a military analogue of the cook's art: Elizabethan books of military science "were so popular that Ben Jonson made them one of the many targets of satire in *The Staple of News*. In 3.2, Lickfinger says to Madrigal (the Poetaster and Jeerer) that the Master-Cook is the 'man o' men'" (Acheson 2011, p. 151, added underlining), and describes the cook's actions: "[...] he designes, he drawes, / He paints, he carues [carves], he builds, he fortifies, / Makes *Citadels* of curious fowle and fish, / He raiseth *Ramparts* of immortall *crust*; / And teacheth all the *Tacticks*, at one dinner: / [...] / The whole *Art Military*." (lines 20–29).

Caroline Février (2007) has traced the fabulous aquatic bestiary, from Roman mosaics to illustrated books from the Renaissance. Fishes in the medieval worlds, both in reality and in the imaginary, is the subject of a study by Hannelore Zug Tucci (1985). In a paper in ethnology and musicology, and also concerning the names of tribes with zoological semantic motivation, Kunike and Constant (1914) discussed the symbolism of fish among South American Indians.

Henri Lavondès and John E. Randall (1978) discussed names of fishes obtained from five Marquesan islands in Polynesia, and the Marquesan taxonomic system was analysed as a hierarchy on three levels, including names indicating size.

Louis Robert (1962) dealt with fish in the framework of the philology of *realia*, being concerned in particular with a cleric's letters, by a metropolitan from tenth-century Phrygia. The opening section in Robert (1964) is "Les poissons-scies". Krüger (1967) discussed fishes in medieval zoology.

Ancient Egyptian fish-names were discussed by D'Arcy W. Thompson (1928) and Jaroslav Černý (1937–1938), the latter in relation to pictorial representations. Aquatic animals as represented in Greek art are the subject of Delorme and Roux (1987). Meyboom (1977) discussed fishes in Roman mosaics from Pompeii. Fish are of interest to archaeologists in various contexts, such as the remains of fish, or occurrence in art, or in textual records, and so forth. Cf. Maarleveld (2010) on methodology. Jean Desse and Nathalie Desse-Berset (2000) were concerned with salted fish at the furthest eastern reach of the Graeco-Roman world, in relation to current practice in Makran, Pakistan; they stated their aims as follows (*ibid.*, p. 119): "nous confronterons des données textuelles antiques portant sur la fameuse «côte des Ichthyophages», aux marges orientales connues de notre monde antique, à de récentes analyses de faunes mises au jour au Makran (Bélouchistan, Pakistan). Non évoquée dans ces textes antiques, la conservation des poissons par salaison y est pourtant bien attestée dès le milieu du IV^e millénaire avant notre ère comme le révèlent de récentes analyses de faunes". In contrast, salted fish in the westernmost part of the Roman world is the subject of the already mentioned Ponsich (1988), reviewed in Curtis (1991).⁵⁴

⁵⁴ The introduction to a 2018 thematic issue of *Anthropozoologica* about *Animaux aquatiques et monstres des mers septentrionales* states: "Partant du récit *Tochmarc Emire*, consacré au héros irlandais Cuchulain, dans lequel les créatures marines sont

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appelées «le bétail de la mer», Natalia Petrovskaia («Poisson et pêche dans la littérature médiévale irlandaise et galloise: le bétail de la mer») étudie les références aux poissons dans la littérature irlandaise : ces récits témoignent en parallèle des réalités de la pêche et de la consommation de poisson en Irlande à l'époque médiévale et des nombreux éléments allégoriques qui peuplent les légendes irlandaises comme le «saumon de savoir». À ces observations font écho celles de Cécile Rochelois sur une vie d'ermite du XII^e siècle, Godric de Finchale, rédigée par un contemporain du saint, Reginald de Durham («Les pêches miraculeuses de Godric de Finchale. Dauphins et saumons avo-lontédans la vie d'un saint anglais du XII^e siècle»). Là aussi, dans un cadre spatio-temporel précis, des observations très concrètes sur les espèces, les techniques de pêche ou sur les habitudes alimentaires des habitants de l'estuaire de la Welland se mêlent à des épisodes miraculeux illustrant la bonté du saint envers les animaux ou la générosité de Dieu envers ses créatures" (Bouquet et al. 2018, p. 49). In her English abstract, Petrovskaia remarked (2018, p. 139): "It will be shown by means of a comparison between the *Navigatio sancti Brendani*, a Latin text of Irish origins, and the *Voyage de Saint Brendan*, its Anglo-Norman adaptation, that the presence of realistic elements in the representation of marine life in a text is proportional to the direct experience of the sea and of fishing on the part of the text's audience".

It cannot be taken for granted that what we now consider to be a fish was referred to. "Abordant le problème de l'identification, Olga Vassilieva-Codognet, dans «Le poisson cyclope d'Alexandre Neckam (*De naturis rerum*, II, 24): entre vérité zoologique et réminiscences virgiliennes», étudie le témoignage d'un autre encyclopédiste, Alexandre Neckam, qui décrit parmi les ennemis de l'ours blanc un poisson doté d'un seul oeil en forme d'écu triangulaire. Elle mène une enquête qui aboutit à plusieurs hypothèses et permet de comparer les propos tenus au XIII^e siècle sur l'ours blanc et les savoirs actuels sur cet animal" (Bouquet et al. 2018, p. 48). Vassilieva-Codognet (2018, p. 113) found that an aquatic mammal, not a fish, was meant: "Sur le versant zoologique, nous avons proposé plusieurs candidats possibles: le phoque à capuchon, la baleine beluga, l'orque et le morse. Sur le versant philologique, nous avons identifié la provenance (*Liber monstrorum* [...] et *l'Énéide* [...]) de cet «oeil en forme de bouclier triangulaire» qui fait toute l'étrangeté, voire la monstruosité, de ce singulier animal".

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