THE USE OF $\textit{snn\textordmasculine}r$ IN UGARITIC AND 2 SAMUEL V 8:
HEBREW USAGE AND
COMPARATIVE PHILOLOGY

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The sense of $\textit{snn\textordmasculine}r$ in 2 Sam. v 8 has been a problem for translators for some time. The early versions have several translations indicating that there has been difficulty with the meaning from antiquity. LXX has "dagger", παραξίφοι, Aquila has "watercourse", κρονισμός, and Symmachus has "battlement", ἔπαλξως. The Targum has "let him begin to conquer the fortified place", וְיִשְׂרֵא לְמָיקְבַּשׂ קָרָקָה; 2 karkâ 2 usually refers to an entire fortress rather than a specific part. 3 The Peshitta may preserve this sense of "fortress" in translating $\textit{snn\textordmasculine}r$ as $\textit{skr}$, "shield", that is, "smite (qrwb) in the shielded place", or it could mean "smite with the shield". The Vulgate translates $\textit{snn\textordmasculine}r$ as $\textit{fistulas}$, "pipes". The complete phrase in the Vulgate is "and touched the water-pipes of the houses", et tetigisset domatum fistulas, which is rendered in the Douai version as "get up to the gutters of the tops of the houses". 4

The two most prominent Renaissance translations preferred "water-shaft" or the like: KJV (King James Version [Authorized Version]—"gutter"; Luther's translation—"shaft" (Schacht). 5

1 I wish to thank the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation for the study of Politics and Theology for a post-doctoral fellowship at Boston College. The work on this essay was completed during my tenure at Boston College.

2 The translation is taken from Daniel J. Harrington and Anthony J. Saldañini, Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets, The Aramaic Bible 10 (Edinburgh and Wilmington, Delaware, 1987), p. 170. The translation is italicized in the edition which, according to the translators, indicates that the Aramaic represents a substantive deviation from the Masoretic text.

3 Marcus Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and the Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (London and New York, 1903).

4 The Holy Bible: Translated from the Latin Vulgate, Douai version (New York, 1912).

5 Also in recent German revisions of Luther's translation. See Die Bibel oder die ganze Heilige Schrift des Alten und Neuen Testaments nach der deutschen Übersetzung Martin Luthers (Stuttgart, 1971).
similar rendering is found in modern translations such as the *Revised Standard Version*, *New American Bible*, new Jewish Publication Society version, *New International Version*, *Revised English Bible* and *New RSV* with the translation as “water shaft”, and in *La Sainte Bible* as “le canal”. The most persistent translation from antiquity to the present has been as some type of “water-shaft” or “canal”, although there is uncertainty what type of “water-shaft” is indicated, whether a “gutter” or “eaves-trough” or “canal”.

Since the late 19th century there have been various suggestions that other translations are preferable. Most of these suggestions are derived from philological parallels with cognate Semitic languages, Arabic and Aramaic in particular. The inquiry into the sense of the word, therefore, is not only essential to the reading of 2 Sam. v 8, but provides an opportunity to evaluate the appropriate place of comparative philology in biblical studies. J. Wellhausen argues that ṣinnōr means “canal”, but that it could be used vulgarly (*Vulgārname*) as “throat” (either *Gurgel* or *Hals*); David commanded the Israelites to strike the Jebusites in the throat. G.H. Dalman, extrapolating on the sense of “canal”, suggests that ṣinnōr means “penis”; David urges his men to mutilate the Jebusites. W.F. Albright claims that Dalman’s suggestion is forced and offers another solution:

The doublets ṣinnōr and ṣantēret indicate that we are dealing with a good old Semitic word—whatever its ultimate origin may have been. The solution of the difficulty seems to be furnished by the Arabic ṣin- nōr (snwr) in the sense “joint of the neck”; it is very well known among Semitic phonologists that sin and sade tend to interchange in

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6 (Paris, 1956). The precise translation is “et montera par le canal...” with a note that the text is uncertain.

7 No one has made an argument on the basis of Akkadian. C.H. Gordon cites ṣi-na-ra-na under the entry *snr* in his glossary, but says that it may correspond to *snrr*, a personal name: *Ugaritic Textbook: Glossary* (Rome, 1965). See entries 2177 and 1776.

8 *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen, 1871), p. 164.