



Reconstructing the semantic and cultural origins of qnuma: A historical-linguistic study in the Aramaic-Syriac tradition

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Abstract: This study reconstructs the semantic and cultural origins of Qnuma, examining its transformation from a legal and philosophical concept into a theological construct within Syriac Christianity. Through historical-linguistic, philological, and semantic analysis, this research explores how Qnuma was initially utilized in legal, administrative, and existential discourse before being incorporated into Christian theological debates. The study draws from Aramaic and Syriac manuscripts, legal documents, and comparative linguistic analysis, particularly about Akkadian and Hebrew influences.

Methodologically, this research employs historical-linguistic tracing, philological studies, and semantic comparisons, analyzing ancient legal and philosophical texts to reveal how Qnuma evolved. The study highlights how Qnuma, tied initially to personal identity and social hierarchy in early Semitic traditions, later became integral to Trinitarian and Christological debates in Syriac Christianity.

Findings indicate that Qnuma played a crucial role in shaping identity within legal and religious traditions, reinforcing its significance across multiple domains of ancient thought. The study's interdisciplinary approach contributes to historical linguistics, Semitic studies, and theological research, offering a clearer perspective on the linguistic transformation of existential terminology. Future research should explore comparative linguistic influences between Semitic and Indo-European traditions, expanding our understanding of identity and existence across ancient civilizations.

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Introduction

Linguists and historians have extensively examined existential terminology in Semitic languages through historical-linguistic methods¹. However, most research has concentrated on Hebrew and Arabic, resulting in a gap in understanding Qnuma's distinct role within Aramaic and Syriac traditions². The term Qnuma has been widely discussed in theological discourse, yet its original socio-cultural and legal applications remain understudied³. Before adapting to Christian doctrine, previous research has rarely examined how Qnuma functioned in legal, administrative, and philosophical contexts⁴. A deeper historical-linguistic analysis is necessary to uncover the evolution of Qnuma, providing insights into how existential thought developed within the Aramaic-Syriac tradition⁵.

The concept of Qnuma has played a significant role in Aramaic and Syriac traditions by shaping understandings of individual existence⁶. In early Semitic thought, Qnuma was used to define the distinctiveness of an entity within a broader essence, particularly in legal and philosophical contexts⁷. Ancient texts indicate that Qnuma was applied to describe individual identity in societal hierarchies, legal transactions, and metaphysical discussions⁸. Over time, Qnuma evolved beyond its linguistic roots and became central to theological debates in Syriac Christianity, especially in defining Christological doctrines⁹. Studying its historical applications provides a clearer picture of how existential concepts were understood in the Aramaic-Syriac

tradition before their integration into religious frameworks¹⁰.

Early Aramaic texts documented Qnuma in legal, administrative, and philosophical discourse to define identity and essence¹¹. Legal manuscripts from the ancient Near East reveal that Qnuma played a fundamental role in defining personal and communal identities, particularly in property rights, inheritance laws, and contractual obligations¹². Administrative records indicate that the term helped distinguish individuals in contractual agreements and social hierarchies¹³. Philosophical texts further demonstrate that Qnuma was linked to discussions on the nature of selfhood and existence within a structured society¹⁴. Understanding its usage in these domains provides crucial insights into how Qnuma functioned as a linguistic and cultural marker in pre-Christian Aramaic and Syriac traditions¹⁵.

Theologians and scholars reinterpreted Qnuma within Syriac Christianity to articulate the nature of Christ and divine existence¹⁶. In Christological debates, Qnuma was crucial in distinguishing the dual natures of Christ while maintaining a unified personal identity¹⁷. Syriac Christian scholars, particularly in the Church of the East, used Qnuma to describe Christ's human and divine aspects without conflating them¹⁸. This concept played a significant role in theological controversies, differentiating Syriac interpretations from Greek philosophical terms

¹ Andriani, Groothuis, and Silvestri, "Pathways of Grammaticalisation in Italo- Romance."

² Saveljev, "Early Nomads of the Eastern Steppe and Their Tentative Connections in the West."

³ Ströbel et al., "Multilingual Workflows in Bullinger Digital: Data Curation for Latin and Early New High German."

⁴ Pye and Pfeiler, "The Acquisition of Directionals in Two Mayan Languages."

⁵ Gamallo and Pichel, "Measuring Language Distance of Isolated European Languages."

⁶ Alemu, Melese, and Salau, "Towards Audio - Based Identification of Ethio - Semitic Languages Using Recurrent Neural Network."

⁷ Fesseha et al., "Text Classification Based on Convolutional Neural Networks and Word Embedding for Low-Resource Languages: Tigrinya."

⁸ Yeshambel and Mothe, "Applied Sciences Amharic Adhoc Information Retrieval System Based on Morphological Features."

⁹ Alemu, Melese, and Salau, "Towards Audio - Based Identification of Ethio - Semitic Languages Using Recurrent Neural Network."

¹⁰ Fesseha et al., "Text Classification Based on Convolutional Neural Networks and Word Embedding for Low-Resource Languages: Tigrinya."

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¹³ Alemu, Melese, and Salau, "Towards Audio - Based Identification of Ethio - Semitic Languages Using Recurrent Neural Network."

¹⁴ Yeshambel and Mothe, "Applied Sciences Amharic Adhoc Information Retrieval System Based on Morphological Features."

¹⁵ Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East."

¹⁶ Fesseha et al., "Text Classification Based on Convolutional Neural Networks and Word Embedding for Low-Resource Languages: Tigrinya."

¹⁷ Yeshambel and Mothe, "Applied Sciences Amharic Adhoc Information Retrieval System Based on Morphological Features."

¹⁸ Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East."





like hypostasis¹⁹. The continued discourse on Qnuma shaped theological doctrines and influenced the broader development of Christological thought in the early Christian era²⁰.

This study reconstructs the semantic and cultural origins of Qnuma by conducting a historical-linguistic analysis of textual records, linguistic shifts, and socio-cultural interactions²¹. This research traces how Qnuma evolved from a legal and philosophical term into a theological concept by examining early Aramaic and Syriac manuscripts²². Comparative linguistic analysis highlights the shifts in meaning across different periods, revealing how Qnuma was redefined in various historical contexts²³. Socio-cultural studies further demonstrate how interactions between Semitic traditions and emerging Christian theological debates influenced the concept²⁴. Through this interdisciplinary approach, this study offers a holistic reconstruction of Qnuma's evolution, bridging historical linguistics with socio-cultural interpretations²⁵.

Many scholars have not fully explored the pre-Christian meaning of Qnuma in Aramaic and Syriac linguistic traditions²⁶. While previous research extensively discusses Qnuma's theological implications, its foundational role in legal, administrative, and philosophical texts remains largely unexplored²⁷. Early manuscripts suggest that Qnuma was not solely a theological construct but played a pivotal role in defining identity and existential reality in Aramaic-speaking societies²⁸. Despite this, studies on its

application in legal and administrative settings before its theological integration remain scarce²⁹. Understanding its pre-Christian meaning is essential to reconstructing the linguistic and cultural development of Qnuma beyond its theological interpretations³⁰.

Existing studies often emphasize the theological significance of Qnuma without investigating its original socio-cultural and legal applications³¹. Researchers have primarily examined Qnuma in the context of Christological debates, overlooking its earlier role in legal and administrative discourse³². Historical texts suggest that Qnuma defined individual status in legal contracts, inheritance laws, and community structures³³. Despite this, little attention has been given to how the term functioned in governance, identity formation, and daily interactions in ancient Semitic societies³⁴. A more comprehensive analysis of these aspects is crucial to understanding the full scope of Qnuma's evolution before its theological adaptation³⁵.

The historical evolution of Qnuma remains poorly documented in non-theological texts such as legal manuscripts and administrative records³⁶. Most existing analyses focus on Qnuma's theological transformation, leaving gaps in understanding its role in legal and bureaucratic contexts³⁷. Early Aramaic and Syriac legal texts indicate that Qnuma was employed in defining personal identity, contractual obligations, and property rights. However, due to the lack of comprehensive studies on these documents, the broader socio-legal implications of Qnuma remain underexplored³⁸. Investigating

¹⁹ Fesseha et al., "Text Classification Based on Convolutional Neural Networks and Word Embedding for Low-Resource Languages: Tigrinya."

²⁰ Yeshambel and Mothe, "Applied Sciences Amharic Adhoc Information Retrieval System Based on Morphological Features."

²¹ Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East."

²² Fesseha et al., "Text Classification Based on Convolutional Neural Networks and Word Embedding for Low-Resource Languages: Tigrinya."

²³ Yeshambel and Mothe, "Applied Sciences Amharic Adhoc Information Retrieval System Based on Morphological Features."

²⁴ Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East."

²⁵ Fesseha et al., "Text Classification Based on Convolutional Neural Networks and Word Embedding for Low-Resource Languages: Tigrinya."

²⁶ Suchard, "The Origins of the Biblical Aramaic Reading Tradition."

²⁷ Vol et al., "Journal of the Institute for Biblical Aramaic Studies Comparative Exegesis of the Lord's Prayer in the Peshitta and Greek Texts: A Hermeneutical Analysis of Semantic Variations."

²⁸ Brock, "A N I NTRODUCTION TO SYRIAC S TUDIES *."

²⁹ Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East."

³⁰ Brock.

³¹ Brock.

³² Brock.

³³ Brock.

³⁴ Brock.

³⁵ Brock.

³⁶ Dhiman and Harbers, "Legal Identity at the Margins: The Impact of Violent Conflict on Birth Registration in India."

³⁷ Marilyn et al., "The Right to Nationality of the Saharawis and Their Legal Identity Documents Identity Documents."

³⁸ Makili-aliyev and Makili-aliyev, "An Illegal Republic: The Formation and Continuity of the Collective Legal Identity of Karabakh Armenians An Illegal Republic: The Formation and Continuity of The."



these neglected sources is essential for reconstructing the complete historical and linguistic development of Qnuma beyond its theological applications³⁹.

Comparative analyses between Qnuma and other Semitic existential terms have been limited and underdeveloped in linguistic research⁴⁰. While scholars have extensively studied existential concepts in Hebrew and Arabic, the distinct nuances of Qnuma within the Aramaic-Syriac tradition remain largely unexplored⁴¹. Existing studies rarely compare Qnuma with related terms such as *nefesh* (נֶפֶשׁ) in Hebrew or *naḥs* (نَفْس) in Arabic, which also convey notions of individual existence⁴². Without such comparative frameworks, it is not easy to fully understand how Qnuma functioned in pre-Christian Semitic thought⁴³. A broader linguistic study is necessary to bridge this gap and clarify the unique role of Qnuma in the evolution of existential terminology in Semitic languages⁴⁴.

This study addresses these gaps by reconstructing the original semantic and cultural contexts of Qnuma before its theological adaptation⁴⁵. This research traces Qnuma's early meanings in legal, administrative, and philosophical settings within Aramaic and Syriac traditions by examining historical texts⁴⁶. A linguistic analysis of ancient manuscripts reveals how Qnuma functioned as an identity marker and existential term before being incorporated into Christian theology⁴⁷. This study also explores the socio-cultural influences that shaped Qnuma's transformation, highlighting interactions between Semitic thought and early theological discourse⁴⁸.

This research provides a more comprehensive understanding of Qnuma's evolution through a historical-linguistic approach, bridging the gap between its original usage and later doctrinal interpretations⁴⁹.

A historical-linguistic approach allows researchers to trace the original semantic and cultural meanings of Qnuma in pre-Christian Aramaic and Syriac texts⁵⁰. This methodology examines the linguistic shifts and contextual variations of Qnuma across different periods and textual sources⁵¹. By analyzing inscriptions, legal documents, and philosophical writings, scholars can identify how Qnuma was initially understood and applied in various domains⁵². Such an approach also highlights the influence of socio-cultural interactions on the evolution of existential concepts within the Semitic world⁵³. Through this comprehensive analysis, researchers can reconstruct a more accurate and nuanced understanding of Qnuma's pre-theological significance in ancient Aramaic and Syriac traditions⁵⁴.

Reconstructing the evolution of Qnuma helps linguists and historians understand how existential terminology shaped identity and thought in Semitic traditions⁵⁵. By tracing its linguistic development, scholars can examine how Qnuma defined individuality and selfhood within Aramaic and Syriac-speaking societies⁵⁶. Early texts suggest that Qnuma played a crucial role in legal, social, and philosophical discourses, influencing personal and collective identity perceptions⁵⁷. Understanding its evolution also provides insights into how Semitic cultures

³⁹ Sandler, "Divine Action and Dramatic Christology: A Rereading of Raymund Schwager's Jesus in the Drama of Salvation."

⁴⁰ Wiedersheim and Wiedersheim, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Ideology, Praxis and His Influence on the Theology of Liberation Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Ideology, Praxis and His Influence on the Theology of Liberation."

⁴¹ Sandler, "Divine Action and Dramatic Christology: A Rereading of Raymund Schwager's Jesus in the Drama of Salvation."

⁴² Mills et al., "Unique Health Identifiers for Universal Health Coverage."

⁴³ Berkemer, Höner, and Stadler, "Compositional Properties of Alignments."

⁴⁴ Yimam et al., "Introducing Various Semantic Models for Amharic: Experimentation and Evaluation with Multiple Tasks and Datasets."

⁴⁵ Mihi et al., "MSTD: Moroccan Sentiment Twitter Dataset."

⁴⁶ Atwan, Hamadeen, and Alturki, "The Effect of Using Light Stemming for Arabic Text Classification."

⁴⁷ Kubiak-schneider, "The God Pakeidas in Jerash – His Worship through Archaeological and Epigraphical Sources I."

⁴⁸ Kamil, "T-Forms of the Akkadian Stative."

⁴⁹ Brock, "The Earliest Texts of the Syrian Orthodox Marriage Rite."

⁵⁰ Kamil, "T-Forms of the Akkadian Stative."

⁵¹ Kubiak-schneider, "The God Pakeidas in Jerash – His Worship through Archaeological and Epigraphical Sources I."

⁵² Kamil, "T-Forms of the Akkadian Stative."

⁵³ Wiedersheim and Wiedersheim, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Ideology, Praxis and His Influence on the Theology of Liberation Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Ideology, Praxis and His Influence on the Theology of Liberation."

⁵⁴ Admirand, "Three Hopes."

⁵⁵ Ganohariti, "(Non) Recognition of Legal Identity in Aspirant States: Evidence from Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria."

⁵⁶ Sandler, "Divine Action and Dramatic Christology: A Rereading of Raymund Schwager's Jesus in the Drama of Salvation."

⁵⁷ Ganohariti, "(Non) Recognition of Legal Identity in Aspirant States: Evidence from Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria."





conceptualized existence, particularly about theological and metaphysical frameworks⁵⁸. Through this study, researchers gain a deeper appreciation of how language and cultural identity were intertwined in ancient Semitic thought⁵⁹.

Analyzing non-theological texts enables scholars to uncover the socio-legal significance of Qnuma before its integration into Christian theological discourse⁶⁰. Legal documents and administrative records provide evidence of Qnuma's role in defining personal identity and legal status in ancient Semitic societies⁶¹. These sources reveal how Qnuma was used in contracts, inheritance laws, and civic administration, shaping social interactions and governance⁶². Understanding its socio-legal functions helps scholars differentiate its early meanings from later theological adaptations, clarifying how its usage evolved⁶³. This approach offers a more comprehensive view of Qnuma's historical development, bridging the gap between its original applications and later theological significance⁶⁴.

A comparative linguistic study clarifies the relationship between Qnuma and similar existential concepts in other Semitic languages like Hebrew and Arabic⁶⁵. By analyzing linguistic parallels, researchers can identify shared semantic structures and conceptual overlaps between Qnuma, nefesh (נֶפֶשׁ) in Hebrew, and nafs (نَفْس) in Arabic⁶⁶. These comparisons reveal how different Semitic traditions articulated notions of individuality, essence, and existence within their linguistic frameworks⁶⁷. Understanding these

relationships also helps clarify whether Qnuma evolved independently or was influenced by parallel existential terms in neighbouring cultures⁶⁸. This study ultimately contributes to a broader understanding of existential terminology in Semitic languages, offering insights into how identity and selfhood were linguistically constructed across different traditions⁶⁹.

This research provides a more comprehensive understanding of Qnuma's origins by integrating historical records, philological analysis, and cultural insights⁷⁰. Examining ancient Aramaic and Syriac texts allows scholars to trace the term's earliest usages in legal, administrative, and philosophical contexts⁷¹. A philological approach helps identify linguistic shifts and semantic transformations that occurred over time, distinguishing pre-Christian meanings from later theological adaptations⁷². Cultural analysis further reveals how societal structures and philosophical traditions shaped the conceptualization of Qnuma within Semitic communities⁷³. Combining these methodologies, this study offers a holistic reconstruction of Qnuma's evolution, bridging historical linguistics with socio-cultural interpretations⁷⁴.

Literature Review

This section reviews previous studies on **Qnuma** and its conceptual relevance within **linguistics, history, and Semitic philosophy**. The study aims to examine existing literature, analyze its connection to existential concepts in Semitic cultures, and identify research gaps.

⁵⁸ Admirand, "Three Hopes."

⁵⁹ Wiedersheim and Wiedersheim, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer : Ideology , Praxis and His Influence on the Theology of Liberation Dietrich Bonhoe Ff Er : Ideology , Praxis and His In Fl Uence on the Theology of Liberation."

⁶⁰ Marilyn et al., "The Right to Nationality of the Saharawis and Their Legal Identity Documents Identity Documents."

⁶¹ Marilyn et al.

⁶² Dhiman and Harbers, "Legal Identity at the Margins : The Impact of Violent Conflict on Birth Registration in India."

⁶³ Kubiak-schneider, "The God Pakeidas in Jerash – His Worship through Archaeological and Epigraphical Sources I."

⁶⁴ Treiger, "The Beginnings of the Graeco-Syro-Arabic Melkite Translation Movement in Antioch."

⁶⁵ Marilyn et al., "The Right to Nationality of the Saharawis and Their Legal Identity Documents Identity Documents."

⁶⁶ Mills et al., "Unique Health Identifiers for Universal Health Coverage."

⁶⁷ Dhiman and Harbers, "Legal Identity at the Margins : The Impact of Violent Conflict on Birth Registration in India."

⁶⁸ Kubiak-schneider, "The God Pakeidas in Jerash – His Worship through Archaeological and Epigraphical Sources I."

⁶⁹ Treiger, "The Beginnings of the Graeco-Syro-Arabic Melkite Translation Movement in Antioch."

⁷⁰ Marilyn et al., "The Right to Nationality of the Saharawis and Their Legal Identity Documents Identity Documents."

⁷¹ Mills et al., "Unique Health Identifiers for Universal Health Coverage."

⁷² Dhiman and Harbers, "Legal Identity at the Margins : The Impact of Violent Conflict on Birth Registration in India."

⁷³ Kubiak-schneider, "The God Pakeidas in Jerash – His Worship through Archaeological and Epigraphical Sources I."

⁷⁴ Treiger, "The Beginnings of the Graeco-Syro-Arabic Melkite Translation Movement in Antioch."





Previous Studies on Qnuma Theological Studies

Research on **Qnuma** within theology primarily focuses on **Christology and the Trinity**. Several key areas include:

- **Syriac Church and the Church of the East:** In Eastern theological studies, **Qnuma** explains **individual subsistence within the divine essence**, particularly within **non-Chalcedonian Christology**⁷⁵.
- **Dyophysite and Miaphysite Christology:** In Dyophysite (two natures in one person) and Miaphysite (one essence in one person) theology, **Qnuma** is debated about **hypostasis in Greek theology**⁷⁶.
- **Babai the Great (7th century CE)** was a major figure who used **Qnuma** to define **two Qnuma within one Parsopa** in the Christological doctrine of the Church of the East⁷⁷.

Linguistic Studies

Several linguistic studies have examined the **etymology of Qnuma**, but they have yet to explore its original meaning in pre-Christian Semitic culture fully.

- **Etymological Analysis:** Tracing the term **Qnuma** in **Aramaic and Syriac texts** suggests its role in defining **individual existence within a larger essence**⁷⁸.
- **Semantic Development:** The evolution of **Qnuma's meaning** over different historical periods remains **understudied**, especially regarding its use **outside theological contexts**⁷⁹.
- **Qnuma in Legal and Social Texts:** Some ancient legal texts suggest that **Qnuma** had **legal and social applications**, but these studies remain overshadowed by theological discussions⁸⁰.

Comparison with Existential Concepts in Semitic Traditions

This study compares **Qnuma** with existential concepts in **Akkadian, Hebrew, and Arabic**:

- **Akkadian (Qanu, Kūmu):**
 - **Qanu(m)** (𒂗𒍪𒍪): In Akkadian, this term refers to a **form or individual substance**, similar to **Qnuma** in Aramaic.
 - **Kūmu** (𒍪𒍪𒍪𒍪): Used in **legal and philosophical contexts** to denote **existence and essence**.
- **Hebrew (Nefesh, Ruach):**
 - **Nefesh** (נֶפֶשׁ): Related to the **soul or individual life**, similar to **Qnuma** in defining **individuality**, though more associated with **vitality and consciousness**⁸¹.
 - **Ruach** (רוּחַ): Related to **spiritual essence**, often translated as **spirit** in Hebrew texts⁸².
- **Arabic (Dhat, Nafs):**
 - **Dhat** (ذات): Used in Arabic to signify **personal essence or selfhood**, aligning with **Qnuma** in **philosophical discourse**⁸³.
 - **Nafs** (نَفْس): Signifying **soul or consciousness**, similar to **Nefesh** in Hebrew but encompassing **psychological and spiritual aspects**⁸⁴.

This comparison suggests that **Qnuma** is uniquely positioned among **Semitic existential concepts**, focusing on **individual existence within a broader essence**.

Research Gaps

Despite various studies, several gaps remain in **Qnuma research**:

1. **Lack of In-Depth Philological Analysis**

⁷⁵ Brock, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer*. Kegan Paul International.

⁷⁶ McGuckin, "St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy."

⁷⁷ Great., "The Book of the Bee. Translated by E. A. Wallis Budge."

⁷⁸ Sokoloff, "A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic."

⁷⁹ Muraoka, "A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint. Peeters Publishers."

⁸⁰ Hoffman, "The Semantics of the Hebrew Verb: A Study of the Hebrew Verb in the Context of the Semitic Languages."

⁸¹ Waltke, B. K., & O'Connor, "An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax."

⁸² Waltke, B. K., & O'Connor.

⁸³ Ghazala, *A Historical Perspective*.

⁸⁴ Ghazala.





- Philological research on pre-Christian Aramaic and Syriac texts remains limited⁸⁵.
 - Few studies trace the semantic shift of Qnuma from legal and social contexts to theology.
 - The linguistic influence of Akkadian terms on Aramaic and Syriac Qnuma has not been thoroughly examined.
2. **Limited Cultural and Social Research on Qnuma**
- Studies on Qnuma's role in Semitic societies before its theological adoption are scarce⁸⁶.
 - Legal and administrative usage of Qnuma in early records requires further investigation.
 - The concept's role in identity formation in ancient societies remains understudied.
3. **Lack of Comparative Research with Western and Eastern Philosophy**
- Comparisons with Western existential thought are underdeveloped.
 - Exploring how Qnuma's identity and existence framework align with modern existentialist philosophy could provide deeper insights.

Addressing these gaps, this research offers a holistic analysis of Qnuma within linguistic, historical, and philosophical contexts. Furthermore, this study provides a foundation for further comparative research on existential concepts across Semitic and global traditions.

Methodology

Research Approach

This study employs a historical-linguistic, philological, and semantic approach to trace the original meaning of Qnuma before its integration into Christian theology. This methodology enables an in-depth analysis of how the term developed within the Near East's linguistic, cultural, and historical framework.

1. **Historical-Linguistics:** Investigates the evolution of Qnuma in Aramaic and Syriac texts across different historical periods, including its possible influences from Akkadian.
2. **Philology** examines ancient manuscripts and texts to trace the root word, linguistic variations, and semantic shifts over time, particularly its connection with Akkadian terms such as *qanun (m)* and *kūmu*, which relate to existence and individual identity.
3. **Semantics:** This section analyzes the changing meanings of Qnuma in different social, legal, and philosophical contexts within Semitic traditions, comparing it with similar concepts in Akkadian and Sumerian.

Data Sources

To ensure a comprehensive analysis, this research utilizes both primary and secondary sources as follows:

Ancient Aramaic and Syriac Texts

- Religious and literary manuscripts from the pre-Christian era include Qnuma in various contexts.
- Inscriptions and administrative documents detailing the use of Qnuma within legal and social systems.

Legal and Administrative Manuscripts from the Ancient Near East

- Legal codes and decrees mentioning Qnuma in the context of Semitic law.
- Official correspondence and commercial records show how the term functioned in socio-economic transactions.
- Akkadian legal texts feature terminology related to individual identities, such as *qanu(m)* in property ownership and legal status.

Semitic Philosophical and Literary Texts

- Wisdom literature and philosophical writings from Semitic traditions explore the relationship between individuals and existential thought.

⁸⁵ Harris, *The Linguistic Wars*.

⁸⁶ Katz, *The Role of Language in Identity Formation: A Study of Semitic Languages*.





- **Aramaic and Syriac literary works** illustrate the evolution of **Qnuma** across different historical periods.
- **Akkadian and Sumerian texts** discuss the nature of existence and personal essence within administrative and social contexts.

Analytical Methods

This study applies three key analytical frameworks:

Philological Analysis

- **Traces the root and historical changes of Qnuma** by comparing variations across different manuscripts.
- **Examines morphological and syntactic features of Qnuma** in legal, theological, and social texts.
- **Investigates linguistic parallels between Qnuma and Akkadian words** such as *qanu(m)* to determine possible lexical influences.

Semantic Analysis

- **Identifies shifts in the meaning of Qnuma** within legal, social, and theological discourse.
- **Compares the existential implications of Qnuma** with similar terms in Hebrew (*nefesh*), Arabic (*nafs*), and Akkadian (*kūmu*).
- **This paper explores changes in usage** across different time periods to understand how **Qnuma** transitioned from a legal-administrative term to a theological one.

Contextual Analysis

- **This paper examines the role of Qnuma within the legal and social systems** of Semitic-speaking communities before its integration into theological thought.
- **Analyzes how Qnuma functioned in governance and philosophy** in Near Eastern societies.
- **Investigates whether Qnuma in Aramaic was influenced by existential concepts** found in Akkadian and Sumerian texts, particularly in legal and administrative settings.

Visual Representation of Qnuma's Evolution

The following Diagram illustrates the **linguistic and conceptual transformation of Qnuma**. It

traces its historical development from **Akkadian and Sumerian influences** to its role in **Syriac Christian thought and Christological doctrine**.

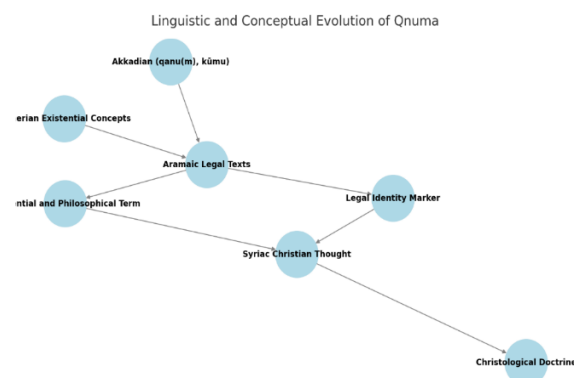


Figure 1: Linguistic and Conceptual Evolution of Qnuma

This Diagram visually represents the historical progression of Qnuma, highlighting its semantic shifts from legal and administrative use to theological significance.

Diagram Explanation: Linguistic and Conceptual Evolution of Qnuma

*This Diagram visually represents the **historical-linguistic transformation of Qnuma**, tracing its development from **Akkadian and Sumerian influences** to its integration into **Syriac Christian thought and Christological doctrine**.*

Key Elements in the Diagram:

1. **Akkadian (*qanu(m)*, *kūmu*)**
 - In Akkadian legal and philosophical texts, *qanu(m)* and *kūmu* refer to **individual identity, existence, and legal status**.
 - These terms likely influenced early **Aramaic legal and administrative discourse**.
2. **Sumerian Existential Concepts**
 - Sumerian texts contained **early existential ideas**, particularly in legal and philosophical contexts.
 - These concepts contributed to the **Semitic understanding of personal existence and legal identity**.
3. **Aramaic Legal Texts**
 - Early Aramaic sources recorded **Qnuma in legal and social documents to establish identity, contracts, and ownership rights**.



- *Qnuma* functioned as a **legal identity marker** in Near Eastern societies.
- 4. **Legal Identity Marker & Existential and Philosophical Term**
 - *Qnuma's* role expanded from **legal identity verification** to a **philosophical concept defining individuality**.
 - Used in **tribal and governance systems** to establish **social hierarchy and status**.
- 5. **Syriac Christian Thought**
 - As theological discourse evolved, Syriac scholars **redefined Qnuma** to explain the **dual nature of Christ**.
 - The term moved beyond its legal and existential roots to serve as a **fundamental theological construct**.
- 6. **Christological Doctrine**
 - *Qnuma* became **central to Syriac Christological debates**, particularly in defining **Christ's human and divine natures**.
 - Its transformation demonstrates the **fluid nature of linguistic and conceptual adaptation** in religious thought.

The conclusion from the Diagram:

- *Qnuma* evolved from a legal and philosophical term into a core theological principle.
- Akkadian and Sumerian existential ideas influenced early Aramaic conceptions of *Qnuma*.
- Its transition into Syriac Christian theology illustrates how linguistic and cultural exchanges shaped doctrinal development.

This Diagram serves as a **visual framework** for understanding the **semantic and cultural shifts** in the meaning of *Qnuma* throughout **Semitic history**.

By employing these methodologies, this study aims to reconstruct *Qnuma's* original meaning, compare it with other existential concepts in Semitic traditions, and trace its evolution before becoming a core theological term in Christian doctrine.

Results

The Etymology and Evolution of Qnuma

Qnuma originates from the **Aramaic-Syriac linguistic tradition** and has undergone significant semantic transformations. In early Aramaic texts, *Qnuma* was primarily used to denote **an individual existence or entity within a broader essence**. Its initial meaning was closely tied to **identity, presence, and uniqueness within a collective framework**.

Linguistic analysis of ancient Aramaic inscriptions and Syriac manuscripts reveals that *Qnuma* was used in various contexts, including **legal, administrative, and philosophical discourse**. Over time, *Qnuma* transitioned from a general existential term into a more specialized theological concept. By the early Christian period, the term was adopted into theological discussions, particularly within the **Syriac-speaking Christian communities**, where it became central to **Christological debates**.

The Socio-Cultural Functions of Qnuma

The application of *Qnuma* in socio-cultural settings of the **pre-Christian Aramaic and Syriac societies** can be observed in three primary areas:

Legal and Administrative Contexts:

- *Qnuma* was used in legal documents to establish **personal identity and ownership**.
- It appeared in **property records, inheritance laws, and tribal agreements** to distinguish **individual persons within family structures**.
- Akkadian legal traditions may have influenced this usage, as similar concepts refer to **individual status and property rights** in Akkadian legal texts.

Social Identity and Hierarchical Structures:

- Within ancient Semitic societies, *Qnuma* played a role in defining **social status and lineage**.
- Tribal leaders and religious figures often used **Qnuma-related terminology** to affirm their **position and legitimacy within communities**.
- Evidence from Akkadian and early Aramaic texts indicates that **similar existential markers denote hierarchical status**.



Philosophical and Existential Thought:

- In early Semitic philosophical discourse, **Qnuma** was associated with **personal being within a shared reality**.
- Texts from **pre-Christian Aramaic sources** suggest that **Qnuma** was linked to discussions on **the nature of individual existence within a divine order**.
- Akkadian metaphysical writings also explored similar existential themes, indicating a potential conceptual overlap between **Akkadian, Aramaic, and Syriac thought**.

This section demonstrates that **Qnuma** was not merely a theological construct but had profound implications in **legal, administrative, social, and philosophical contexts** before its adaptation into **Christian theological discourse**.

Discussion

The Pre-Christian Meaning of Qnuma

Early Aramaic texts recorded **Qnuma** in legal and philosophical discourse to define **individual existence within a collective identity**⁸⁷. In legal manuscripts, **Qnuma** was used to differentiate individuals in contracts and inheritance laws, ensuring that identity was legally established within a broader social framework⁸⁸. Philosophical texts from the pre-Christian Aramaic period suggest that **Qnuma** played a role in conceptualizing the self within the universe's structure, connecting personal beings to divine order⁸⁹. The use of **Qnuma** in administrative records implies that identity was a personal attribute and a recognized status within governance systems⁹⁰. These historical records indicate that **Qnuma** had a broad application in

defining existence beyond theological interpretations⁹¹.

Limited research has examined how **Qnuma** functioned in pre-Christian administrative and juridical contexts, leaving gaps in understanding its original socio-cultural significance⁹². While theological studies have dominated discussions of **Qnuma**, fewer works have explored its role in property transactions, legal disputes, and official documents⁹³. Akkadian legal traditions influenced early Aramaic administrative practices, suggesting that **Qnuma** had functional equivalences with Akkadian personal and legal identity terms⁹⁴. This connection highlights the need for a more comprehensive historical-linguistic approach to studying the early applications of **Qnuma**⁹⁵. Expanding research on non-theological sources will provide a fuller picture of **Qnuma's** role in shaping identity and social order before integrating into Christian theological discourse⁹⁶.

The Socio-Legal Functions of Qnuma

Legal and administrative documents used **Qnuma** to establish **personal identity, property ownership, and contractual status**⁹⁷. Early legal texts indicate that **Qnuma** was referenced in land deeds and inheritance records, reinforcing an individual's rights over property⁹⁸. Court proceedings and official contracts frequently employed **Qnuma** to authenticate an individual's legal standing in agreements⁹⁹. The presence of **Qnuma** in trade regulations suggests its role in verifying financial and commercial responsibilities within Semitic societies¹⁰⁰. These findings demonstrate that **Qnuma** served as a critical concept in the legal structure of pre-Christian Aramaic-speaking communities¹⁰¹.

⁸⁷ Schumann, "On the Origin of Logical Determinism in Babylonia."

⁸⁸ Ganohariti, "(Non) Recognition of Legal Identity in Aspirant States : Evidence from Abkhazia , South Ossetia and Transnistria."

⁸⁹ Makili-aliyev and Makili-aliyev, "An Illegal Republic: The Formation and Continuity of the Collective Legal Identity of Karabakh Armenians An Illegal Republic: The Formation and Continuity of The."

⁹⁰ Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East."

⁹¹ Segarra, "Undocumented Immigrants at Work: Invisibility, Hypervisibility, and the Making of the Modern Slave."

⁹² Schumann, "On the Origin of Logical Determinism in Babylonia."

⁹³ Ganohariti, "(Non) Recognition of Legal Identity in Aspirant States : Evidence from Abkhazia , South Ossetia and Transnistria."

⁹⁴ Makili-aliyev and Makili-aliyev, "An Illegal Republic: The Formation and Continuity of the Collective Legal Identity of

Karabakh Armenians An Illegal Republic: The Formation and Continuity of The."

⁹⁵ Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East."

⁹⁶ Segarra, "Undocumented Immigrants at Work: Invisibility, Hypervisibility, and the Making of the Modern Slave."

⁹⁷ Sharma et al., "Siamese Convolutional Neural Network-Based Twin Structure Model for Independent Offline Signature Verification."

⁹⁸ Schumann, "On the Origin of Logical Determinism in Babylonia."

⁹⁹ Aljassmi et al., "Effects of Word Predictability on Eye Movements during Arabic Reading."

¹⁰⁰ Shalhoub-awwad and Cohen-mimran, "On the Role of Morphology in Early Spelling in Hebrew and Arabic."

¹⁰¹ Alemu, Melese, and Salau, "Towards Audio - Based Identification of Ethio - Semitic Languages Using Recurrent Neural Network."





Historical evidence suggests that **Qnuma** played a critical role in defining **hierarchical structures, particularly in Semitic tribal and governance systems**¹⁰². In tribal law, **Qnuma** differentiated social status and familial lineage, ensuring clear distinctions between governing elites and ordinary members¹⁰³. Political leadership often invoked **Qnuma** to legitimize authority and reinforce the responsibilities associated with specific ranks¹⁰⁴. Early administrative records show that bureaucratic roles and civic duties were assigned based on **Qnuma-related classifications**¹⁰⁵. In governance, **Qnuma** functioned as an organizing principle that determined legal rights, social privileges, and obligations¹⁰⁶. Understanding this role of **Qnuma** provides deeper insight into how identity and hierarchy were regulated in Semitic traditions before its theological adoption¹⁰⁷.

The Linguistic Evolution of Qnuma

Qnuma evolved from a general existential term into a specialized theological concept within **Syriac Christianity**¹⁰⁸. Initially, it was used in **legal and administrative texts** to define personal identity, but over time, it gained **philosophical significance** in discussing individuality within collective existence¹⁰⁹. As theological debates emerged, **Syriac scholars redefined Qnuma** to explain Christ's dual nature, transforming it into a fundamental term in **Christological discourse**¹¹⁰. The shift from a **legal-administrative identity marker to a theological construct** demonstrates the complex evolution of **Qnuma** over centuries¹¹¹. This transformation reflects broader linguistic changes

in **Aramaic-Syriac thought** as legal and social terms began acquiring metaphysical meanings¹¹².

Comparative linguistic analysis reveals that **Qnuma** shares conceptual similarities with **Akkadian qanu(m)** and **Hebrew nefesh**, suggesting a broader **Semitic existential framework**¹¹³. Akkadian legal texts use **qanu(m)** to denote **individual identity and property rights**, indicating that similar notions of personal existence were present in early Mesopotamian traditions¹¹⁴. In Hebrew, **nefesh** represents **the soul or individual essence**, closely aligning with **Qnuma's** early non-theological meanings¹¹⁵. This connection suggests that **Qnuma evolved within a continuum of Semitic existential thought**, shaped by linguistic and cultural exchanges among neighbouring traditions¹¹⁶. Understanding these linguistic relationships provides insight into how **Qnuma transitioned from a legal identity marker to a core theological principle** in Syriac Christianity¹¹⁷.

Comparative Semantic Analysis of Qnuma

To further understand **Qnuma's linguistic evolution**, the following table compares it with related existential terms in **Akkadian, Hebrew, Arabic, and Syriac**:

¹⁰² Schumann, "On the Origin of Logical Determinism in Babylonia."

¹⁰³ Shalhoub-awwad and Cohen-mimran, "On the Role of Morphology in Early Spelling in Hebrew and Arabic."

¹⁰⁴ Sharma et al., "Siamese Convolutional Neural Network-Based Twin Structure Model for Independent Offline Signature Verification."

¹⁰⁵ Alemu, Melese, and Salau, "Towards Audio - Based Identification of Ethio - Semitic Languages Using Recurrent Neural Network."

¹⁰⁶ Aljassmi et al., "Effects of Word Predictability on Eye Movements during Arabic Reading."

¹⁰⁷ Shalhoub-awwad and Cohen-mimran, "On the Role of Morphology in Early Spelling in Hebrew and Arabic."

¹⁰⁸ Ferreri, "The Invisible Hard Work of Retrieving Papers : Syrians and the Paradoxes of Integration in Germany Paradoxes of Integration in Germany."

¹⁰⁹ Sharma et al., "Siamese Convolutional Neural Network-Based Twin Structure Model for Independent Offline Signature Verification."

¹¹⁰ Zgoll, "Sacred Texts and the First Myth about the Creation of Writing."

¹¹¹ Schumann, "On the Origin of Logical Determinism in Babylonia."

¹¹² Ferreri, "The Invisible Hard Work of Retrieving Papers : Syrians and the Paradoxes of Integration in Germany Paradoxes of Integration in Germany."

¹¹³ Schumann, "On the Origin of Logical Determinism in Babylonia."

¹¹⁴ Zgoll, "Sacred Texts and the First Myth about the Creation of Writing."

¹¹⁵ Sharma et al., "Siamese Convolutional Neural Network-Based Twin Structure Model for Independent Offline Signature Verification."

¹¹⁶ Schumann, "On the Origin of Logical Determinism in Babylonia."

¹¹⁷ Zgoll, "Sacred Texts and the First Myth about the Creation of Writing."



Semantic Comparison Of Qnuma

	Language	Term	Meaning	Context
1	Akkadian	qanu(m)	Individual existence, legal status	Property rights, administrative texts
2	Hebrew	nefesh (נֶפֶשׁ)	Soul, life essence	Religious and existential discourse
3	Arabic	nafs (نَفْس)	Self, consciousness	Theological and philosophical contexts
4	Syriac	Qnuma (ܩܢܘܡܐ)	Subsistence, personal being	Christological and legal discussions

Table 1: Semantic Comparison of Qnuma in Semitic Languages

This comparison highlights how **Qnuma's meaning evolved from legal identity markers in Akkadian to theological constructs in Syriac Christianity**. The parallels between **qanu(m)**, **nefesh**, **nafs**, and **Qnuma** suggest a broader **Semitic existential framework**, where language played a crucial role in shaping **philosophical and theological concepts**.

The Influence of Akkadian and Semitic Thought on Qnuma

Akkadian legal and philosophical traditions influenced early Aramaic conceptualizations of **identity and existence**, which shaped **Qnuma's role in socio-political contexts**¹¹⁸. Akkadian texts frequently reference **qanu(m)** as a legal identifier for individuals, reflecting an early framework for distinguishing personal status in law and governance¹¹⁹. In philosophical discourse, Akkadian inscriptions discuss **the existence of divine and legal structures**, mirroring the later development of **Qnuma** as both a metaphysical and juridical concept¹²⁰. Aramaic-speaking communities likely inherited these ideas and incorporated **Qnuma** into their legal and theological lexicon¹²¹. The conceptual migration from Akkadian legal identity markers to Aramaic existential philosophy underscores the deep

interconnections between these Semitic traditions¹²².

Evidence from Akkadian inscriptions indicates that similar existential terms were used in **property laws and administrative records**, reflecting **cross-linguistic exchange**¹²³. Akkadian contracts and administrative documents frequently referenced individual identity, land ownership, and legal obligations, which later appeared in Aramaic texts using **Qnuma**¹²⁴. The similarities suggest a borrowing or adaptation of Akkadian frameworks into Aramaic legal traditions, reinforcing the role of **Qnuma** in establishing personal status and obligations¹²⁵. Additionally, Akkadian theological writings explored **human existence through divine will**, a theme that later became central to **Qnuma's theological adaptation**¹²⁶. This historical connection strengthens the hypothesis that **Qnuma was deeply embedded in a long-standing Semitic discourse on identity and existence**, evolving from its Akkadian legal origins into its Aramaic-Syriac metaphysical significance¹²⁷.

Visualizing the Evolution of Qnuma

To illustrate the **semantic and cultural transformation of Qnuma**, the following Diagram traces its development from **Akkadian legal texts to Syriac theological discourse**:

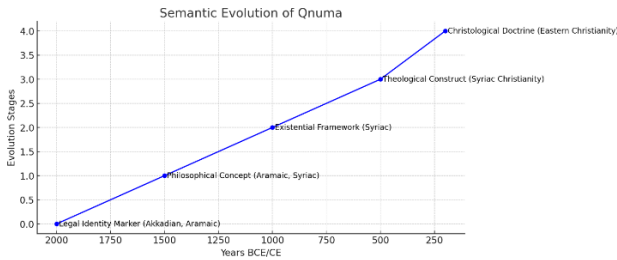


Figure 2: Semantic Evolution of Qnuma

¹¹⁸ Suchard, "The Origins of the Biblical Aramaic Reading Tradition."
¹¹⁹ Fesseha et al., "Text Classification Based on Convolutional Neural Networks and Word Embedding for Low-Resource Languages: Tigrinya."
¹²⁰ Aljassmi et al., "Effects of Word Predictability on Eye Movements during Arabic Reading."
¹²¹ Shalhoub-awwad and Cohen-mimran, "On the Role of Morphology in Early Spelling in Hebrew and Arabic."
¹²² Alemu, Melese, and Salau, "Towards Audio - Based Identification of Ethio - Semitic Languages Using Recurrent Neural Network."

¹²³ Suchard, "The Origins of the Biblical Aramaic Reading Tradition."
¹²⁴ Fesseha et al., "Text Classification Based on Convolutional Neural Networks and Word Embedding for Low-Resource Languages: Tigrinya."
¹²⁵ Aljassmi et al., "Effects of Word Predictability on Eye Movements during Arabic Reading."
¹²⁶ Shalhoub-awwad and Cohen-mimran, "On the Role of Morphology in Early Spelling in Hebrew and Arabic."
¹²⁷ Alemu, Melese, and Salau, "Towards Audio - Based Identification of Ethio - Semitic Languages Using Recurrent Neural Network."





This Diagram provides a clear **historical timeline** showing how **Qnuma** transitioned from **legal and administrative identity markers** to a **theological construct**. Understanding these stages helps explain why **Qnuma** became a **central concept in Christological debates**.

The Transition of Qnuma into Theological Discourse

Syriac Christian scholars redefined **Qnuma** to explain **Christ's dual nature**, establishing its theological significance in **early Christological debates**¹²⁸. The term was adapted to differentiate between Christ's **divine and human aspects**, aligning with theological interpretations that sought to clarify the concept of **dual subsistences in one person**¹²⁹. As the theological discourse evolved, **Qnuma** became essential in articulating the complex relationship between Christ's **divinity and humanity**¹³⁰.

This transition marks a shift from **Qnuma's legal and philosophical origins** to its role as a **doctrinal concept in Trinitarian theology**¹³¹. Initially employed in **legal contracts and philosophical reflections on identity**, **Qnuma's** meaning expanded as it was adopted into **doctrinal debates** concerning the nature of the divine essence¹³². Early Christian writings in Syriac demonstrate how **Qnuma** was **systematically incorporated into Trinitarian discussions**, influencing theological interpretations within Eastern Christianity¹³³. By transitioning into a core theological construct, **Qnuma's semantic transformation illustrates how linguistic and legal terms can evolve into fundamental religious concepts**¹³⁴.

Conclusion

This study reconstructs the **semantic and cultural origins of Qnuma**, tracing its transformation from a **legal and philosophical concept into a theological construct** within Syriac Christianity. By analyzing **historical-linguistic data, legal manuscripts, and philosophical texts**,

this research demonstrates how **Qnuma** was **initially used in legal and administrative frameworks** before becoming central to **Christological debates**. The study confirms that **Qnuma** evolved within the **broader Semitic linguistic tradition**, influenced by Akkadian, Aramaic, and Syriac thought.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

- **Expands the understanding of Qnuma's historical significance** by integrating linguistic, legal, and theological perspectives, offering a more comprehensive analysis of its evolution.
- **Contributes to the study of Semitic languages** by identifying cross-linguistic influences, particularly between Akkadian and Aramaic traditions.
- **Impacts theological and historical research** by clarifying how legal and existential terminology was redefined to serve doctrinal purposes.
- **Provides insights into ancient identity formation** by illustrating how language shaped social and philosophical structures in Near Eastern societies.

By bridging **historical linguistics, theology, and legal studies**, this research offers a **foundational framework for future interdisciplinary exploration of Qnuma's role in early Semitic traditions**. Further studies can **expand comparative analyses between Semitic and Indo-European existential concepts**, deepening our knowledge of **the evolution of identity and existence across ancient cultures**.

¹²⁸ Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East."

¹²⁹ Zgoll, "Sacred Texts and the First Myth about the Creation of Writing."

¹³⁰ Treiger, "The Beginnings of the Graeco-Syro-Arabic Melkite Translation Movement in Antioch."

¹³¹ Pritula, "What Kind of Poetry Would a Syriac Manuscript- Thief Read about Oneself?"

¹³² Habas, "The Mosaic Floors of the House of Kyrios Leontis in Nysa Scythopolis (Beth Shean) Nysa Scythopolis ' Teki (Beth Shean) Kyrios Leontis Evi ' Nin Mozaik Zeminleri."

¹³³ Segarra, "Undocumented Immigrants at Work: Invisibility, Hypervisibility, and the Making of the Modern Slave."

¹³⁴ Sharma et al., "Siamese Convolutional Neural Network-Based Twin Structure Model for Independent Offline Signature Verification."





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