

Once Upon a Time, a Sumerian Donkey...

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Among the several types of interference phenomena philologists, linguists and historians encounter when struggling with ancient corpora, lexical loans represent one of the most frequent types. At the same time, their relevance for the interpretation of both structural language contact and historical and cultural contacts is moderate. Words travel and spread more easily than structures and their diffusion can easily be limited to specific text-types and to specific circles of shared knowledge. Furthermore, they may spread even from and to cultures that were very distant from each other, through several intermediate cultures and languages. Nevertheless, specific lexical phenomena may be extremely successful in terms of diffusion, and their very existence requires to be taken into consideration both from a linguistic and from a cultural-historical perspective. In this paper, I will make some methodological observations on *Wanderwörter* and will concentrate on a couple of examples, in order to illustrate the merits of an approach that combines philological precision, historical credibility and linguistic reconstruction.

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