

Ephraim NISSAN (London)

***Kidor*: A TALMUDIC ONOMASTIC PUN, AND HYPOTHESES CONCERNING THE ETYMOLOGY. PART ONE**

Abstract. The actual etymology of a peculiar man's name, found in a late antique *nomen omen* tale, has been elusive. The dishonest innkeeper Kidor from a Talmudic story (whose folkloric typology we discuss) had a name that, sounding like negative wording from a particular *locus* in Scripture, alarmed one sage (because of homiletic etymology), but his two companions consigned their belongings to that innkeeper, who would not return them. *Kidor* (or rather <kydwr>) is not easy to etymologise. We progress considerably beyond its scholarly treatment thus far. We marshal onomastic data, make and compare hypotheses. Pre-Islamic Arabic anthroponymy may be involved (see Part Two); a Hebrew etymology is not ruled out. We point out Greek wordplay unlikely not to be detected in the Roman East. A Persian etymology, while not strictly impossible, is unconvincing. The most likely possibility is that the name was devised on purpose for the character in the tale, in order to illustrate *nomen omen* by referring to wording from Scripture homiletically (which is what the Talmudic tale does). But was there any onomastic item, in the broader region, which may have provided inspiration or a warrant for the tale credibly claiming that a person may have been bearing such a name?

Keywords: onomastics, puns, *nomen omen*, Talmud, homiletics

1. Introduction

This paper is concerned with the etymology of a puzzling anthroponym, as well as with textual *loci* revolving around onomastic punning in relation to a *nomen omen* tale. The dishonest innkeeper Kidor from a story found in both *Talmudim* (i.e., the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud) had a name that, sounding like a particular wording from Scripture, alerted one rabbi while his two companions, unwary, fell victims to the innkeeper's larceny. Homiletic etymology apart, *Kidor* as a personal name from the early rabbinic literature is not easy to etymologise. I agree with a referee who remarked one should not take it for granted that the name has an "actual etymology", as it is probable that the entire story is fiction, in which case the name would in all likelihood have been contrived to suit the purpose of the story, which the story itself makes explicit: *nomen est omen* and therefore we should pay attention to the meanings of personal names.

We progress considerably beyond Tal Ilan's suggestions in her late antique Jewish onomasticon. We discuss various possibilities, and favour a possible Arabic personal name (Arabic names were not absent in the pre-Islamic period from lands where Talmudic lore if not texts originated). We admit the possibility of a reasonable semantic motivation if the etymon is Hebrew instead, and point out a Greek wordplay unlikely not to be detected in the Eastern Roman Empire. We also consider the complex inter-denominational interplay of the Arabic name considered, as well as the Israeli Hebrew adaptation (and semantic remotivation) resulting from of its modern Judaeo-Arabic form, and onomastic punning involving Jewish liturgy that shaped how the personal name was used.

This is an interdisciplinary study, and this is reflected in how it combines subjects. In order to make access to its sections easier and more useful, Table 1 provides a table of contents. As can be seen, onomastics and folktale studies play an important role. Whereas the tale analysed comprises a playful aetiology of an onomastic item (taken to be *nomen omen*), the actual etymology of that same personal name has thus far not been dealt with satisfactorily. Whereas a conclusive solution is apparently out of reach, one can nevertheless argue for reasonable hypotheses. Figs 1 and 2 show the interdisciplinary interplay.

The most important points regarding the Talmudic tradition discussed are: (i) the presence of a shorter version of it in the Jerusalem Talmud, and a longer, narratively elaborate version in the Babylonian Talmud; and (ii) the related question of whether the longer or the shorter is older and/or more significant. In respect of the setting, onomastics, and etymology, the shorter version from the Jerusalem Talmud has priority. In respect of folklore studies instead, the version from Babylonian Talmud is tantalising, but it develops the earlier, shorter version.

We provide glottological discussions pertaining to the etymology and phonemic development of the name *Kidor*, and an initial discussion about onomastic puns in late antique literatures from the Mediterranean.

THEME ONE: ONOMASTIC WORDPLAY

2. Onomastic Punning in Jewish Texts: Early Rabbinic or Earlier

Punning¹ occurs across cultures,² and involves one or more languages at a time. Onomastic punning – wordplay about a proper name³ – is well-known from the Aggadic Midrash (early rabbinic to medieval Jewish homiletic exegesis

¹ There is a fairly large scholarly literature about punning, e.g. Redfern (1984 [2000]), Sobkowiak (1991), Culler (1988), Dynel (2010), Seewoester (2011).

² For example, see Sherzer (1993) on puns, comebacks, and verbal duelling on the Island of Bali.

PART ONE

1. Introduction

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References

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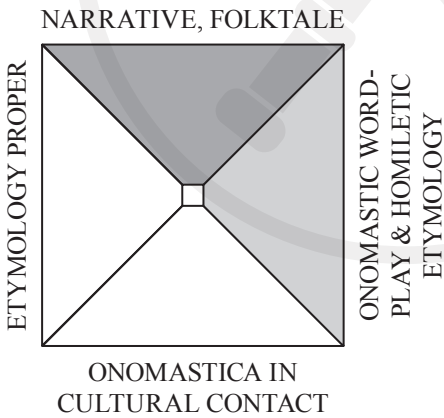
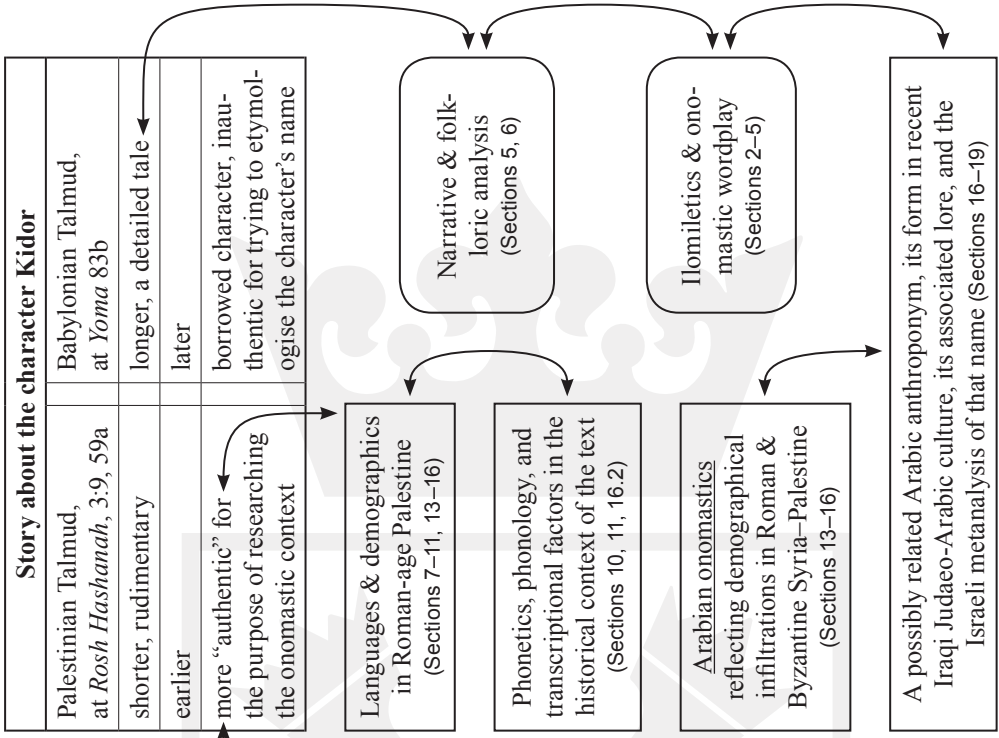
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APPENDIX A: Manipulation of Personal Names in Josephus Flavius

APPENDIX B: Personal Names Suggesting a Bad Sense in the Hebrew Bible

References

Table 1. Structure of the two parts of this study.




↑ Fig. 1. Interdisciplinary interplay at an aggregate level.
 → Fig. 2. Interdisciplinary interplay, in detail.

of the Bible). For example, in *Leviticus Rabbah*, 1:3, the name (or rather epithet) *Avigdor* as occurring in *1 Chronicles*, 4:18 is homiletically etymologised, along with an entire list of siblings of that Biblical character, and the names of all those siblings are applied to just one person: Moses. Once the homiletic text has set forth the proposition that all those persons are actually Moses, and that the mother mentioned is Moses' mother (Jochebed: a price to pay for that is that the other two children of the actual Jochebed, namely, Miriam and Aaron, are not dealt with, apparently as there was no leeway to accommodate them in the given homily), we may say that the aetiological goal is set concerning the name of each and every sibling, to justify the identification of the particular name with Moses. The goal is achieved by devising, for each such further names, an explanation by which the formation of the name is shown to be apt for the biographical details or the features of the cultural role of Moses.

Moreover, onomastic punning has been shown by Garsiel⁴ to be pervasive, though usually not overtly elaborated about, in the Hebrew Bible. (Bilingual

³ Humour about personal names is not necessarily based upon punning. Moreover, sometimes visual media are employed. See e.g. Deligne and Mori (1990). Let us consider now an instance of onomastic punning from the Roman dialect, in literary text from the first half of the 19th century. The foremost poet in the Italian dialect of Rome, Giuseppe Gioachino Belli (1791–1863), is the author of 2269 sonnets in the Roman dialect (*Sonetti romaneschi*), written in the 1830s and 1840s, which were published posthumously (1886–1891). Belli had given instructions for them to be burnt, because of his religious scruples, as well as his mixed feelings (he had been working for the censorship of the Papal States). The title by which he referred to them himself was *Er commedione* ('The Big Comedy'). They were written especially in 1830–1838 and 1843–1847. One of Belli's sonnets in *romanesco* is entitled *L'avvocato Cola* (i.e., 'Nick, the Lawyer'; *Cola* is the short form of the Italian male given name *Nicola*, whose *o* is stressed). The sonnet concisely describes a drama. The impoverished lawyer is compelled, in order to survive, to sell all his belongings within the span of seven or eight months, *fôr de l'onore e d'una sedia sola* – "except his honour and only one chair". Of the proceeds of the sale, very soon nothing is left. Sitting on that chair (*sedia*), the penniless lawyer shuts his eyes and dies of starvation (*ce mori d'inedia*, rhyming with *sedia*). The name chosen for the protagonist, *Cola*, rhymes with *gola*, 'throat': *Ma eh? Quer povero avvocato Cola! / [...] / e je toccava a gastigà la gola.* – "Huh? That poor lawyer Cola! / [...] / and he had to restrain his throat (*gola*)" (by not eating).

⁴ Garsiel (1991). One also comes across punning in the *Qur'ân*: this is the subject of Rippin (1994). Cf. Rosenthal (1956). Humour in the Hebrew Bible is the subject of a paper collection edited by Radday and Brenner (1990). Nevertheless, one sometimes comes across the concept of unhumorous puns (Smith 1979). The very credibility of the detection of humorous intentions in texts from ancient cultures (unless there is evidence that items were treated as humorous indeed) is a vexed issue. Let us mention its occurrence in Jewish studies. Whether there is or there isn't sarcasm in an Arabic medieval letter from the Cairo Geniza (a huge trove of manuscripts and fragments from the attic of an old synagogue in Cairo) is briefly discussed in Goitein's so-called *India Book*, on p. 186, fn. 16. See Goitein and Friedman (2008). 

wordplay is also present, in the Bible.)⁵ Onomastic elaboration or wordplay typifies midrashic punning in the early rabbinic literature. Onomastic punning in texts ascribed to Talmudic Sages from the Roman or Sassanian period is not necessarily about Biblical characters. Such punning sometimes concerns some contemporary person, or then concerning a stereotypical (or even hyperbolic type) character. A good example of the latter is found in the Babylonian Talmud in tractate *Nedarim*, 66b, concerning a wife alleged to have several physical blemishes (i.e., hers is a grotesque body, and she is an archetype for this), and who is aptly named *Likhluḥit*, a name transparently derived from the noun *likhlúkh* ‘dirt’.⁶ Of course, across cultures there is no dearth of instances when given per-

An arguably poignant example follows, of the problem of whether humour was originally intended. In 1889, M[onsieur] Marcano published “Caricature précolombienne des Cerritos” in the *Bulletins de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris* (Marcano 1889). Marcano pointed out the existence of grotesque images from native cultures of Latin America (e.g., “M. Désire Charnay a publié l’image grotesque d’un guerrier teuchtli, exhumé par lui du cimetière de Tenenepanco”), and claimed that these are samples of pre-Columbian caricature: “des échantillons de la caricature précolombienne”. In particular, Marcano was concerned with an image from Cerritos, claiming that it was a caricature deriding a Spanish clergyman: “Il s’agit donc ici d’une caricature, et vraisemblablement c’est un religieux espagnol qu’on a voulu ridiculiser, ainsi que l’indiquent le costume et la coiffure”. Now, I hope there would be a near consensus among my present readers that even without definitely excluding any humorous intent of the originators and early audience of those Native American images, Marcano’s confidence that a caricature (as meant in modern Western Europe) was intended was misplaced. This is an example of overinterpreting an image. When it comes to reconstructing authorial intentions concerning text or imagery from a bygone era, sometimes a critic feels confident enough to exclude humorous intent. While discussing the Hague Bestiary (MMW 10.B.25, written in France in the mid-15th century, “Douai 711 was probably its model”), Willene Clark (2006, p. 77) states: “While trying to place trees behind animals, as the Douai painter had done, he sometimes creates the appearance of a tree “growing” from the animal’s belly, a comical effect that was certainly not his intent”. Rendsburg (1988).

⁵ The vowelling in Marcus Jastrow’s dictionary (1903), p. 585, s.v. *yafe*, is with [a], not [i]: “it was nice (appropriate) that they named her *lakhluḥit* (aversion)”, in his translation. Concerning the technical term *vowelling*, a referee made this useful remark: “Regarding the term *vowelling*: ‘pointing’ now seems to be the established translation of Hebrew *nikud* rather than ‘voweling.’” This however requires some explanation. *Pointing* is the literal translation of the Hebrew term /niqqud/. The reason is that the diacritic marks representing vowels are often constituted of dots, or sets of dots. The same referee also provided this gem of a remark:

Since the device of pointing Hebrew-Aramaic texts is younger than the compilation and redaction of the Talmud (likewise, of the Jewish Bible), the pointing of this or that Talmudic word is not a major consideration when one proposes or evaluates an etymology. The proposer of an etymology *hopes* that the conventional pointing is consistent with the etymology and the critic of an etymology *hopes* that the pointing

sons are found to be aptly named, *les bien nommés*.⁷ The example of *Likhluhīt* illustrates a point important for the present paper: it is a fictitious name, not one from the actual onomasticon. There is the possibility that the same may be true of the name *Kidōr* we discuss in Theme II.⁸

Sometimes claims are made, in the Aggadic Midrash (or, more broadly, in the Aggadah, i.e., non-legal material), concerning whether a name fits the bearer. Within homiletic exegesis, *Genesis Rabbah* 26:18 claims that the names in the antediluvian genealogy signal rebellion (*mardut*), and proceeds to demonstrate this by analysing a few such names homiletically, showing that (like the bearers), the very names were associated with rebellion against the Creator.

Numbers Rabbah 16:4 applies Moses' grim considerations in *Deuteronomy* 32:20, "*ki dor tahpukhot hemma*", "Because (*ki*) a generation (*dor*) of reversals (*tahpukhot*) they are (*hemma*)", to the Ten Explorers, who (unlike Joshua and Caleb) reported back to the Children of Israel by besmirching the Promised Land, trying to dissuade the people from going there. *Numbers Rabbah* 16:7 elaborates about the names of the explorers. Having dealt with protective measures encapsulated in Joshua's and Caleb's names, the text generalises:

There are persons whose names are nice and whose deeds are ugly, [and ones] whose names are ugly and whose deeds are nice, [and ones] whose names are nice and whose deeds are nice, [and ones] whose names and deeds are ugly.

is not consistent with the etymology, but correct etymologies may be inconsistent with the pointing (the pointing could be etymologically wrong) and wrong etymologies may, by coincidence, be consistent with the etymologically correct pointing.

⁷ I have a book in progress on this subject. Sometimes cultural texts do remark about the onomastic aptness (see e.g. in Nissan, in press; cf. Nissan 2013), and some other times there is just the potential for such detection. For example, since 1996 to the present (2014) Arsène Wenger has been the manager of the English premiership football club Arsenal, and in Italy in the third quarter of the 20th century there was an active zoologist whose name was *Leo Pardi*. In Hanoverian Britain, Sackville (a general) was sacked, and Impey (a judge) was impeached.

In the typology of international folklore, tale motif Z183.0.1.3.1§ is "Name that fits the name bearer"; it occurs for example in the tale of *Musrūr and Zayn al-Mawāṣif* in *The Thousand and One Nights*. "§ (Section sign) at the end of a number indicates a new motif added by Hasan El-Shamy to the Thompson tale-motif system." See (El-)Shamy (2006). Stith Thompson's index is Thompson (1955–1958).

⁸ Bear in mind this proviso, which a referee pointed out: "Regarding 'when examining the personal name *Kidōr*,' since all we have in the Talmud is the unpointed spelling (kydwr), as a consequence of which the values of the two *matres lectionis* are not certain (does ⟨y⟩ represent */e/ or */i/? does ⟨w⟩ represent */o/ or */u/?), it would be better to quote the name only in transliteration: ⟨kydwr⟩. Otherwise, you could be challenged to explain why /i/ and /o/ are definitely the vowels of this name. And if you said, 'those are the vowels of *ki dor* in *Deuteronomy* 32:20,' you would implicitly be accepting the traditional explanation of the name."

The text then provides examples for three of these four categories. For example, the Returnees from the Babylonian Exile had ugly names but nice deeds, whereas “those whose names are ugly and whose deeds are ugly are the Explorers”.⁹ The name of one of them, Setur, is then analysed homiletically by way of example in *Numbers Rabbah* 16:7.

In both international folklore, and Jewish texts, one comes across the motif of children given an ugly name for protection.¹⁰ Writing in medieval Champagne, France, the foremost Jewish Biblical and Talmudic exegete, Rashi (1040–1105), was accustomed to aesthetical assumptions which caused him to propose that ‘Cushite’ as being a descriptor for the bride taken by Moses (*Numbers* 12:1)¹¹ was by antilogy, conveying the opposite: “It is because of her beauty, that she was called Cushite, like a person who calls his handsome son Cush to ward off the evil eye”.¹² The name *Cushi* does occur indeed in the Hebrew Bible (*Jeremiah*

⁹ There also exists the motif of characters (giants) whose names have sinister significance (this being motif Z100.1, which occurs in the tale of *‘Alā’ al-Dīn Abū al-Shāmāt*, in *The Thousand and One Nights*), and the motif of a name as a harbinger of evil – this being El-Shamy’s (2006) motif N120.2§, which occurs in the tale of *Budūr and Jubayr ibn ‘Umayr*, again in *The Thousand and One Nights*.

¹⁰ This is El-Shamy’s (2006) motif P208.7.6§. The motif occurs in the tale of the *Barber’s Third Brother: Exposes Blind Robbers*, in *The Thousand and One Nights*.

¹¹ Philo and Josephus do not mention Moses’ Cushite wife. Feldman (1998, pp. 62–63) attempts an explanation for this omission. One of the reasons he offers, is that to Josephus’ readers, the given episode may have appeared to ascribe to positive characters “prejudice against the much respected Ethiopians, who were renowned for their wisdom, piety, and bravery, who are termed blameless by Homer (*Iliad* 1.423), and from whom, according to one theory (Tacitus, *Histories* 5.2.2), the Jews themselves were said to be descended” (Feldman 1998, p. 63).

¹² When this statement is made by Rashi (i.e., Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, b. Troyes, Champagne, 1040, d. Worms, 1105), he may be thinking of Romance names of the types *Maurus* and *Mauritius*. Also consider the etymology of the English name *Nigel*. Latin *nigellus* is a diminutive of *niger*, and there existed the perception that the English name *Nigel* is related. A referee remarked that the derivation of *Nigel* is a bit more complicated: it is an anglicisation of *Nigellus*, which is a mistaken etymology of Middle English male given name *Niel* ~ *Nihel* (> Modern English *Neil*), which is not of Latin origin. There is no actual etymological connection of *Neil* to Latin *niger* here. The English name *Nigel* only appeared in England in the fifteenth century. I would like to stress that folk-etymological perceptions had a cultural impact, and their being scientifically wrong does not impinge upon how premodern people lived with their onomastic data.

As for Rashi’s statement we mentioned, the medieval West would also ascribe a darker complexion to Egyptians, which was aesthetically dispreferred: compare Rashi’s gloss to *Genesis* 12:11, to the old-fashioned Italian adjective *ghezzo* [‘getso] ‘dark’. Also contrast the senses ‘dark-complexioned white person’ vs. ‘Black’, co-occurring in the title ‘Ludovico il Moro and his Moors’ of McGrath (2002).

The Italian adjective *ghezzo* (which is now quite rare), ‘dark’, is correctly pronounced as [‘getso], but it tends to be mispronounced as [‘gedzo]. As for the dialects,

36:14, *Zephaniah* 1:1). The father of the prophet Zephaniah was named *Cushi*, or, less likely, Zephaniah is described as the son of a Cushite who remains unnamed. Yet, in his medieval Romance environment, Rashi is likely to have been thinking of first names of the types *Maurus* and *Mauritius*.¹³

3. Roman-Age Onomastic Wordplay: Jewish, Roman, or Both

When, in late antiquity, the famous rabbinic academy of Sura in Mesopotamia got a new rector, scholars in nearby Nizunia refused to defer to his authority. The rector then sent to them a faculty member, the prominent Hamnuna. Sura, the Nizunian scholars claimed, was not on a par with them. Willing to test his own stature, they proposed a question to which he had the scruples not to reply (short of improvising). They jeered in gloat: “You are not Hamnuna, but Qarnuna!”; i.e., “Prof. Hotfish, my foot. Some Mr. Coldfish you are” (Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Qiddushin*, 25a). Elsewhere, I treat this anecdote as an example of *mis-antonyms*, i.e., false opposites. Nizunian gloat may have implied, as well, patterning of *Qarnuna* after the word for ‘horn’, as though: “a stupid beast, horns and all”. The Jewish medieval commentator Rashi¹⁴ interpreted *Qarnuna* as ‘idle’ (cf. idiomatic “sitting by the corners”), but related it to *qarnona* (to him, denoting ‘market’), as though the nickname stood for: “one who has squandered time at the marketplace” and didn’t study enough.

take Calabrian *jizzu* [‘yitsu]. In all cases, the etymology is from Latin *aegyptius*, ‘Egyptian’. See Rohlfs (1966, pp. 412–413, §291). In Italy, there exists the family name *Ghèzzi* [‘getsì]. Note however that in the Milanese dialect, *el ghèzz* (whose plural is *i ghezzi*, and where *z* is pronounced as [z]) denotes ‘the green lizard’ (*Lacerta viridis*), whose standard Italian name is *ramarro*.

¹³ T. G. Pinches, s.v. ‘Cush’ in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Bromiley 1979–1988), stated: “In the opinion of W. Max Müller [1893, p.] 112), the Egyptians, when they became acquainted with the Negroes, having no word to express this race, classed them with the nechese, which thereafter included the Negroes. If the Hebrew name Phinehas (*Pi-nechas*) be really Egyptian and mean ‘the black’, there is still no need to suppose that this meant ‘the Negro’, for no Israelite would have borne a name with such a signification”. Really? Apart from the fact that the person was given an Egyptian name, we cannot determine what there was, in the particular name, which caused it to be selected. A referee remarked that the relevant Egyptian word here is *panhys* ‘the Nubian’. Egyptian names are also borne by other prominent characters from the generation of the Exodus, including the siblings trio Aaron (*aharon*), Moses (*moshe* ‘son’), and Miriam.

¹⁴ Of Troyes, in Champagne, thus one who may have presumably perceived in Old French *cornu* to be germane to the Aramaic, but chose not to give expression to it. Cf. his interpreting Old French *calva souris*, cf. French *chauve souris* ‘bat’, as being related to Hebrew *šrṣ* ‘swarming animal’ based on how he transliterated the term.

Of course, anthroponomastic playword was also practised by non-Jews in antiquity. Take the Romans. Cicero used *Minos* (the name of a mythical king of Crete) as a metaphor for a wise man; in particular, he used it for Calvisius Sabinus, a senator. This he did in order to subserve the following pun: Cicero nicknamed the duo of senators, Calvisius Sabinus and Statilius Taurus, *Minotaurus*, but this compound happens to be the name of the man-eating mythical monster, half man and half bull, allegedly living in the Labyrinth in Crete in the times of Minos. (The Minotaurus was so named by a compound of the name of Minos, whose wife had given birth to the beast, and of a Greek – or similar Latin – term for ‘bull’.) In his *Institutio oratoria*, Quintilian reprehended such alteration of names for rhetorical purposes as calling a sharp-tempered Placidus “Acidus”. Matthews¹⁵ discussed some puns on ancient Roman *cognomina*. What is more, in scholarship it has been shown that Josephus Flavius, who was mainly writing in Greek for a Roman audience, was able to rather subtly play with the names of persons he was mentioning. We relegate the details of this into Appendix A, which will appear in the sequel of the present study.

THEME TWO: A LATE ANTIQUE *NOMEN OMEN* NARRATIVE

4. Anthroponymy as Being a Cue for Evaluation of the Name Bearer: The Case of *Kidor*

We are going to concern ourselves with the Talmudic narrative about a character called *Kidor*. A succinct version appears in the Jerusalem Talmud, at *Rosh Hashanah*, 3:9, 59a, in mid column: “A man was called *Kidor*”, with what rabbi Meir said about that. That shorter version is the one most important for onomastics (one of the two foci of this article). Folklore studies (the other focus of this paper) may especially take interest in the fuller version, as found in the Babylonian Talmud, where *Yoma* 83b – let us consider first the fuller textual context – is concerned with (among the other things) what to do, and what prominent people allegedly did, when a person is seized by ravenous hunger. For example: “Our Rabbis taught: If one was seized with a ravenous hunger, he is given to eat honey and all kinds of sweet things, for honey and very sweet food enlighten the eyes of man.” There is the following anecdote about travelling rabbis: “R. Judah and R. Jose were walking together when a ravenous hunger seized R. Judah. He seized a shepherd and devoured his bread. R. Jose said to him: You have robbed the shepherd! As they entered the city, a ravenous hunger seized R. Jose. They brought him all sorts of foods and dishes. Whereupon R. Judah said to him: I may have deprived the shepherd, but you have deprived a whole town.”

¹⁵ Matthews (1973).

This is followed by another anecdote about travelling rabbis, and this time, hunger is not a theme (the translation is from the English Soncino edition¹⁶ of 1935–1952, and the brackets appear there):

Also, R. Meir and R. Judah and R. Jose were on a journey together. (R. Meir always paid close attention to people's names, whereas R. Judah and R. Jose paid no such attention to them). Once as they came to a certain place, they looked for a lodging, and as they were given it, they said to him [the innkeeper]: What is your name? – He replied: Kidor. Then he [R. Meir] said: Therefrom it is evident that he is a wicked man, for it is said: For a generation [Ki-dor] very forward are they.

R. Judah and R. Jose entrusted their purses to him; R. Meir did not entrust his purse to him, but went and placed it on the grave of that man's father.¹⁷ Thereupon the man had a vision in his dream [saying]: Go, take the purse lying at the head of this man! In the morning he [the innkeeper] told them [the Rabbis] about it, saying: This is what appeared to me in my dream. They replied to him: There is no substance in the dream of the Sabbath night.

The innkeeper's name, כִּדּוֹר *Kidor*, is homiletically explicated based upon

כִּי דוֹר תְּהוֹכּוֹת הֵמָּה

Because (*ki* כִּי) a generation (*dor* דוֹר) of reversals
(*tahpukhot* תְּהוֹכּוֹת) they are (*hemma* הֵמָּה),

¹⁶ Its editor was Isidore Epstein (1935–1952). The Reformatted Soncino Talmud (RST) was made freely available online by Reuven Brauner at <http://halakhah.com/indexrst.html>. We are using Epstein's edition out of convenience. A referee remarked that it would be good to check Schottenstein's and Steinsaltz's editions and Neusner's and Rodkinson's translations for any pertinent information.

¹⁷ Of course, reception of the tale (*qua* readers open to a literary experience) requires that one suspend disbelief, and assume that the rabbi, in a strange place, was able to find the graveyard, and also to locate the grave of the innkeeper's father. We are not told whether he inquired with anybody of the local people, a gap in the narration and a cumbersome element for the narrative, being a subplot that would open up the possibility that the persons asked would report to the innkeeper that a foreigner had been asking awkward questions, and that they concerned the grave of the innkeeper's father.

Taking issue with "reception of the tale requires that one suspend disbelief", a referee asked: "Should we suspend disbelief or should we disbelieve? The story has all the making of being fiction, as many of the stories in the Talmud indeed are." This is well taken, but we need distinguish between what readers of fiction who want to enjoy the literary experience do (they suspend disbelief, even though if the fiction is realistic they may evaluate its *verisimilitude* or, which is not the same, the *legisimilitude*, i.e., compliance with the rules of the world, of what is related), and what critical readers do, all the more so if they are to do it in scholarly fashion within philology, rather than literary studies or literary theory.

– the continuation in Moses' grim forecast in *Deuteronomy* 32:20 being the explanation of the previous hemistich: "children in whom G-d has no trust". Moses' reference is to a future generation who would cast religion aside.

In the Soncino translation, the homiletic wordplay about *כידור* *Kidor* (the person's name) and *כי דור* *ki dor* (occurring in a Biblical verse) gets this note: "Ibid. XXXII, 20. The name 'Kidor' suggested to R. Meir one who does not deserve confidence. That, as he later explained, was an idiosyncrasy of his own, amounting at best to an intuitive caution."

The Soncino translation of the tale proceeds as follows:

R. Meir went, waited there all day, and then took the purse with him. In the morning they [the Rabbis] said to him: 'Give us our purses'. He said: There never was such a thing! R. Meir then said to them: Why don't you pay attention to people's names? They said: Why have you not told this [before], Sir? He answered: Consider this but a suspicion. I would not consider that a definite presumption! Thereupon they took him [the host] into a shop [and gave him wine to drink]. Then they saw lentils on his moustache. They went to his wife and gave her that as a sign, and thus obtained their purses and took them back. Whereupon he went and killed his wife.

The bracketed addition "and gave him wine to drink" in the Soncino English translation is explained in a note: "Supplemented by Bah", i.e., Rabbi Joel Sirkesh, known as the Bah after the acronym, *Bah*, of the title of his book *Bayit Hadaš*. Another note in the Soncino translation explains how the rabbis obtained back their purses from the innkeeper's wife: "Telling him the husband had sent them for the purses and giving her as a proof the fact that lentils had been the last meal in her house." "Consider this but a suspicion" refers to R. Meir's suspecting that the innkeeper may be dishonest upon learning that his name was *Kidor*, which suggested to him Scripture: "Because (*כי* *ki*) a generation (*דור* *dor*) of reversals (*tahpukhot* תהפוכות) they are (*hemma* המה)". A note in the Soncino translation waters down the irrational element in such an inference: "The name 'Kidor' suggested to R. Meir one who does not deserve confidence. That, as he later explained, was an idiosyncrasy of his own, amounting at best to an intuitive caution." This is a belief that we describe as *nomen omen*, but which strictly speaking, is not primarily about foretelling the future: rather, it is precisely captured by the Japanese proverb *na wa tai o arawasu*, "A name shows a person's substance" (mentioned by Loveday 2013, p. 560).

5. Typological Considerations About the Tale

"We could not find an AT type for the Talmudic tale, and neither an oicotype."¹⁸ This reply that Dr. Idit Pintel-Ginsberg of the Israel Folklore Archives (IFA) in Haifa kindly sent me on 11 June 2012, concerned the English translation of the

Kidor narrative the way it appears in the Babylonian Talmud. That a neat clustering within the typology of international folklore is apparently unavailable is itself an interesting result. My immediate reaction was to point out: “not finding a tale-type is itself an important result, because it indicates that it is a tale [that falls between the chairs], so to speak, and perhaps it suggests that there was a literary hand devising it, rather than just cladding an extant tale with the names of well-known rabbis.”¹⁹ At any rate, the conclusion of the tale version from the Babylonian Talmud has parallels in Oriental Jewish folktales recorded at IFA (see below).

Clearly, the inn anecdote from *Yoma* 83b in the Babylonian Talmud – for which there is a parallel in the Jerusalem Talmud at *Rosh Hashanah* III, end, 59a – is a story about the tricked ones tricking back the fraudster: the rabbis were able to tell the innkeeper’s wife that she had fed him lentils, which is private information, so that she would consider this as proof that her husband had made these customers privy to such private information in order for them to obtain the valuables.

It is also a tale about the clever companion who *ab initio* was not duped. Rabbi Meir is proven superior to his companions by the fact that he held the (in the storyworld) correct belief that *nomen omen* – that the name foretells the future – and that one may, indeed must, derive practical guidance for everyday life from what a person’s name signals about that person’s character, habits, and future behaviour relevant for oneself. Arguably the Kidor story is primarily a *nomen omen* tale.

That the story ends with the bad guy killing his wife is an extreme form of narrative resolution which is not infrequent in international folklore. Even the victims of a trickster may end up killing their wives, in that case having been duped into the belief that they had obtained means to resuscitate the dead; those men then cause themselves to die in the belief that the outcome would be

¹⁸ In actual instances of international folk types, it is often the case that *oicotypisation* reshapes the tale: in the given locale and given generation when a version of the tale was told (and as reported about one or two generations later on), there was a cultural environment (*oicotype*) whose circumstances suggested a given customisation of some *motifeme* (an abstraction of a motif) into a given actual motif. *Motifeme* is a concept introduced by Alan Dundes (1962, repr. 1975). *Oikotype* or *oicotype* or *oecotype* is a concept originally introduced by Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1948).

¹⁹ A referee remarked on this: “my suggestion [is] that the story is fiction.” In all likelihood it is fiction indeed, but what I was explaining to my interlocutor from the folklore archive is that this particular fiction writing on the part of the Talmudic author may well have been creative and devising something novel, rather than relating a just quite superficial adaptation of an international tale type by modifying the characters’ names and identities and the oikotype, i.e., the cultural setting, of the story.

The referee also remarked: “We have here a probable *hapax legomenon*: *kidor* seems to occur only in one passage in the Talmud. Moreover, the name plays a central role in the story, the moral of which is: consider the meaning of a person’s name because if you neglect to consider it, you may run into trouble. In my opinion, it is not likely that such a story is true. Rather, the story is probably fictional and the name was contrived as an allusion to *Deuteronomy* 32:20.” This is beyond dispute, I would say.

advantageous (such is the case of the anonymous fifteenth-century Italian tale *Storia di Campriano contadino*,²⁰ and of its European variants, the Unibos or One-Ox stories):²¹ such stories are “fatal deception” tales. But a more “realistic” context for episode acme or for narrative final resolution consisting of murder by a character whose goals were thwarted, is that the killing is carried out of anger (at the one killed, if a relative, or at oneself, if the murder is suicide).

In her book about folktales of the Jews of Iran,²² Central Asia and Afghanistan, the late Sarah Soroudi²³ lists two Afghan Jewish versions (IFA 2835 and IFA 5240) of the Jewish tale-type 1525 *J (introduced by Heda Jason)²⁴ *Rascal’s Wife Returns Appropriated Object*:

- I. Rascal cheats man (does not return deposit, does not pay for purchase, etc.)
- II. Cheated person learns about rascal’s last meal from the remnants on his beard (hands) or overhears the code used between rascal and his wife.
- III. He approaches the wife, gives her the “sign” from her husband and recovers his property. Rascal punishes wife.

Early rabbinic lore has tales about a gentile selling a red heifer to the Jews; in one such story, the protagonist is righteous, whereas in the other story, he is wicked but is thwarted and commits suicide. There is a story about the righteous gentile (Dama of Ascalon, in the Babylonian Talmud at *Kiddushin*, 31a) who was supernaturally rewarded with a red heifer being born to a cow of his, so that he

²⁰ Edited by Albino Zenatti (1884), translated into English on pp. 285–295 in Ziolkowski (2009).

²¹ See Ziolkowski (2009), Chapter 4.

²² A referee remarked that the rest of this section is not in etymology. Indeed. My reply is that any folklorist would tell you that you need to discuss this tale seriously in terms of folklore studies, too, otherwise there would be no point in discussing the etymology in the first place. It is only worthwhile to discuss the etymology, once we do justice to the folklore. Etymology is never disembodied. The etymology of names for objects has a contextual material culture to reckon with, and as Mario Alinei has stressed on occasion, etymology cannot be disembodied; it is not an enigmatist’s exercise (see below). In the case at hand, we are dealing with a tale, not a concrete object; in this case, folklore is paramount. The following are Alinei’s words from p. 217 in Alinei and Nissan (2007):

Agli ormai pochi studiosi che continuano a interessarsi di etimologia va quindi detto, senza esitazione, che finché l’etimologia continuerà a identificarsi con una tecnica puramente enigmistica, e priva di qualsiasi attenzione per le caratteristiche antropologiche della “cosa” e per il suo specifico contesto geografico e storico-culturale, ci sono poche speranze che l’etimologia guadagni il posto che si merita nelle scienze storiche, oltre che nella linguistica moderna.

²³ On p. 181 in: Sarah Sorour Soroudi’s (2008) posthumous *The Folktale of Jews from Iran, Central Asia and Afghanistan: Tale-Types and Genres*. The book was edited by Heda Jason.

²⁴ Jason (1965).

would recover what out of filial piety he had previously lost (for the sake of not waking his father to take the safe's key from under the father's cushion), a recovery effected by selling the red heifer to the Jews for a hefty price – which is what she was worth, because of the very rare occurrence of a perfectly red heifer, and because of the Biblical prescription for Jews to cleanse themselves of the defilement caused by a dead human body by means of the aspersion of the ashes of a red heifer (a rite that came to an end with the destruction of the Second Sanctuary).²⁵

The early rabbinic tradition also has a story, in *Pesiqta Rabbati* 14:1–3 (MS Parma 141a; *editio princeps* 22a–22b) about the unworthy gentile who, having been negotiating the sale of his red heifer to the Jews, determined out of spite to make her unfit for their ritual purposes, by yoking her after the Jews' departure; on their return, the Jews notice symptoms of the heifer having had a yoke on, so they call off the deal and tell the seller to play pranks on his mother, not them. The thwarted trickster then commits suicide over his losing that bargain.²⁶

²⁵ “It was propounded of R. ‘Ulla: How far does the honour of parents [extend]? – He replied: Go forth and see what a certain heathen, Dama son of Nethinah by name, did in Askelon. The Sages once desired merchandise from him, in which there was six-hundred-thousand [gold Denarii] profit, but the key was lying under his father, and so he did not trouble him. Rab Judah said in Samuel’s name: R. Eliezer was asked: How far does the honour of parents [extend]? – Said he: Go forth and see what a certain heathen, Dama son of Nethinah by name, did in Askelon. The Sages sought jewels for the ephod, at a profit of six-hundred-thousand [gold Denarii] – R. Kahana taught: at a profit of eight-hundred-thousand – but as the key was lying under his father’s pillow, he did not trouble him. The following year the Holy One, blessed be He, gave him his reward. A red heifer was born to him in his herd. When the Sages of Israel went to him [to buy it], he said to them, ‘I know you, that [even] if I asked you for all the money in the world you would pay me. But I ask of you only the money which I lost through my father’s honour.’ Now, R. Hanina observed thereon: If one who is not commanded [to honour his parents], yet does so, is thus [rewarded], how much more so one who is commanded and does so!” (from the Soncino English translation of the Babylonian Talmud: Epstein 1935–1952).

²⁶ The following translation is my own:

§1 R. Phineas the Cohen, son of Ḥamma, in the name of our Sages: It came upon to pass that the Jews needed a red heifer, and were finding none, but later found her in the possession of a gentile. They went and told him: “Sell the cow you have to us, as we need her. He told them: “Pay me her price, and take her”. “What is her price?” He told them: “Three *zehuvim* (golden coins) or four”.

§2 They told him: “We will pay”. While they had gone in order to bring in the money, that gentile felt for where [i.e., for which purpose] they needed the cow. Once they came bringing the money, he told them: “I am not selling it to you”. They told him: “Do you want to raise her price? If you ask, we will give you anything you ask for”. That evil one, as he was seeing them hard pressed, jeered at them. They told him: “Take five *zehuvim*”, but he would have none of that. “Take ten!” “Take twenty!” “Take thirty!” “Take fifty!” Until they got as high as one hundred *zehuvim*, and he would have none of that.

6. Ironies in the *Kidor* Tale

Concerning the statement of the rabbis to the innkeeper: “There is no substance in the dream of the Sabbath night”, here is the Soncino translation’s note: “The Sabbath rest gives rise to idle thoughts which are then reflected in dreams.” Actually there are multifold ironies, in that advice the rabbis give the innkeeper. R. Judah and R. Jose are unaware of what R. Meir did, but R. Meir apparently agrees with the statement that, as though, all three rabbis were conveying to the innkeeper: it may be that just one of them gave the advice, perhaps it was R. Meir, and the other two rabbis agreed. The innkeeper relating his dream should have alerted R. Judah and R. Jose to that innkeeper’s ravenous character, as he is actually avowing to lust for somebody else’s purse.

To R. Judah and R. Jose, the dream is just nonsense, and they take no heed from the dream just as they did not heed R. Meir’s earlier caution. R. Meir instead is of course aware that his own purse is on the grave of the innkeeper’s father. Dissuading the innkeeper from heeding the dream is a necessary step for R. Meir to avoid having his purse stolen by the innkeeper. It is surprising that R. Meir did not fear the purse being stolen by some other visitor at the graveyard, and it is all the more surprising that R. Meir made it easy for the innkeeper to be informed

There are among our Sages those who say: “Until they got as high as one thousand *zhevim*”. They reached an agreement with him, and went away to bring him that money. What did that evil one do? He told a fellow gentile: Lo and behold how I am playing with those Jews. Do they want her and are paying me that money? It is because she never had a yoke on. I am going to take the yoke and place it on her, and will take their money”. And he did so. He took the yoke and placed it on her neck all night long.

§3 The requirements of the [red] heifer are that she never had a yoke on. There are two hairs where the yoke would be placed, such that as long as she never had a yoke on, those two hairs are straight, but as soon as she has a yoke on, those two hairs are bent right away. There also is another symptom: as long as she never had a yoke on, her eyes are alike (*šwwt*), but as soon as she has a yoke on, her eyes *šwrwt* (linger on?), and she is changed, squints, and looks at the yoke. Once they came to take her from him, with all that gold in their hands, and they showed the gold to him, he immediately went in and took the yoke off the heifer, and took her out to them. Once he had them see her, they began to check watchfully for the symptoms: those two hairs that had been straight, had become bent, and moreover, her eyes had become squinting because of the yoke. They told him: “Take your cow. We don’t need her. Go play pranks on your mother”.

§4 Once that evil one saw that they returned his cow to him and that he came off with nothing, losing all those *zhevim*, that same mouth that had said “I cheat them” began to say: “Blessed be He, who chose this nation”, and he went into his home, hanged a rope, and strangled himself. [...]

The dishonest seller had no need whatsoever to put the yoke on the cow, other than in order to derive pleasure from deceit. He did so in night time, not in order to till a field in daylight.

by the dead, as the father's spirit would care enough about the innkeeper's this-worldly gain for him to advise him in a dream about the opportunity to steal the purse of R. Meir.

The latter must have been confident in eventually succeeding in dissuading the innkeeper from heeding the dream, but R. Meir may have been reckoning that such father, such son, and that Kidor's father had been as unworthy in life as his son is (on the evidence of his personal name), and that the dead father would rather have his son sin more in this world, even though the dead father must have been sorely aware of other-worldly retribution for the wicked ones. These inferences are not explicit in the tale, but they make R. Meir's behaviour into one of defiance.

The innkeeper Kidor, too, defies a risk as he is apparently confident he would not lose control and have his goals thwarted as a consequence, when he lets himself be made to drink wine by customers to whom he had already revealed his larceny by flatly denying he had ever received the purses of two of them.

Alternative possible understandings of R. Meir's behaviour are that either he located the grave prophetically (but if able to do so, he could as well have or access foreknowledge of the innkeeper's bad behaviour without any need to infer the bad character of the name from the name *Kidor*), or otherwise, R. Meir just hid his purse near a grave, without realising it was that of the innkeeper's father – whereas the narrator of the narrative is omniscient, and aware of what R. Meir did not know.

The narrator's omniscience is also expressed in the statement that the innkeeper killed his wife. The Talmud is primarily a code of law, even though (as in the case at hand) it also contains aggadic (i.e., non-legal) material of sundry kinds, and these sometimes are folktales, clad sometimes as anecdotes about historical characters. Were one to take the narrative for a historical anecdote, then we may wonder how it could be definitely claimed that it was the innkeeper who killed his wife. Did the three rabbis leave on their way for some other town (being therefore unaware of what happened at the innkeeper and his wife's own lodging shortly afterwards), and only learned later that the innkeeper's wife was killed, and that it had become common knowledge that her husband's was her killer? If the murder took place when they were alone in a room, or even in front of their children if they had any, there was no pair of valid witnesses for a court to condemn.²⁷ There was

²⁷ The two-witness rule is mandated by Biblical law and rabbinic law for capital cases: two valid eyewitnesses are necessary, and circumstantial evidence or other evidence is not valid. For the impact of the two-witness rule in Canon law and English law, see Jackson (1977). Jackson explains (*ibid.*, p. 18): “[T]he two-witness rule of the Bible has been widely adopted in countries influenced by Canon law, as indeed have some of the necessary means of avoiding its rigours. When the medieval Canon lawyers sought to construct an institution of corroboration by similar fact evidence (*testes singulares*), they justified their argument by analysis of the facts of the story of Susannah, found

no legal determination. Jewish law does not accept a self-incriminating confession from a defendant in a capital case (there is something similar in English law: in England and Wales, before 1898 a defendant in a trial was not allowed to testify at the same trial). Even assuming that a court had found the innkeeper guilty other than by applying Jewish law, or assuming that the killing never went to court, but people in the neighbourhood claimed that the innkeeper was the murderer, why was the Talmud of all texts making a concession, by accepting that the innkeeper's wife had been killed by her husband, where there could be (in the more likely circumstances of the wife finding her violent death) no legal determination based on Jewish law? This is a good example of how in the Talmud one finds legal and aggadic materials sitting side by side. The innkeeper murdering his wife in anger at her unwittingly thwarting his plans is a narrative closure that makes sense in the economy of a folktale, from an international folklore perspective.

THEME THREE: ETYMOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

7. Surveying Potentially Relevant Data from the *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*

7.1. Tal Ilan's Treatment of the Name *Kidor*, and Considerations on Data in her Lexicon

When considering Jewish onomastics²⁸ from the Graeco-Roman period, the place to start looking is Tal Ilan's lexicon in four volumes,²⁹ published between 2002 and 2012. In this section, I simply review the data obtained or not found by

in the Apocrypha to the Hebrew Bible. True enough, they said, Susannah could not be rightly convicted when one elder said that she committed adultery under an oak while the other said it was under a holm tree. But that was only because the two elders had claimed to have observed the event *together*. Had they not made this claim, their evidence would not have been regarded as logically contradictory: for though adultery may not be committed simultaneously under two different trees, it may be so committed successively. Moreover, we all know (so the Canon law doctors argued) that adultery with the some lover is an act which is prone to be repeated – *factum iterabile* – unlike some other crimes against Canon law, such as the murder of a Bishop (especially the same Bishop). I have traced the use of this argument for corroboration by similar fact evidence from a Canonist *Summa* of the mid-12th century, written in Bologna, to English treason trials of the 17th century, and a famous divorce case of the same period, which then became one of the principal foundations for the so-called *Moorov* doctrine which Lord Hailsham so fully read into his speech in the House of Lords in the modern leading case of *Kilbourne*.³⁰ In Jewish law, this argument would not have been valid for conviction in a criminal case, and two eyewitnesses would have still been necessary, who witnessed the same event and reported about it with no contradiction.

sifting through her lexicon. In one of the volumes, she discusses the name *Kidōr* indeed, but in order to gain a fuller view, I also considered her other onomastic data. Her first volume is about names from Palestine³⁰ from 330 BCE to 200 CE, that is, from the Macedonian conquest to the time the *Mishnah* was written. The geographical context is pertinent for the name *Kidōr*, as the rabbis in the Kidōr narrative are from the Land of Israel, and as the more succinct version of the narrative is found indeed in the Jerusalem Talmud.

In the “Orthographical Index in the Hebrew Alphabet”, one finds indeed the name כִּידוֹר whose entry is on p. 387, in the section “Other (mostly Semitic) Names in the Hebrew Alphabet – Male”. Of course, as Ilan’s focus in that volume is the Jewish onomasticon from Palestine, the main source she gave is *yRH* [= *Yerushalmi* (Jerusalem Talmud), *Rosh Hashanah*] 3:9, 59a, along with a citation of Moshe Kosovsky,³¹ *Yerushalmi*, 477.

The prosopography is that only one person is known to have borne the name *Kidōr*.³² The descriptor given by Tal Ilan is “Killed his wife”, with a note pointing

²⁸ A referee remarked: “Before I start to read section 7, this question comes to mind: will the author quote other instances of the Hebrew male given name *Kidōr*? The fewer he has, the likelier the story is fiction, that is, the name was contrived for use in the story.” Indeed. But as we are going to see, it is not so simple to count occurrences, because some names may or may not be related.

²⁹ Ilan (2002–2012). I wrote most of this article in the summer of 2012, with further elaboration later on; Part II of Ilan’s volume-set was published (and I accessed it immediately upon publication) at the end of the summer. I did not find in Part II data somehow relevant for my present study.

³⁰ I am employing her term. But a referee remarked: “There was no geographical entity called ‘Palestine’ in the pre-Christian Era. The name comes from a shortening of Latin *Syria Palaestina* ‘Philistine Syria’, which the Romans coined in 132 of the Common Era as a slap in the face to the Jews: the Philistines, as related in the Pentateuch [*recte*: in *Judges*, *Samuel* 1 and 2, and *Kings* 1], were the bitter enemies of the Israelites.” I assumed this is well known. Just in case this is unknown to some readers, it is useful to point it out.

³¹ Kosowski [sic] (1985), *Concordance to the Talmud Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud)*. Note that Kosowski, p. 477, in vowelizing the headword of the entry (which just comprises the beginning of the Kidōr narrative from the Palestinian Talmud), put a *dagesh* in the letter *dalet*, thus yielding כִּידוֹר (*Kiddor*). In contrast, there is no vowelizing in the headword of the entry כִּידוֹר (*Kydwr*), comprising the beginning of the Kidōr narrative from the Babylonian Talmud, the way it appears on p. 971 in Vol. 3 of Biniamin Kosovsky (1977), *Thesaurus nominum quae in Talmude Babylonico reperiuntur, Tomus III (Josa–Othniel)*. The referee we often mention remarked that *pointing* would be more appropriate a term than *vowelizing*, itself “inappropriate here since we are talking about a diacritic added to a consonantal letter, ךּ”. He or she means that in this case, the dot inside the letter indicates doubling of the consonant, not a vowel accompanying that consonant.

³² A referee remarked: “Precisely as I thought. Thus, this is in all likelihood not a name with a conventional etymology but a name contrived to fit a story and the story is

out that this is only known from the Babylonian Talmud: “This information is only derived from BT (*bYoma* 83b).”

The dating is “Post-135 CE”, because “Described in this tradition as a contemporary of R. Meir”. Tal Ilan’s etymological annotation for *Kidor* is as follows:

This name is explained as deriving from the verse “כי דור תהפוכות המה” (Deut. 32:20). This, however, is clearly a false etymology. כדור means “ball, globe”³³ in Hebrew (Jastrow, *DTTBYML*,³⁴ 613) and cf. also the name גלגולא – Galgula. כדר is recorded as a name for Arabs³⁵ (Harding, *ICPIANI*, 496).³⁶ The name may also be of Greek extraction with the element δῶρα in it (an element also present in Biblical names: מתן; מתת).

fiction. Statistically, it would be highly unlikely that the story is store and that Kidor (thus, a real person) happened to have a name connoting evil.” This is also what I am inclined to think. Nevertheless, even if the story and name are fictional, it is interesting to find out whether in the onomasticon of the region there was any item which may have provided inspiration for a tale purporting that the personal name *Kidor* or anything spelled <kydwr> existed. (Concerning giving one’s child a name connoting evil, consider that in the last several recent decades, a Japanese father was reported as having been denied by the Japanese authorities his request to name his newborn son *Akuma* ‘demon’. In English-speaking North America, some Protestant men bear the name Mahlon from the Book of Ruth, because their parents were unaware that it is a substitute, omen name, lit. ‘illness’, for a soon dead husband.) Nevertheless, I must take issue with the referee’s assumption that actual personal names suggesting a bad sense do not occur: see Appendix B in Part Two of the present study.

³³ A referee pointed out: “Does anyone really see Hebrew [/kaddur/] ‘ball, globe’ as relevant here? A Hebrew given name is not likely to have that meaning.” Ilan’s attempt at etymology in the given entry does not run very deep. The referee made an interesting remark on this (the brackets are the referee’s; note that *kadur* reflects the current degeminated pronunciation, but phonemically the Hebrew word is /kaddur/): “‘This, however, is clearly a false etymology [because *kaddur*] means ‘ball, globe’ in Hebrew.” Ilan is right for the wrong reason. Yes, it’s a contrived etymology (= Ilan’s “false etymology,” which is not a good wording), but it’s contrived not because the name does not derive from Hebrew *kadur* ‘ball, globe’ (which is true – the name does not derive from that Hebrew word). Rather, the name is contrived because the author of the story could not make his point (we need to pay attention to the meaning of personal names) if the main character (the dishonest innkeeper) did not have an omen name.”

³⁴ I.e., Jastrow (1903).

³⁵ Still the same referee pointed out: “True, but that ethnonym (‘name’ is too broad a term) is not necessarily etymologically relevant in fact, it probably is not). In general: Ilan did a good job of COLLECTING, but the ETYMOLOGIES are not infrequently naive. Caveat lector.” This should be well taken. Ilan is a prosopographer; etymologising was not her task.

³⁶ I.e., G. Lankester Harding’s (1971) *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions*.

We are going to come back and discuss such Jewish or Hebrew onomastics that is interpreted as literally denoting round shape. As for *kdr* (כדר), we are going to see in Sec. 12 that it occurs in compound names from Ugarit, as well as in one Biblical name. There may be a weak (far too weak) argument for Greek origin of *Kidor*, based on the (chance?) occurrence of a substring³⁷ in that name that is also the stem of the Israeli male name of Greek origin *Doron* (literally, ‘gift’: *doron* in that sense occurs in early rabbinic Hebrew), a name which itself instantiates a widespread semantic motivation.³⁸ It is exceedingly difficult to bridge *Kidor* to *Doron*, and this difficulty may be fatal for that option. I disbelieved it in the first place (and mentioned it at this point, to do away with it right away), and a referee also disbelieves it, and took pains to pinpoint explicitly the problems with it:

The author has to address these questions when considering *doron*: if *-dor* in *kidor* comes from *dor-* in *doron*, why was *-on* not retained, how is *ki-* to be explained, and do the presumed meanings of the etymons of *ki-* and of *-dor* in the Hebrew name *kidor* comport with each other? If those questions are addressed, the argument will probably turn out to be less than, as you characterize it, “weak”. It will turn out to be without foundation.

³⁷ The referee wondered: “Is *substring* a technical term of linguistics or of some other discipline? I do not know it. Sequence of phonemes would be best because we do not know whether we can speak of a morpheme or of a syllable here (= the only other possible technical terms that I can think of).” *Substring* is a technical term from computing, the theory of computation, and computational linguistics.

³⁸ Cf. Italian *Donato* and the Hebrew name, *Mattan*, of Jezebel’s Baalist priest; also cf. the theophoric *Mattityahu* (of the priest who fathered the Maccabees), which has semantic-motivation equivalents in Romance anthroponymy (Old Italian *Diodato*, French *Dieudonné*). Cf. the theophoric *Netanya* born by four men in the Hebrew Bible. I had originally proposed that there also are occurrences from toponomastics. I mentioned the names of Natanyah, an Israeli city, and Baghdad (but see below). *Nataniah* is the vulgate form, also in cartographers’ romanisation. The referee pointed out: “Netanya (sic *recte*, not ‘Na-,’ which is the substandard Israeli Hebrew pronunciation of the place name in question) is a tangent on a tangent on a tangent, etc.: (1) it’s a place name, not a personal name; (2) it was coined in the late 1920s (the city so called was founded in 1929); the city was named for Nathan Straus (1848–1931); and (4) his Hebrew name comes from the Hebrew verb meaning ‘give’.” Whereas it is likely that the name-givers did not intend the name of that town to be theophoric (they were just adding the international suffix *-ia* to a first name), they had the precedent of four different men in the Hebrew Bible bearing the theophoric name *Netaniah* (*Nētanyā*).

I had also written: “as to Baghdad, the name is from Middle Persian: *Bag dat*” (for ‘G-d-given’; an etymology *non de mon cru*, but which I had passively accepted); I accept the referee’s objection: “How can the Arabic name *Baghdad* go back only to Middle Persian (spoken from more or less the fourth century before the Common Era to more or less the seventh century of the Common Era) if *Baghdadu* is found in the ninth century BCE (Assyrian cuneiform) and the sixth century BCE (Babylonian bricks with the seal of King Nebuchadnezzar)?”

We are going to come back to Harding's pre-Islamic Arabian onomastic data: not only concerning כדר but also concerning such names that begin by *h* (thus compatibly with my hypothesis that the initial Hebrew letter *kaf* of the name *Kidor* represented [χ] instead of [k]).

7.2. Considerations on Other Data in Tal Ilan's Lexicon

Volumes 3 and 4 of Ilan (2002–2012) offer nothing possibly relevant. Let us see why, so you wouldn't have to take my word for it. The third volume of Ilan's lexicon is about the Western Diaspora between the Macedonian and Islamic conquests. This volume was relevant for me especially in order to check whether anything relevant to *Kidor* could be found in Egypt.³⁹ Checking in the "Orthographical Index" of the entire volume, there was no כידור in the Hebrew alphabet. Nothing even remotely similar is to be found in either the Coptic alphabet, or the Demotic alphabet of Egypt, and nothing similar in the Latin alphabet either. There is nothing relevant in the Arabic alphabet.

In the Greek alphabet though, one does find *K[-]ιδιδον* (standing for *Candidus*, Latin, male) on p. 477; and *Κανδιδα* (for *Candida*, Latin, female) on p. 573; as well as *Κανδιδος* (for *Candidus*, Latin, male) on p. 477. This does not appear to be relevant for *Kidor*, even if one was to assume that the *n* was nasalised and that the final *τ* (*d*) was miscopied as *ρ* (*r*).

Checking in the same index, one also finds that there exists *Κερδων* (for *Cerdius*, Latin, male) on p. 479. Arguably, this could be relevant for *Kidor* if one admits metathesis, but I am not inclined to believe this, especially because I do not believe that the initial letter *kaf* of the name *Kidor* stands for [k]; it rather stands for *[χ] (which some would transcribe [x], for *kh*).⁴⁰

³⁹ However, also consider Susanna Maria Ruozzi Sala's (1974) *Lexicon nominum Semicitorum quae in papyris Graecis in Aegypto repertis ab anno 323 a.Ch.n. usque ad annum 70 p.Ch.n. laudata reperiuntur*. I used to have my own copy of Ruozzi Sala's booklet years ago, but have not been able to access it more recently even at university libraries.

⁴⁰ The referee objected: "But even an asterisk and /x/ will not help, for older Hebrew does not have /x/ (that is, undageshed *kaf*) in word-initial position." (The technical term *undageshed* of Hebrew grammarians means 'undoubled'.) I in turn retort that whereas one is used indeed to consider the phonetic value [x] in initial position (other than phonosyntactically in the middle of compounds) not to have been possible in Hebrew for the phoneme /k/, it has been the view of linguists of Mishnaic Hebrew for several decades now that /k/ did not possess the allophone [k] in initial position, and was to acquire it before the Masoretes of Tiberiad in the final several centuries of the first millennium of the Common Era. See Sec. 10 below. Another point the referee made depends on the same misconception I signalled now: "the first letter MUST

Note moreover (and in this case, any relation to *Kidor* would have to be by metathesis and a replacement of the liquids *r/l*, which I do not find cogent), that in the section “Other (mostly Semitic) Names in the Greek Alphabet – Male”, one finds the name *Χυλδαιος* (standing for *Chyldaius*) on p. 615. Ilan points out that the etymology is unclear. This name was borne by a male person from Cyrenaica, and there exists in the literature a hypothesis that this person was Jewish. That hypothesis however only depended on a perceived superficial similarity to the name of the prophetess Chulda (*Hulda*), and her name has a zoonymic motivation in Hebrew. I am somewhat sceptical about the man buried in Cyrenaica being Jewish just on the evidence of his name. It may be however that the name was originally from Syria-Palestine, **Hulday*, without the bearer of such a conjectural Northwest Semitic name being per force Jewish.

The fourth volume of Ilan’s lexicon is about the Eastern Diaspora between the Macedonian and Islamic conquests. It is relevant for our discussion of *Kidor*, because the most elaborate version of the *Kidor* narrative is found in the Babylonian Talmud. There is no “*Kidor*” in the “Index of the Names in English”. “*Kidor*” or כִּידוֹר is not found in the section “Other (mostly Semitic) Names in Hebrew Characters – Male”. Nor is כִּידוֹר found in the “Orthographical Index / Hebrew Alphabet”, nor is anything similar. There is nothing relevant in the section “Iranian Names – Male”, “Arabic Names – Male”, or “Arabic Names – Female”.

stand for /k/ (comment 34). The phonotactics of older Hebrew do not have certain fricatives in word-initial position (when the word is pronounced in isolation), so that, for example, ‘Latin *familia* > Hebrew-Aramaic *pamalya*.’” Not so. For the Hebrew phoneme /p/ (contrary to the vulgate view), it is even better established that it did not have [p] as allophone. It had the phonetic values [ɸ] and [f], whereas by the end of the first millennium these had become [p] and [f]. See Fig. 3 (from Nissan and Alinei 2013, p. 237, Fig. 5 = Fig. 26 in Appendix A: “Morphological Constraints, and Semitic Loanwords in Greek”, in Nissan 2014).

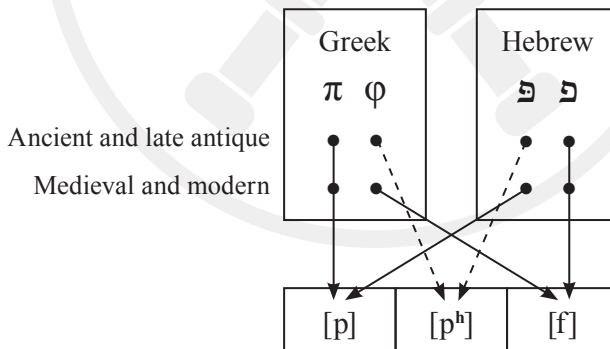


Fig. 3. Hebrew /p/ vs. Greek at different historical periods.

8. Discarding an Iranian Relation of the Name *Kidor*

Ilan's lexicon having nothing, in its fourth part, that would relate *Kidor* to Iranian names, is negative evidence against a possible hypothesis that *Kidor* could be explained by a Persian etymology. Nevertheless in June 2012, I inquired with an Iranologist in Turin, Ezio Albrile, about the possibility that the name *Kidor* in the narrative that I related to him, may remind him of anything relevant in Iranian. Albrile, assuming that the letter *kaf* in the spelling כִּידוֹר stands for [k] (instead of [χ], which is what I retorted), tentatively proposed⁴¹ Middle Persian *ked* (*kyt*), and Partian *kedeg* (*qydig*), for 'wizard' or 'devine'.

Note however that even if one was to deem admissible (which I do not)⁴² a correspondence between the final *g* of *kedeg* and the final *r* of *Kidor* (through a spirantisation of *g* approaching an uvular *r*), this would only marginally agree with the narrative from the Babylonian Talmud, because the character *Kidor* has a revelation in a dream by his dead father, yet is no competent devine.

A referee made a remark, concerning the remote comparison to *kedeg* –

Since short sequences of phonemes are statistically likely to recur in numerous languages (even if you exclude obviously irrelevant languages, such as, in this case, Hawaiian, Afrikaans, and Yiddish), chance resemblances are likely (Leonard Bloomfield, *Language*, 1933, notes that the Greek and Malay for 'eye' are similar and he may not have been the first linguist to note chance resemblances). I am sure that if you asked anyone possessing knowledge of any language of ancient Western Asia, you would find that everyone one [sic] of those languages has a sequence *kad*(-), *ked*(-), or *kod*(-), etc.

⁴¹ By referring to David Neil MacKenzie's dictionary of Middle Persian (1971, p. 50).

⁴² Moreover, the referee remarked: "One also must [...] consider the ENTIRE form: if *kid*- < *ked*-, what about the last two phonemes of the Hebrew name?" It is not my intention to claim that *kedeg* is a good candidate for the etymon of *Kidor*. Note however that *eg* and *or* are not unbridgeable. Consider Persian *chador* (it became internationally known after Khomeini's revolution, as denoting the prescribed outer dress of women), which Iraqi Arabic (admitting an initial phoneme alien to Arabic) adopted in the form *ĉādār* (denoting a heavy curtain placed on the door of a room, or even curtains covering the internal courtyard of a traditional house: placed on the first-floor colonnaded corridor, the *ṭarma*, these were winding curtains, used in winter when there was cold weather, and by pulling a cord, they would be drawn up. These curtains, too, went by the name *ĉādār*). As for the pronunciation of /r/ on the part of Mesopotamian Jews in the pre-Islamic period, we really don't know. We do know that in Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic, quite often etymological /r/ in terms of Arabic origin became [ɣ] (*gh*), the same as the Arabic consonant *ghayn*, or the Iraqi liturgical spirantised pronunciation of the Hebrew intervocalic /g/ (whereas [r] is retained for /r/ in Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic terms of other derivations: Hebrew, Aramaic, Turkish, Kurdish, Persian, Hindi, English or otherwise European, as well as in recent borrowings from Standard Modern Arabic); by hypercorrection, some unlearned individuals may try to restore [r] in place of [ɣ]

This is quite like what I have written in a fairly recent study (especially in “Too High Odds”, being Sec. 2 of Nissan 2012, pp. 205–212).

Philippe Gignoux, Christelle Jullien, and Florence Jullien co-authored *Noms propres syriaques d’origine iranienne* (2009). I asked Christelle Jullien (email, 10 March 2014)

about a *hapax*: the personal name *kydwr*. The text is Middle Aramaic, but not Syriac. The man so named was an innkeeper, and the anecdote is used in order to illustrate *nomen omen* (by reference to the Biblical words *ky dwr* occurring in a verse about untrustworthy persons). It may be that name was invented, like the tale.

But does *kydwr* remind you of any personal name in the Iranic and Syriac onomasticon which you have ever come across?

Her kind reply was as follows (email, 10 March 2014):

Je n’ai pas rencontré le patronyme *kydwr* dans les sources syriaques.

La composante *dwr* pourrait évoquer le nom abrégé *Adur* ; cependant traditionnellement, le nom est écrit avec un *olaf* au début (*'dwr*), ce qui n’est pas le cas ici.

La composante *ky-* dans les sources syriaques considérées entre en composition avec des patronymes de rois bien connus (Kay-Khusro par exemple).

Mais dans votre texte, d’après ce que vous me dites, le contexte biblique semble évident, et je ne crois pas à une étymologie moyen-perse pour le nom de ce personnage.

This makes sense indeed. Notwithstanding the existence

- of a name *Ādur* ‘fire’, e.g.,
 - the proper name *Ādur-Anāhīd*, i.e., literally, “Anāhīd of the fire,” borne by a granddaughter of Ardašīr I,⁴³
 - the *Acts of Ādur-Hormizd*, a Syriac martyrological text (Asmussen 1983),
- as well as of an initial element *Kay-* in the royal onomasticon,

even where Arabic has [ɣ]. Let it be clear that I am not claiming that this is relevant for *kedeg* versus *Kidor*. Rather, I am trying to show that as an abstract exercise, it would not be inconceivable to also handle the *-or* of *Kidor*. That kind of phonetics of Jewish speech in Iraq, however, can plausibly only be traced back to the Middle Ages before the arrival of tribes from Arabia that caused the Bedouinisation of Muslim Arabic dialects in central Iraq. Mossul Arabic and Iraqi Christian Arabic resemble Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic, but their Arabic /r/ is [r], not [ɣ].

⁴³ Mary Boyce (2002) considers this as evidence which “suggests that at least by the outset of the Sassanian era a sacred fire had replaced the cult-image in the temple of Anāhīt at Staxr (Eṣṭaḳr), of which the Sasanian family had been the hereditary guardians.”

neither is relevant or cogent taken individually, all the more so if combined together. Even if one wants to cautiously not take it for granted that the name *Kidor* was just made up for the sake of illustrating *nomen omen*, and would therefore sift through all etymological possibilities based on what we know about the onomasticon in the area between Mesopotamia and Syria, the Land of Israel, and northern Arabia, we can conclude that a Middle Persian source for that personal name can be safely excluded. That the innkeeper *Kydwr* was called *Kay-Adur*, “King Fire”, is unlikely, not least as its vowels would not suit the Biblical homiletics from the Hebrew wording *ki dor* of *Deuteronomy*.

9. Speculation About *Kidor* as Being a Late Antique Near Eastern Personal Name: Why a Greek Etymon Is Unconvincing, But Bilingual Wordplay with Greek May Be a Possibility

Apart from the tentative suggestions made by Tal Ilan, I have reasons to tentatively disbelieve a Greek etymology of the personal name *Kidor*, and to favour an origin in the Semitic, though not Hebrew, onomasticon. We know that the Hebrew letter *kaf*, which is the first one in the Hebrew spelling *kydwr*, happens to be the letter which in the Roman age was used – word-initially, which is what matters for our purposes here as it is the relevant phonetic environment – for transcribing the Greek letter χ but not the letter κ (which was transcribed with the Hebrew letter *qof* instead). That transliteration was accompanied by a substitution of phonemes: Greek /x/ > Hebrew /k/.

If one were to concede that Greek is relevant for *Kidor* (and we don’t have to concede this),⁴⁴ there would be two possible reasons why the personal name *Kidor* is written with the first letter being *kaf*, not *qof*. The first reason is to make the spelling fit, letter by letter, the spelling of the words *ki dor* from *Deuteronomy*. This possibility could be used as an argument to counteract the objection that, if the name was originally Greek, then it must have started with χ but not the letter κ .

The possibilities of a Greek origin are meagre. First of all, nothing that resembles *Kidor* is found in the Greek onomasticon. If one seeks a Greek etymology, the closest we may get is not close enough to be cogent. There is the noun $\chi\acute{\iota}\delta\rho\nu$ ‘fresh wheat’ (genitive $\chi\acute{\iota}\delta\rho\nu$, plural $\chi\acute{\iota}\delta\rho\alpha$), which is found in the *Septuagint* at *Leviticus* 2:14 and 24:14 (as well as in Athenaeus, *Δειπνοσοφισταί*, 648, and in Aristophanes’ comedies *Equites*, 806, and *Pax*, 595). If we allow a Greek candidate etymon to begin by the letter κ instead of χ , then one may think of $\kappa\epsilon\delta\rho$ - being the stem of the Greek terms for ‘cedar’ or for ‘citron’. This, too, would be a phytonymic

⁴⁴ The referee claimed: “In any case, I do not believe that Greek is relevant and I believe that the name was contrived to fit the story.”

motivation for the personal name. Also consider *κιδᾶρις*, denoting the symbol of kingship – the band surrounding the head of kings (especially of Persia) – or of some pagan priests.

Or then – and this may have been indeed on the Sages’ minds (if the story originated in the Land of Israel: it is found also in the Jerusalem Talmud indeed), even though I don’t believe it is the etymon of *Kidor* – the Greek verb⁴⁵ *κῆδω* denotes ‘to afflict’, ‘to sadden’, ‘to molest’, ‘to damage’, ‘to ruin’, which would be an apt motivation⁴⁶ for the name of the dishonest innkeeper *Kidor*, in consideration of the story’s claim that one ought to pay attention to a person’s name in order to evaluate that person’s character.

10. Why the Initial *Kaf* Letter?

The other reason why the personal name *Kidor* is written with the first letter being *כ* *kaf*, not *ק* *qof*, must be phonetic.⁴⁷ This is especially important if we seek an etymology outside Hebrew (in Greek, a non-Semitic language, but possibly also

⁴⁵ The referee remarked: “How do we get from a Greek verb to a Hebrew male given name? Which is to say, which form of the Greek verb could be relevant and are the phonological correspondences in order? In trying to etymologize a linguistic form, all of us naturally first think of phonologically similar words as the possible etymons, but that is only the first step.” As I stated, in my opinion the Greek strand of hypotheses for *Kidor* is meagre. At most, one may legitimately wonder whether before the Arab conquest, any Greek-reading Jew in the region who may have been aware of the tale about *Kidor* may have reckoned that apart from the onomastic wordplay with Hebrew Biblical wording, also the Greek *κῆδω* may be apt for as negative a character as *Kidor*.

⁴⁶ With no relation to the Greek verb, also consider that in Akkadian, *kudurru* is a boundary-stone (cf. Hebrew *gader* ‘fence’), as well as an inscription on such a stone. George Scheper remarks: “The oath/curse formula characterizes two important, distinct yet related genres of Ancient Near Eastern literature: *kudurru*, or boundary-stone inscriptions, and vassal-treaties, or covenants (for examples and sources see Fensham, 1963; Gratz, 1998, chap. 2, esp. pp. 46–65; and Hillers, 1964, chap. 2). Scholars have differed over the commonalities and differences among these Ancient Near Eastern *kudurru* and treaty forms” (Scheper 2005, p. 2102, citing Fensham 1962, 1963, etc.). The referee objects: “since /k/ in Akkadian *kudurru* corresponds to /g/ in Hebrew *gader*, if that Akkadian word were relevant, we should probably expect the name to have */g/ rather than /k/.”

⁴⁷ Consider this concerning the phonetics of Mishnaic Hebrew: “Interchanges between *ק* (*qop*) and *כ* (*kaf*) are very infrequent.” E. Y. Kutscher, col. 1595, in his sub-sub-entry within the sub-entry “Mishnaic Hebrew” in the entry “Hebrew Languages” of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1972), in the Supplementary entries, Vol. 16. The referee concedes: “The existence of variation between word-initial <k> and <q> in Mishnaic Hebrew (a better wording than ‘Interchanges between [...]’) opens up more etymological possibilities, as you implicitly recognize.”

in Arabic, a Semitic language: transcription may have been rooted in synchronic phonetics, regardless of the etymological radicals in case of lexical cognacy), while of course such considerations are also relevant for reasoning about possible morphological co-derivatives within Hebrew, for the purposes of hypothesis formation concerning a possible Hebrew etymon.

I wonder whether there existed, in the Northwest Semitic onomasticon of the Roman period (perhaps in Lebanon or Syria?), a variant of the Biblical Hebrew proper name *Gedor* which, by unvoicing of the initial phoneme, was compatible with the transcription *kydwr*, either *Kidor* or something sounding similarly. There exist Hebrew names in the Jewish onomasticon being compounds of a derivative of the lexical root $\sqrt{\text{gdr}}$ (namely, Biblical to early modern and modern *Avigdor*, and the medieval theophoric *Eligdor*).⁴⁸

⁴⁸ In the note 46, we considered Akkadian *kudurru* ‘boundary-stone’. Incidentally, a Hebrew co-derivative of *gader* ‘fence’ occurs in Hebrew onomastics. We find the name *Eligdor*, evidently patterned after the Biblical compound epithet *Avi-Gdor* (“father of Gedor”, *I Chronicles*, 4:4 and 4:18, Gedor being both a place-name and a personal name), interpreted as a personal name *Avigdor*. The medieval personal name *Eligdor* (unlike *Avigdor*) is explicitly theophoric, and thus only makes sense if both names are interpreted as follows. On the face of it, *Avigdor* can be etymologised as “father of Gedor”, apparently a place-name. It is possible, however, to understand it as an invocation: “My Father, restrain him! (literally: fence him in!)”. As for *Eligdor*, the only interpretation feasible is: “My G-d, restrain him! (literally: fence him in!)”. This is a wish for the future behaviour and personality of the baby, so that he would not go out and sin, but possibly also in the sense that he would be protected from attacks from the outside. At any rate, consider that in the Jewish homiletic tradition (in *Leviticus Rabbah*, at the beginning of section 1), *Avigdor* is considered to be another name of Moses: “Many fence-builders (*godrin*) rose for Israel, and this one was the father of them all”. That is to say, *Avigdor* is interpreted as being a personal name formed as a compound which means “father of fencing”. On the homiletic sense of ‘fencing’, in relation to ‘sanctification’ as implying ‘separation’ and thus ‘the raising of fences’, see Melamed (1961/2 [1984], s.v. ויעזקרו on pp. 144–145, or pp. [63]–[64] as reprinted in 1984); and Jurgrau (1974, pp. 198–199).

The name *Eligdor* was borne by the father of Abba Mari ben Eligdor. The latter was a Talmudist, Biblical commentator, Maimonidean philosopher, logician, physicist and astronomer (even though only fragments of his works are extant), who Ginzberg (in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, 1906) stated was from early 14th-century Salonica. He was from Provence, instead (*Encyclopaedia Hebraica*, s.v.). He was already old in 1335. His commentary, or rather philosophical treatise about the Book of Job, has attracted interest because of his approach to theodicy. The *Encyclopaedia Hebraica* (Vol. 1, col. 64, s.v.) states that Abba Mari ben Eligdor was born in Noves, Provence, in 1280, and died in 1340; he was also known as Senior Astruc de Noves (or: de Negre).

The name *Avigdor* was borne by some Jewish men in the Middle Ages and later on, up to the present. It is also the name of an extant European Jewish family which obtained a title of nobility. Of Solomon ben Abraham Avigdor (Abigdor), born in Provence in 1384, translations he made from Latin while a teenager are extant, of two

It is now accepted (based on the evidence of transliterations from the Hellenistic and Roman periods) that unlike the present phonetics of the Hebrew phoneme /k/, which has the allophones [k], the unvoiced velar stop (i.e., what is conveyed by the letter *kaf* with the dot inside: the *dageš*), and [x] (i.e., *kh*, the unvoiced velar fricative), in ancient times the plosive allophone (i.e., the stop) was instead aspirated, as in Greek it was transliterated with χ like the other allophone of /k/, namely, the intervocalic unvoiced velar fricative [x]. Geoffrey Khan pointed out:⁴⁹

We know from Greek transcriptions that in the first half of the first millennium A.D. plosive *kap* was pronounced with aspiration.⁵⁰ This was likely to have been the case also in the Tiberian pronunciation tradition. In the Karaite transcriptions plosive *kap* with *dageš* is represented by Arabic *kāf*, which⁵¹ was aspirated.

This is in contrast to the unvoiced uvular fricative value of the Arabic letter *kā'* with which Karaite transcriptions represent the *kaf* without *dageš*. The Roman period was a historical stage at which Proto-Semitic cognacy of the Arabic unvoiced velar fricative /ħ/ [x], and the value /ħ/ [x] of the historically polyphonic Hebrew letter ק (as representing the consonantal phonemes /ħ/ and /ħ/) would no longer determine, in transcription across languages, an originally Arabic /ħ/ being rendered as ק (which was the case of Biblical Hebrew), so Arabic /ħ/ would be rendered by the letter כ *kaf* in the Roman period. Interestingly, also in Judaeo-Arabic as written in the Hebrew script, Arabic /ħ/ used to be rendered as כּ (thus, *kaf* with a diacritic mark) up to the 20th century.

astronomy treatises. He was assisted by his father, Abraham Bonet ben Meshullam Avigdōr. There also was a Talmudist, Avigdōr (Abigdōr) ben Nathan of Avignon, who was mentioned as still living in a book written in 1304 by a pupil of his. As for the German Talmudist Abigdōr ben Menachem, he lived in the early 15th century. Abigdōr the Frenchman wrote a commentary on the prayerbook of the High Holidays, and is identified with the rabbinical scholar Abigdōr ben Isaac. Not long before him, there was Abigdōr ben Elijah ha-Kohen, who lived in Vienna, flourished about the middle of the 13th century, and was the earliest of the great Talmudists of Austria; most eminent was his pupil, Meir of Rothenburg. About the middle of the 15th century, Abigdōr Cohen, a rabbi and a wealthy man, lived in Ferrara, Italy.

⁴⁹ On p. 8 in Khan (1996).

⁵⁰ At this point, Khan's paper cites "E. Y. Kutscher, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 10 (1965), pp. 24–35", with no indication of the title of Kutscher's article. Note however that no article by Kutscher is found in either Vol. 16 (1965), or Vol. 10 (1959) of the *Journal of Jewish Studies*. Nor did he ever publish in that Oxford journal, as far as I was able to ascertain. Arguably Khan intended the late Edward Yechezkel Kutscher's only article ever published in the Manchester journal, namely, "Yemenite Hebrew and Ancient Pronunciation", which appeared in 1966 in the *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 11.2, on pp. 217–225.

⁵¹ According to Roman (1983, p. 55). Roman's book was reviewed by G. Khan (1986).

Blau, writing about the hypothesis that in Biblical times and still in the Hellenistic period, the Hebrew letters ה and ע were polyphonic (with the Hebrew letter 'ayin ע conveying the same at the two Arabic letters 'ayn and ġayn), stated that according to that conjecture,⁵²

reminiscences of these features were still alive at the time of the Septuagint, which transcribes ה and ע by *zero* / χ and *zero* / γ respectively, χ and γ roughly corresponding to ה and ġ respectively. On the other hand, these transcriptions may be due to difficulties of transcribing sounds lacking in Greek

and in fact, consider “the papyri of Nessana, transcribing Arabic ה and ה as a rule by *zero*, once [Χαλέδ, Χομαης] by χ; ġ by γ, but once by *zero* [Αζαλής]”.⁵³ These considerations are important for our hypothesis that will be introduced in Sec. 12.

11. A Hebrew Etymology Without Initial Unvoicing?

Whereas for *Kidor* (כידור *kydwr*) one may suggest derivation from, or attraction to, a Hebrew lexical root √*kdr*, on semantic grounds I find it difficult to accept that a personal name (as opposed to a nickname) may have been derived from it. One only infers a Hebrew root √*kdr*, because of the noun כדור *kaddur* ‘ball, globe’, as well as because of the Mishnaic Hebrew feminine participle *kodéret* (see below).

There is incertitude as to whether כדור *kaddur* (*kdwr*) in *Jeremiah* 22:18 and 30:33 is to be analysed as a derivative of a root כדר √*kdr*, or as *ka-ddur* (“like a *dur*”, which would dovetail with an Arabic root for ‘round’), but occurrences of כדור *kdwr* and of כדר *kdr* derivatives in the early rabbinic textual corpus make it certain that in that historical stratum כדור *kaddur* was felt by speakers (or writers) at those times to be a כדר *kdr* derivative, not a דור *dwr* derivative.

In *Kohelet Rabbah* to *Ecclesiastes* 12:11, one finds a punning homiletic derivation of *kdrbnwt* in “The sayings of the wise ones are כדרבנות *kdrbnwt*” (i.e., “like goads”), from בנות של כדור *kkdwr šl bnwt* (*ke-khaddur šel banot*), “like the girls’ ball”, with a verbal form as well: “as the ball (*kaddur*) is thrown around (*mitkadder*) from hand to hand”.

Moreover, in the Babylonian Talmud at *Hullin* 64a, one finds the following passage about how to determine whether eggs at hand are kosher, a passage given here in the Soncino English translation (brackets are its own):

⁵² Y. Blau, col. 1572, in his sub-sub-entry within the sub-entry “Mishnaic Hebrew” in the entry “Hebrew Languages” of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1972), in the Supplementary entries, Vol. 16.

⁵³ Blau, *ibid.*, col. 1572, his brackets.

And these are the characteristics which distinguish the eggs [of clean birds]: All that are arched and rounded, with one end broad and the other end narrow, are clean. Those that are broad at both ends or narrow at both ends are unclean. Those with the white outside and the yolk in the centre are clean, those with the yolk outside and the white in the centre are unclean; if the white and the yolk are mixed up, one may be certain that it is a reptile's egg? – This⁵⁴ must be resorted to only where the eggs were broken. But they can still be examined by the position of the yolk and white? – They were beaten up in a dish. [...]

A sign by which to recognise eggs of clean birds is that the egg (feminine noun: *beiša*) is *koderet* (feminine active participle), that is to say, arched on top, instead of pointed. Cf. Hauber (2014).

Is it reasonable to expect a name such as *Kidor* to be bestowed on a baby, if it is understood to etymologically describe the roundedness of somebody fat? If this is considered to be a negative feature, then this is fit for a nickname (cf. *Bombolo*, in an early 20th century Italian song: “lo chiamavan Bombolo”).

But the plumpness of a baby or toddler still finds affectionate verbal expression in the Near East, such as by the Arabic passive participle *mudabdab*. One cannot rule out such semantic motivation of an anthroponym in the early rabbinic period. Attitudes towards fatness are culture-bound: refer to Sander Gilman's book⁵⁵ and papers in fat studies,⁵⁶ sometimes in relation to Jews.⁵⁷ Incidentally, the name *Mashmannah* of one of David's elite soldiers, in *1 Chronicles* 12:10(11), is related to ‘fatness’ and ‘oil’.

It is interesting to note that in Israel, one comes across a Judaeo-Arabic name (*Ḥḏūrī*, *Khdhourī*) adapted as *Kadduri*, both as a family name, and a personal name (Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic ‘*ammu Ḥḏūrī*’ “[paternal] uncle Khdhourī” > Israeli Hebrew *hadod Kadduri* “Uncle Kadduri”,⁵⁸ and the referent happened to

⁵⁴ Note in the Soncino English translation (Epstein 1935–1952): “The necessity that the gentile name the bird.” That is to say: suppose a Jew abiding with the dietary laws is given an egg by a non-Jew, who knows about the source of that egg. Is that a bird's egg, or a reptile egg's? If the latter, the egg is certainly non-kosher. But if it is a bird's egg, does it come from a kosher bird? Is it necessary that the vendor or giver of the egg should also state what the exact bird species is? (not in the Linnaean sense). The Talmudic text claims that there is such a need only if the eggs are already broken, because if the egg is still intact, one could still infer from which kind of birds it originated.

⁵⁵ Gilman's (2008a) *Fat: A Cultural History of Obesity*.

⁵⁶ Gilman (2002 [2004]; 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; 2005a; 2005b; 2008b).

⁵⁷ Gilman (2004d; 2006).

⁵⁸ “Is the Israeli Hebrew family name Kaduri (variously romanized) not from Arabic *kazuri* (dot under the <z> and macron over the <i>) ‘dealer in suet’?” Let me reply with Margareth Thatcher's famous words: “No! No! No!” It reminds me of when an American folklorist claimed (actually, added of his own initiative to a draft of a study of mine) that a skullcap that my late grandmother knitted for me had those

be a slim man). In this case however the acceptability of the semantic motivation is taken for given, as an extant personal name was “Israelised” and interpreted as conveying, by folk-etymology, whatever the apparent root may yield within Hebrew. Therefore, these 20th-century data are hardly relevant for *Kidor*. Unless, that is, the etymology of *Hḏūrī* is relevant instead.

12. On a Few Biblical and Ugaritic Lexical or Onomastic Items

Clearly, when examining the personal name *Kidor*, we need to contextualise it in several respects:⁵⁹ its textual sources, the relevant geographical and historical

given three colours, because they were the colours of the Iraqi flag. It was a bizarre proposition that left not only me, but anybody in the know deeply unimpressed.

“Uncle Khdhouri” was my own great-uncle, and we know quite well what the intention of his being given that name was (an association with the prophet Elijah, traditionally onomastically identified across confessional boundaries with the Green One of Islamic tradition. See Secs. 17 to 19 below, in Part Two). There even was wordplay with the name for the balsamic herbs sniffed at the end of the Sabbath: see Sec. 19 below. There definitely was no relation at all to Arabic *kazūrī* ‘dealer in suet’. For that matter, in his florid Hebrew-language chronicle of the Ottomans, *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta*, of 1523 (curr. edn. Capsali [1523] 1975–1983; cf. Jacobs 2005 about it), the Cretan, Venetian subject Rabbi Elia Cápsali of Candia felt able to relate that it was because of the atrocities to which they were subjected by Tamerlane, that the Ottoman Turks learned the execution method called *palo*, i.e., impaling. (Capsali was using the Middle Italian term, in Hebrew transcription.) The Iraqi name for that horrible way of putting somebody to death is *qāḏūy*, Modern Turkish *kazuğ*. In Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic, to say “they impaled him” you would say *suwwólu qāḏūy* (lit., “the did *qāḏūgh* to him”). Arabic *kazūrī* ‘dealer in suet’ is no more relevant to the personal name *Hḏūrī* (*Khdhouri*) than *qāḏūy* ‘impaling’ is. Israelis adapted the first name *Hḏūrī* by writing it *kdwry* and then reading it *Kadduri*, which sounded to them as a family name rather than a first name (there also exists an agricultural school bearing the name *Kadduri* in Israel, after a donor, Sir Elly Kadoorie < *Hḏūrī*). My own uncle, when speaking Hebrew, would tell me *ha-dod Kadduri*, “Uncle Kadduri”. I myself got accustomed to both my first name and last name being mispronounced during the nearly twenty years I lived in Milan, and the nearly twenty years I lived in London. I am even used to put, in pronunciation, the tonic stress on my family name as the people in the country where I am would do. It is this social linguistic phenomenon that is involved also for the name *Kadduri*.

⁵⁹ Therefore, it will be of no use (other than to illustrate this very need to contextualise) to involve the occurrence of the personal name *Kidor* whose bearer gave the title to the Wikipedia entry “Commander Kidor” (http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Commander_Kidor&oldid=450725140). The entry (in bad English) begins as follows: “General Brigadier Kidor is a fictional character from the telenovela *Os Mutantes – Caminhos do Coração*. He is an alien high-class officer from the Reptilian Army.” And: “Kidor appear as Juli’s guest at her lab in the Arraiial Island

period, and the relevant languages in which to look for an etymology, and what the texts in which the name appears say about the person bearing that name, as well as (homiletically) about the name itself.

We may note that a noun *kidor* appears as a hapax in the Hebrew Bible (*Job* 15:24), in a context (*melekh 'atid lakkidor*) which appears to mean “like a king ready for the attack”, or “like a king ready to the battle”. Whereas this may add a connotation to our reception of the homiletic explication of the personal name *Kidor* as found in the Babylonian Talmud, allowing it is risky business, as it may just boil down to engaging in creative homiletics, rather than add to a literary understanding of the context. Also relevance for etymology is dubious.

Moreover, note that in *Genesis*, King Chedorlaomer and his allies, on their return from their raid on the Dead Sea Pentapolis, were defeated by Abraham and his allies. Chedorlaomer is mentioned as being a king of Elam, and as the head of the coalition of kings who raided the Dead Sea Pentapolis according to ch. 14 of *Genesis*.⁶⁰ There is no evidence at all for relating the name of the malfasant Kidor from early rabbinic times, to the malfasant character from patriarchal times. Trying to seek such evidence may just be an exercise in creative homiletics. Nevertheless, some considerations that have been made about Chedorlaomer’s name may be in part relevant. Jim Stinehart (from Evanston, Illinois) tried⁶¹ to relate Chedorlaomer to Ugarit.⁶² By interpreting the personal name as a compound, Stinehart pointed out the following concerning the first element, *kdr*, in the name *Kdrl'mr*:

leading an army to devastate Aghartha kingdom. [...] Kidor engaged in hand to hand combat with Aristotle who wind up winning by kicking Kidor in his cubes.” The Wikipedia categories listed are: “Fictional commanders”, “Fictional assassins”, “Fictional aviators”, “Fictional characters with superhuman strength”, “Fictional warlords”, “Fictional mass murderers”, and “Fictional characters introduced in 2008”. The latter settles the matter concerning historical relevance...

⁶⁰ Yevin and Mazar (1956/7, cols. 252 and 255) discussed the onomastics of the kings who participated in the military campaign. In particular (col. 255, my trans.): “The fact that ‘Chedorlaomer king of Elam’ is mentioned as being the head of that alliance is a crucial factor in dating the events considered, as it was precisely in the middle of the 17th century [B.C.E.] that – as we learn from Akkadian sources – there was the great rise of the Elam polity and its expansion westwards. Even though we do not know of any Elamite king by that name from that period, the name *per se* is quite likely based on Elamite sources to be a theophoric name, containing the element *kudur* ‘servant [of]’. Therefore, onomastically and ethnically the information from *Genesis* 14 corresponds to this particular time interval in the history of Asia.”

⁶¹ <http://lists.ibiblio.org/pipermail/b-hebrew/2009-June/038815.html> – the title of the item being “[b-hebrew] KDR + L + (MR)”. The date of Stinehart’s posting is 15 June 2009.

⁶² He has already previously “noted that the title of attacking ruler Chedorlaomer is, in defective spelling, MLK (LM. That is identical to the unique title of kings of Ugarit: MLK (LM.” He transcribed the letter ‘*ayin* with an open parenthesis.

The first part of the name “Chedorlaomer” is KDR. Per BDB [Brown et al. (1906)], KDR is a Hebrew root that is similar to Arabic KDR, which means “rush down of a hawk or attacking force”. That Hebrew root leads in full spelling to KYDWR at Job 15:24, referring to the “seething tumult of battle”. The defective spelling of KYDWR at Job 15:24 would be KDR. The Hebrew word KDR can have dark overtones, focusing on the image of an attacking bird rushing down upon its prey. Gesenius suggests “warlike disturbance, military tumult” as the meaning of KYDWR at Job 15:24, and as with BDB, Gesenius sees the root as being KDR, which Gesenius identifies with “war”.

The data from Ugaritic are especially interesting:

In Ugaritic, *kdr* is sometimes viewed as meaning “vulture”. A vulture is a bird that rushes down upon its prey. That nicely matches Arabic KDR, noted above regarding the Hebrew word KDR. *Kdr* in Ugaritic often has a dark meaning. Though the word *kdr* has a very broad range of meanings in Ugaritic, one set of meanings of *kdr* in Ugaritic is similar to the dark meaning of its Hebrew cognate discussed above. As such, *kdr* in Ugaritic can literally refer to the rushing down of a hawk or vulture or attacking force, and figuratively refer to the gloomy darkness of the seething tumult of war.

The historical period of Ugaritic is too early for the onomasticon of the Talmudic period, but one cannot rule out the persistence, in both the lexicon and the onomasticon of Northwest Semitic, of relevant derivatives of \sqrt{kdr} , and this consideration is given weight by the occurrence of such derivatives as part of compounds in the anthroponymy of Ugarit:⁶³

The word *kdr* is frequently found in Ugaritic, and on several occasions appears at the beginning of a proper name in Ugaritic. As such, KDR at the beginning of the name “Chedorlaomer” has a Ugaritic feel. By contrast, KDR [with this dark meaning] is only seen at Job 15: 24 in the Hebrew Bible [in the full-spelling form KYDWR], and except for Chedorlaomer (who of course is not a Hebrew), KDR never appears at the beginning of any person’s name in the Bible.

While discussing in a separate section Harding’s data from the pre-Islamic Arabian onomasticon, we are going to come across occurrences of KDR in Safaitic anthroponymy and Sabeian toponomastics.

13. May *Kidor* Be a Semitic, Indeed Arabic Personal Name from Roman Antiquity?

My own opinion is that the name *Kidor* may be considered to be one of several ultimately Arabic personal names found in the Hellenistic and Roman era

⁶³ The brackets are Stinehart’s own.

in or near the Land of Israel (think for example of the Ituraeans and Idumaeans, whether of converted stock, or religiously non-Jewish). As I am going to explain in the next section, I think the original Arabic name had an initial unvoiced velar fricative /ħ/ [x], not an initial /q/, because the latter phoneme would have been transcribed into Hebrew with the letter *qof*, whether – we turn now to phonetic values – the unvoiced uvular stop [q] (or its voiced version [G], the voiced uvular stop) or the unvoiced velar stop [k] was heard, because also Greek κ is systematically rendered with the letter *qof* in the early rabbinic literature.

In this section, we consider names of Arabic background occurring in Roman-age Syria or Lebanon or the Land of Israel. In Appendix A (printed in Part Two), we mention that in his *Life* 48–61, Josephus Flavius relates about the wicked Varus (‘twisted’), who was succeeded by the fair Aequus Modius (‘fair measure’), but in *War* 2.482–483, Josephus gave his true name, *Noarus*. As this person was an Ituraean prince (in his days, there had been an Ituraean king *Azizus*, i.e., Arabic *‘Azīz*), *Noarus* may well reflect – I claim – the Arabic name *Anwar*.⁶⁴ (The background of both the Ituraeans and the Nabataeans was Arab indeed,⁶⁵ and this was reflected in their onomasticon.)

Therefore, Josephus’ modification into *Uarus/Varus* is an echoic distortion, just like making *Acidus* out of *Placidus*. Steve Mason⁶⁶ discussed Josephus’ *Noarus/Varus* (but did not recognise there the name *Anwar*) in relation to Quintilian, on p. 52, fn. 291, and Aequus Modius.⁶⁷ It is important to understand that just as the example of *Acidus* from *Placidus* in Quintilian instantiates a form of distortion based on echo, so was *Varus (Uarus)* from *Noarus* in Josephus. If my identification of the name *Anwar* in *Noarus* is correct, then the segment *-war-* was shared with Josephus’ adaptation into the Latin name *Varus* within his Greek-language text, as in fact, [u] and [v] were *V* in the spelling of Latin, and moreover the

⁶⁴ Adaptations of Arabic names are known to have existed, but in the case of particular names, there are doubts. For example: “As to the name mentioned in the Apollonia-Arsuf inscription, it can either be reconstructed as Kassianos (apparently the Latin cognomen Cassianus), which remained in use during the Roman and Byzantine periods in Greek-speaking regions, but is quite rare in other inscriptions found in Palestine, or less likely Kassanos, which may represent the Greek adaptation of a Semitic personal name” (Roll and Tal 2009, p. 146). “Κασσάνοϋς may originate from the Safaitic (Arabic) name, Q‘ṣn [...], but a Latin origin seems preferable. Interestingly, Cassianus and Kassanos are popular in the Roman and Byzantine Hauran and Transjordan, where Arabic influence was likely significant. It may be that both names are adaptations of an Arab name” (*ibid.*, fn. 28). Pay attention to the fact that the Arabic *Hāsan* is not proposed as an etymon, and this is because the initial Semitic consonant would not yield [k] in adaptation to Greek. If, however, locals had in mind the Latin name *Cassianus*, then they may have adapted *Hāsan* to it.

⁶⁵ But see three notes further down, in fn. 68.

⁶⁶ Mason (2001).

⁶⁷ Mason, *ibid.*, p. 56, fn. 326.

Greek spelling of Latin names beginning by *V* was by rendering that initial by *ov* (thus reflecting [w]).

The identification I proposed with the name *Anwar* should not be taken for granted. It is for the Roman-age onomasticon of the inhabitants of Palmyra, in Syria, that relation to the Arabic onomasticon is indisputable. Yet for many others in the region at the time, it is probable. As for how the Ituraeans were perceived, the following was pointed out by Fergus Millar: “Graeco-Roman writers (particularly Diodorus and Strabo) had no hesitation in describing the *Nabataioi* as *Arabes*.”⁶⁸

Ephraim Nissan
282 Gipsy Road
Welling, Kent DA16 1JJ
England, United Kingdom
[ephraim.nissan@hotmail.co.uk]

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⁶⁸ “Graeco-Roman writers (particularly Diodorus and Strabo) had no hesitation in describing the *Nabataioi* as *Arabes*. The same does not however seem to have applied to the *Itourai*, who lived in and around Anti-Lebanon; references to them by pagan writers are few, and Strabo for instance speaks of ‘Itourai and Arabes’ as inhabiting this mountain region. Indeed Cassius Dio, writing in the first half of the third century A.D., seems to be the only pagan writer who is attested, in a single passing reference, as describing the ‘Itourai’ as ‘Arabes.’” (Millar 2006, p. 356). And Millar, *ibid.*, fn. 13: Strabo, *Geog.* 16, 2, 18 (255); Dio [Cassius] 49, 12, 2: “The Ituraeans, namely the Arabs”. Cf. 49, 32, 5.

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