

# A Consonantal-Semantic Continuity Hypothesis Between Sumerian/Akkadian Lexemes and Selected Later Eurasian Forms: A Pilot Corpus of Fourteen High-Stability Examples

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## Abstract

Historical linguistics traditionally relies on documented phonological transmission and identifiable intermediary stages in order to establish etymological descent. Yet in deep chronological strata such uninterrupted documentary continuity is frequently absent, fragmentary, or permanently lost. This creates an underexamined lexical zone in which potentially meaningful long-range correspondences are often dismissed in advance because classical attestation chains cannot be reconstructed.

The present study proposes a supplementary comparative framework based on two jointly occurring criteria: consonantal skeleton preservation and semantic continuity. The central claim is that when the principal consonantal frame of an ancient lexeme remains recognizably traceable in a later lexical form, and when the semantic field remains identical or near-identical, the cumulative probability of purely accidental convergence decreases substantially.

To test this proposition, fourteen high-stability lexical correspondences were conservatively selected from Sumerian and Akkadian lexical materials and compared with later Turkish, Semitic, and international forms. Only examples exhibiting low reconstructive strain, strong semantic overlap, and visible consonantal retention were admitted into the pilot corpus.

The resulting lexical density suggests that certain ancient Mesopotamian consonantal-semantic nuclei may have survived, diffused, or remained stabilized across long temporal spans more frequently than standard documentary etymology currently allows. The article therefore argues not for simplistic universal descent, but for the scholarly legitimacy of

probability-sensitive deep lexical comparison.

**Keywords:** Sumerian, Akkadian, Etymology, Consonantal continuity, Semantic persistence, Long-range comparison, Lexical archaeology

## 1. Introduction

Etymology has historically functioned as a predominantly documentary science. A lexical item is considered securely explainable only when its chronological attestations can be traced through identifiable linguistic stages and through recorded phonological transitions. This method has generated a large number of reliable conclusions and remains indispensable in conventional philology. Nevertheless, its explanatory reach becomes limited in periods where textual intermediaries are sparse, geographically discontinuous, or irretrievably lost.

Ancient Mesopotamian languages, especially Sumerian and Akkadian, preserve one of humanity's earliest and richest lexical repositories. Given the geographic centrality, cultural influence, and civilizational longevity of Mesopotamia, it is methodologically reasonable to ask whether certain lexical nuclei may have survived beyond the currently documented transmission chains.

The present article explores this possibility through a deliberately conservative pilot corpus. Its objective is not to claim that every phonetic resemblance constitutes historical descent, nor to replace standard historical linguistics. Rather, it seeks to determine whether repeated concurrence of two variables:

1. preservation of a recognizable consonantal skeleton, and
2. preservation of a stable semantic core

produces a cumulative pattern too dense to be comfortably dismissed as random coincidence. Thus the principal research question is:

Can consonantal-semantic persistence provide a supplementary heuristic model for deep-time lexical continuity where documentary intermediaries are incomplete?

This article answers that question through a tightly filtered corpus of fourteen examples selected specifically for minimal interpretive strain.

## 2. Methodology

The present study does not proceed through unrestricted resemblance hunting. Instead, a strict inclusion filter was applied before any lexical pair was admitted into the pilot corpus. A candidate correspondence was accepted only when the following four conditions were simultaneously satisfied.

### 2.1 Consonantal Frame Preservation

The principal consonantal skeleton of the ancient lexeme had to remain recognizably visible in the later form, allowing only ordinary phonetic events such as softening, hardening, vowel insertion, semivowel addition, weak syllable loss, or terminal reduction.

Examples include:

- kutum → kutu (K-T frame retained),
- paharum → bahar (P/B-H-R retained),
- gammalum → camel (G/C-M-L retained).

### *2.2 Semantic Stability*

The semantic field had to remain identical or functionally near-identical. Purely visual or metaphorical associations were excluded whenever semantic overlap was weak.

Thus, for example:

- ṭuppu → tapu was admitted because both denote formal documentary record, whereas looser image-based correspondences were intentionally rejected.

### *2.3 Minimal Reconstructive Strain*

No candidate was accepted if it required arbitrary elimination of multiple core consonants. Only weak unstressed prefixes, terminal syllables, or phonetically vulnerable support vowels were allowed to erode.

Example:

- nalbasum → libas preserves the L-B-S garment nucleus after reduction of the weak initial syllable.

### *2.4 Conservative Corpus Restriction*

Although many additional speculative correspondences were observed, only items with the lowest explanatory strain were selected. This deliberate restriction was intended to maximize academic credibility and avoid resemblance inflation.

### 3. Pilot Corpus of Fourteen High-Stability Examples

No	Ancient Lexeme	Ancient Meaning	Stitched Transitional Reading	Later Form	Later Meaning
1	AMA	mother	ama→ana	ANA	mother
2	UMMUM	mother	ummum→ümm	ÜMM	mother
3	WALITTUM	mother	walittum→valide	VALİDE	mother
4	ILU	god	ilu→el/ilah	EL / İLAH	god
5	KIŠŠU	container	kiššu→kase/kese	KASE / KESE	container
6	KUTUM	box/container	kutum→kutu	KUTU	box
7	ṬUPPU	official tablet/document	tuppu→tapu	TAPU	official deed
8	PAHARUM	spring season	paharum→bahar	BAHAR	spring
9	EQLU	cultivated field	eqlu→ekili	EKİLİ	cultivated
10	ŠEŠŠUM	six	sessum→şeş	ŞEŞ	six
11	GAMMALUM	camel	gammalum→camel	CAMEL	camel
12	AZAG	forbidden	azag→yasak	YASAK	forbidden
13	BESUM	withdraw/go away	besum→bas	BAS (git)	go away
14	NALBASUM	garment	nalbasum→libas	LİBAS	garment

### 4. Cas by-Case Analysis of the Fourteen High-Stability Correspondences

#### 4.1 AMA → ANA

Sumerian *ama* denotes “mother” directly and without semantic ambiguity. The later Turkish form *ana* preserves the same maternal meaning with only a minor nasal alternation between /m/ and /n/, one of the most common articulatory substitutions in human language. Since semantic identity is exact and consonantal architecture remains almost fully intact, this pair represents a highly stable kinship correspondence.

#### 4.2 UMMUM → ÜMM

Akkadian *ummum* likewise means “mother.” The later Semitic form *ümm/umm* preserves both the bilabial nasal core and the same maternal semantic function. Only the terminal

syllable is reduced. Family terms are historically among the most conservative lexical classes, which gives this consonantal-semantic continuity substantial comparative value.

#### 4.3 *WALITTUM* → *VALİDE*

Akkadian *walittum* denotes the woman who gives birth, i.e., mother. The Ottoman Turkish form *valide* also refers specifically to mother. The phonetic path requires only ordinary W→V voicing and T→D softening, while the L-D/T maternal frame remains visibly traceable. The biological specificity of the shared meaning makes this correspondence especially resistant to semantic inflation.

#### 4.4 *ILU* → *EL / İLAH*

The ancient Mesopotamian lexeme *ilu* signifies god, deity, or divine being. Later Semitic forms such as *el* and *ilah* preserve the same sacred semantic nucleus. The L consonantal axis remains stable, while terminal vowels and auxiliary breath sounds vary only minimally. Because divine terminology tends to resist radical semantic drift, this item occupies one of the strongest positions in the corpus.

#### 4.5 *KIŠŠU* → *KASE / KESE*

Akkadian *kiššu* denotes a container, receptacle, or holding vessel. Turkish *kase* and *kese* continue the same containment function in two different material realizations: rigid vessel and soft flexible pouch. The K-S consonantal frame remains clearly visible, while the terminal vowel merely opens into later nominal endings. This pair is semantically transparent and structurally economical.

#### 4.6 *KUTUM* → *KUTU*

Akkadian *kutum* refers to a protective storage box or container. Turkish *kutu* denotes precisely the same kind of object: a vessel into which items are placed, stored, and preserved. Only the final nasal consonant is lost, while the K-T storage skeleton remains unchanged. Few items in the corpus display such low reconstructive strain.

#### 4.7 *ṬUPPU* → *TAPU*

Akkadian *ṭuppu* means inscribed tablet, formal record, or official document. Turkish *tapu* denotes a state-recognized title deed and legal property document. Crucially, both words belong not merely to the broad category of “writing,” but to the narrower bureaucratic sphere of legally validated record. The consonantal T-P frame remains visible after ordinary simplification of the doubled consonant.

#### 4.8 *PAHARUM* → *BAHAR*

Akkadian *paharum* signifies springtime, the blossoming season, or the annual return of vegetative renewal. Turkish *bahar* preserves exactly the same seasonal designation. The phonetic transition requires only the common P→B voicing shift, while the H-R seasonal consonantal frame remains intact. This is among the least semantically strained correspondences in the pilot corpus.

#### 4.9 *EQLU* → *EKILI*

Akkadian *eqlu* denotes cultivated land, tilled field, or agricultural plot. Turkish *ekili* similarly refers to land that has been sown or planted. The K/Q-L agricultural frame remains visible, while the later form merely adds a productive adjectival extension. The semantic continuity is not generic “land,” but specifically transformed agricultural ground.

#### 4.10 *ŠEŠŠUM* → *ŞEŞ*

Akkadian *šeššum* denotes the numeral six. Later *şeş* preserves the identical numerical value. Numerals are among the most conservative lexical categories in language persistence studies, because they are resistant to metaphorical reinterpretation. Consequently, a consonantal-semantic match in this domain carries unusually high evidentiary force.

#### 4.11 *GAMMALUM* → *CAMEL*

Akkadian *gammalum* means camel. English *camel* denotes the same zoological referent. The G/C-M-L animal-name skeleton remains strikingly stable despite the reduction of the terminal syllable.

Animal names frequently show long chronological durability, and the low semantic flexibility of this item increases its comparative significance.

#### 4.12 *AZAG* → *YASAK*

Sumerian *azag* denotes something forbidden, prohibited, or not permitted. Turkish *yasak* carries the same legal-prohibitive meaning. Initial semivowel addition (Y-) and final hardening (G→K) are both common phonetic developments, while the Z/S-K prohibitive skeleton remains visibly present. Because the semantic identity is direct rather than metaphorical, this pair constitutes one of the corpus’ strongest practical examples.

#### 4.13 *BESUM* → *BAS (git)*

Akkadian *besum* means to withdraw, move away, or leave. Turkish colloquial *bas git* functions as an imperative dismissal meaning “go away” or “leave immediately.” Following the erosion of the terminal syllable, the B-S movement-away frame remains intact. What survives here is not merely locomotion, but the more specific semantic force of commanded removal.

#### 4.14 *NALBASUM* → *LIBAS*

Akkadian *nalbasum* denotes a garment or clothing item. Turkish *libas* likewise means garment, dress, or clothing. The weak initial syllable is reduced, but the central L-B-S garment skeleton remains clearly traceable. Because both ancient and later forms belong to the same clothing semantic field, the correspondence is notable despite moderate initial truncation.

### 5. Probabilistic Considerations

The principal objection to any long-range lexical comparison is the possibility of accidental

resemblance. In isolated instances this objection is entirely legitimate. A single phonetic similarity, even when semantically suggestive, can always be dismissed as chance.

The evidentiary landscape changes, however, when resemblance is not singular but cumulative.

The present pilot corpus contains fourteen examples distributed across multiple semantically independent lexical domains:

- kinship,
- divinity,
- storage objects,
- legal documentation,
- seasonal terminology,
- agriculture,
- numerals,
- zoological nomenclature,
- prohibition,
- directional movement,
- clothing.

This distribution is methodologically significant because the correspondences are not clustered within a single semantic field where analogical contamination might be expected. Instead, they recur across unrelated functional vocabularies.

The repeated concurrence of two variables:

1. recognizable consonantal frame preservation, and
2. semantic identity or near-identity

substantially weakens the explanatory sufficiency of random coincidence. A chance resemblance may plausibly account for one example.

It becomes progressively less economical as the number of low-strain matches increases across independent lexical categories.

The argument advanced here is therefore not that every item individually proves linear historical descent. Rather, it is that the cumulative density of such examples generates a probabilistic burden that conventional dismissal by “mere coincidence” no longer satisfies adequately.

At a sufficient threshold of repetition, coincidence ceases to function as the intellectually cheapest explanation.

This pilot corpus proposes that fourteen highly conservative examples already approach such a threshold.

### *5.1 Preliminary Control Consideration*

As a minimal control observation, the present study informally compared several randomly selected Sumerian and Akkadian lexemes against unrelated later Turkish and international lexical forms without applying the study's semantic-continuity filter. In most such cases, either consonantal preservation failed entirely or semantic correspondence proved weak, metaphorical, or absent.

This contrast is methodologically relevant because it suggests that low-strain consonantal-semantic convergence does not emerge automatically through unrestricted lexical comparison. Rather, the majority of uncontrolled comparisons collapse under semantic or structural inconsistency.

The present article does not claim that this preliminary observation constitutes a formal statistical model. However, it provides an initial comparative indication that the density observed within the fourteen-item pilot corpus may exceed what unrestricted random resemblance would be expected to generate consistently across multiple independent semantic domains.

## **6. Discussion**

The significance of these findings lies not in asserting a simplistic one-channel genealogical transmission for every lexical pair, but in demonstrating that ancient lexical memory may persist through consonantal-semantic nuclei with greater durability than attestation-centered models generally assume.

Several explanatory mechanisms remain open:

- direct inheritance,
- areal lexical diffusion,
- substrate persistence,
- prolonged civilizational borrowing,
- or recurrent phonosemantic stabilization.

The present study does not force a single mechanism upon all items. The study also recognizes several longstanding objections raised by orthodox historical linguistics against long-range comparison methodologies. Mainstream critiques correctly emphasize the dangers of uncontrolled resemblance accumulation, accidental phonetic similarity, selective confirmation bias, and the absence of documented intermediary transmission stages.

For this reason, the present framework intentionally adopts a conservative filtering strategy based on simultaneous consonantal preservation, semantic continuity, and minimal reconstructive strain. The goal is not to bypass historical-comparative linguistics, but to

explore whether probabilistic lexical persistence may deserve cautious investigation in cases where documentary continuity has become historically inaccessible.

Its more modest claim is methodological:

when consonantal structure and semantic function repeatedly survive together, deep lexical continuity deserves investigation even in the absence of uninterrupted documentary chains.

Ancient Mesopotamia occupied one of the longest-lasting centers of early urban civilization. Under such circumstances, the persistence of lexical nuclei across later languages is not an irrational hypothesis but a testable comparative possibility.

Thus, this study advocates a shift in emphasis:

from purely documentary etymology to documentary etymology plus consonantal-semantic probability analysis.

## 7. Conclusion

This study has presented a tightly filtered pilot corpus of fourteen consonantal-semantic correspondences between Sumerian/Akkadian lexemes and selected later Eurasian forms. Each lexical pair was admitted only when three conditions were simultaneously present:

1. visible preservation of the principal consonantal frame,
2. stable or near-stable semantic continuity, and
3. low reconstructive strain.

The resulting corpus does not by itself claim definitive linear descent in every individual instance.

Such a claim would require broader comparative documentation and further philological expansion.

What the corpus does demonstrate, however, is that repeated low-strain lexical convergence across multiple independent semantic domains cannot be dismissed casually without probabilistic consideration.

The article therefore proposes a methodological invitation rather than a final dogma: deep-time etymological comparison should be evaluated not only through surviving documentary chains, but also through the cumulative persistence of consonantal-semantic nuclei.

If further expanded corpora continue to reproduce similar densities, then the traditional boundary between historical etymology and probabilistic lexical archaeology may require substantial reconsideration.

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