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THE RELATIVE PRONOUN **ḍ**- AND THE PRONOMINAL SUFFIXES IN MANDAIC¹

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Abstract

The enclitic pronominal suffixes in Neo-Mandaic are affixed to nouns and prepositions via two separate strategies. Nearly all nouns and prepositions inherited directly from Classical Mandaic take pronominal suffixes directly. All loanwords, and an extremely circumscribed set of original Mandaic words, receive pronominal suffixes after an enclitic particle, **-d-**. Rudolph Macuch suggested in his *Handbook of Classical and Modern Mandaic* that this particle is derived from the Classical Mandaic relative pronoun, **ḍ-**. The evidence, however, suggests that this particle is an innovation, which ultimately derives from the metathesis of the final two root consonants of Classical Mandaic **qam** / **qadmia** 'to, for' (Neo-Mandaic *qam* / *qamdi-*), from which it spread by analogy to new lexical items.

The relative pronoun **ḍ-** *dušenna* was so common a feature of the classical language (*genzā*, or literary Mandaic) that it warranted a separate sign in the Mandaic script, but is almost completely absent from the modern dialect (*raṭnā*, or colloquial Mandaic). In Classical Mandaic (CM), its most frequent use was to modify the head noun of the noun phrase with a second noun (either substantive or adjective):²

| | | |
|----|----------------------|--|
| CM | manda ḍ-hiia | Knowledge of Life (a divine epithet) |
| CM | raza ḍ-kasia | a private secret, lit. secret of private |

¹ This article is based upon a paper first delivered at the Harvard Semitic Philology Workshop in November of 2004. I am particularly indebted to Prof. John Huehnergard, Prof. Wolfhart P. Heinrichs and Nā'ama Pat-El for the advice they have provided through multiple drafts of this paper.

Transcriptions of Classical Mandaic words follow the system first proposed by E.S. Drower and Rudolf Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary* (Oxford 1963), xii, and transcriptions of Neo-Mandaic words follow the phonemic orthography devised by the author for his forthcoming dissertation on the Neo-Mandaic dialect of Khorramshahr, Iran.

² E.S. Drower and Rudolf Macuch, *Dictionary*, 491b.

Note that the head noun of the phrase appears in the emphatic state. This is always the case, even when the word has been borrowed from another language and thus would not otherwise appear in the emphatic state. The relative pronoun *d-* also appears after two of the interrogative pronouns in Classical Mandaic:

| | | |
|----|-----------------------|--|
| CM | manu <i>d-</i> | who is the one that ... |
| CM | mahu <i>d-</i> | which is the one that ... ³ |

All traces of this latter function of the relative pronoun have completely disappeared from Neo-Mandaic (NM). It is attested in the former function, but in this capacity it is restricted to classicizing constructions (e.g. NM *ḥākīmā d-Šuštār* ‘the governor of Shushtar’, from Arabic *ḥākīm* ‘governor’) and a few frozen expressions borrowed directly from the classical language. Beyond these few exceptions, this function has been completely assumed by the construct state:⁴

| | | |
|----|--------------------|--|
| NM | <i>riš šettā</i> | New Year’s Day, lit. Head of the Year ⁵ |
| NM | <i>šer horettā</i> | the Second World War, lit. War of Other |

The enclitic pronominal suffixes are appended directly to the prepositions as well as the construct state of the Mandaic noun, in Classical as well as Neo-Mandaic:

| CM forms | NM forms | English Gloss |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| baita | <i>bietā</i> | house |
| baitai | <i>bietē</i> | my house |
| baitak | <i>bietak</i> | your (m. sg.) house |
| baitik | <i>bietek</i> | your (f. sg.) house |
| baiṭh | <i>bieti</i> | his house |
| baita | <i>bietā</i> | her house |
| baitan | <i>bietan</i> | our house |
| baitkun | <i>bietkon</i> | your (pl.) house |
| baitun | <i>bietu</i> | their house ⁶ |

³ Rudolf Macuch, *Handbook of Classical and Modern Mandaic* (Berlin 1965), 167.

⁴ In Arabic as well as Mandaic, a subset of proper names can be modified with an adjective in construct with the head noun (e.g. the month name *Rabi’ al-Awwal* or the opening prayer of the Qur’ān, *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*). I am indebted to Professor Wolfhart Heinrichs for this observation. See Heinz Grotzfeld, ‘*Rabi’ al-awwal* and *Nahr el-kibîr*. The notion of dichotomy and its expression in Arabic’, *ZAL* 37 (2000), 7–14.

⁵ CM *riša d-šidta*

⁶ This series does not represent the full complement of enclitic pronouns in Classical Mandaic, many of which are not attested in the modern language (such as the 2nd fem. pl. suffix **-kin** and the 3rd fem. pl. suffix **-kin** and the 3rd fem. pl. suffix **-hin**).

Neo-Mandaic differs from Classical Mandaic in this regard only with loan words and certain prepositions, to which the pronominal suffixes are not affixed directly, but instead follow an enclitic particle *-d*-. At first glance, it is tempting to identify this enclitic *-d*- with the relative pronoun *d*-, and this is precisely what Rudolf Macuch suggested in his *Handbook*, despite the fact that the former particle was completely unknown in the classical language.⁷ The process by which the enclitic *-d*- could derive from the relative pronoun *d*-, at precisely the time when the latter was disappearing from the language, is not immediately clear. It is clear, however, that the similarity between relative *d*- and enclitic *-d*- is superficial, for the enclitic *-d*- invariably follows the **construct** state of the noun, while the relative *d*- invariably follows the **emphatic** state. I propose that the enclitic particle *-d*- represents an innovation in the modern language completely unrelated to the relative particle *d*- of the classical language.

Three broad categories of prepositions exist in Neo-Mandaic. The first, the preclitic prepositions, are already attested in the classical language. These take pronominal suffixes in Classical Mandaic but appear only before nouns in the modern dialect. The second category consists of independent prepositions. Five of these prepositions take pronominal suffixes directly, but the rest (almost all of which are borrowed from Persian or Arabic) take enclitic *-d*- before pronominal suffixes. The third category of prepositions, all of which take enclitic *d*-, comprises the compound prepositions, which are largely a feature of the modern language.

The independent prepositions which take pronominal suffixes directly are among the most frequent in the language, and most of them are already attested in Classical Mandaic. In fact, with few exceptions, almost all of the prepositions inherited from Classical Mandaic take pronominal suffixes directly. The most important exception is the indirect object marker. This marker takes the form *qamdi* before the third person pronominal suffixes and *qam* elsewhere. Unlike the other prepositions that take enclitic *-d*-, this preposition is not only descended from the classical language but also extremely frequent in the modern language.

⁷ Macuch, *Handbook*, 166.

Preclitic, Independent, and Compound Prepositions in Neo-Mandaic

Preclitic

no pronominal suffixes

b- (CM **b**) in, by, with
əm- (CM **‘m**) from⁸
el (CM **‘l**) direct object
q- (CM **qa**) present tense

Independent

pronominal suffixes added directly

əlāw- (CM **‘lau**) to, for
min (CM **mn**) from, with
qār (CM **qar**) to, among, *chez*
tuṭ (CM **atutia**) under
orke (CM —) with

Independent

pronominal suffixes after d-

qam (CM **qam**) to, for
qamdi- (CM **qamdīa**) idem
barābar (Persian) opposite
jambe (Persian) toward
joft (Persian) near; close by; with
bienā (Arabic) between⁹

Compound

pronominal suffixes after d-

bātar (CM **b + atra**) after
əm qamāy (CM **‘m + qadmaia**) from before

The indirect object marker, NM *qam(di)-*, which is one of the most common prepositions in Classical and Neo-Mandaic, requires further examination. In Classical Mandaic, this preposition, which is cognate with *qammê* in Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic (BTA), takes all pronominal suffixes directly. The forms with attached pronominal suffixes (e.g. **qadmu** ‘before them’) preserve the medial **d** of the original root (**qadm-*), which is also retained in other CM forms (**qadam** ‘in front of’, **qadmia** ‘before’) derived from this same root.

Metathesis is a common feature of Mandaic phonology, particularly between the final two root consonants of the basic Semitic tri-radical root, and especially when these two segments consist of a stop and a sonorant.¹⁰ The form of the indirect object marker found before the third person pronominal suffixes derives from CM **qadmia**. The mod-

⁸ In the written language, the CM preposition **‘m** has the meaning ‘with’, which it shares with CM **mn** ‘from; with’. In the spoken language, both have been replaced in this meaning by *orke*; however, NM *əm-* (the reflex of CM **‘m**) has been reinterpreted as the enclitic equivalent of *min*, which can only mean ‘from’ in Neo-Mandaic.

⁹ A cognate, CM **binia**, cs. **binat-**, is the Classical Mandaic form.

¹⁰ A few examples from Mandaic include the CM verbal roots ZHL (from *ZLḤ) ‘to pour’; HQL (from *HLQ) ‘to slide’, YDL (from *YLD) ‘to bring forth’, and so forth; see Macuch, *Handbook*, 54. In each of these examples, the metathesis involves the exchange of a stop and a sonorant, exactly as in QDM. This is also frequently the case among Arabic loanwords with final consonant clusters consisting of a stop and a sonorant; cf. NM *qolf* from Arab. *qulṭ* ‘padlock’; see Macuch, *Handbook*, 22.

ern reflex of this root, NM *qamdi*, reflects the metathesis of these two segments, against the expected ***qadmi*. The other forms are directly inherited from CM *qam*. As the second root consonant of the preposition **qadm-* had disappeared in the independent forms (presumably deleted to avoid a final consonant cluster), but reappeared whenever pronominal suffixes were attached, it is likely that the modern forms (*qamdē*, etc.) are likewise the result of metathesis.

While this hypothesis explains the form *qamd-* before pronominal suffixes, the origins of the enclitic *-d-* remain obscure. The most plausible origin for this particle requires the metanalysis of the new form *qamd-*, which was divided into the independent preposition NM *qam* and a separate particle *-d-*. The new morpheme was subsequently extended to the other prepositions through analogy:

| | | | | | | |
|------------|---|---------------|----|--------------|---|-----------------|
| <i>qam</i> | : | <i>qam-dē</i> | :: | <i>bātar</i> | : | <i>bātar-dē</i> |
| before | : | before me | :: | after | : | after me |

The first category of prepositions and the most basic of the second category of prepositions remained resistant to the analogical change, which is consistent with Jerzy Kuryłowicz's Second Law of Analogy.¹¹ The newly minted compound prepositions, and all prepositions borrowed from other languages, succumbed to the analogy, as did many other loanwords which were subsequently borrowed. With very few exceptions, however, the core vocabulary of Neo-Mandaic, inherited from the classical language, did not succumb to this analogy. For example, NM *farwāh* 'thanks'¹² generally takes the pronominal suffixes directly, e.g. NM *farwāhak* 'thank you (m. sg.)'. As a second-order response, however, it takes the enclitic *-d-*:

| | | |
|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Speaker 1: | <i>Farwāhak</i> | Thank you! |
| Speaker 2: | <i>Farwāh-daḳ</i> | No, thank you! |

There is one very frequent word which routinely takes suffixes with this morpheme, yet is neither a preposition nor does it seem at first glance to be directly attributable to any of the languages with which Neo-Mandaic has come into contact. According to Rudolf Macuch,

¹¹ Analogical developments proceed from 'basic' forms to 'derived' forms, where the relationship between basic and derived forms is a consequence of their spheres of usage. See Hans Henrich Hock, *Principles of Historical Linguistics* (Berlin 1991), 212–22. Hock notes that basic vocabulary is more resistant to analogical change than derived or borrowed vocabulary, though by no means immune to it. The spread of this analogy also conforms to Witold Mańczak's first observation regarding the natural tendency of analogical change, namely that longer words are more frequently remade on the model of shorter words than vice versa, *ibid.* 229.

¹² Possibly CM *pruk*, Pahlavi *farrox* (*plhw*), 'fortunate, blessed, happy'.

Modern Mandaic presents, at least, a few particularly surprising proofs of its antiquity. Modern *giš-* as an expression of totality ... is completely unknown in literature as well as in the neighboring languages. It is hardly believable that this most frequent exclusively mod. Mandaic word could come from a language dead several thousands of years ago. In spite of this obvious difficulty I find no other suggestion about its origin than the Sumerian expression of totality GÍŠ to which it corresponds both formally and materially in a quite striking way, how ever [sic] unbelievable this etymology may seem. But I am afraid that the scepticians will encounter insurmountable difficulties in suggesting another equally corresponding etymology. I would, therefore, recommend to consider this suggestion unless a better one can be made, for it is certainly impossible that a most frequent word of a language would have simply fallen down from heaven.¹³

In an unpublished text, which E.S. Drower collected from her informant Hirmiz bar Anhar, a Baghdadi Mandaean whose family originated in Shushtar, Iran, this word frequently parallels the word *jami*¹⁴ (from Arabic *jami*¹⁵ ‘all, entirety’):

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| <i>Anā gaṭelnā gešdākon!</i> | I will kill all of you! |
| <i>Anā qamwadinkon jami¹⁶ adākon!</i> | I will take all of you! |

Clearly NM *geš* is parallel in meaning to NM *jami*¹⁷, which is derived from the root JM¹⁸ ‘to join, collect, or gather’. Initially, it would appear to be the construct form of a noun **giša*, deriving from a root GYŠ, which is not attested in the lexicon. The possibility exists that it may also derive from the G-stem passive participle of the verbal root GŠŠ, as the paradigm of the II–III verbs has been levelled towards that of the II–Y verbs in this regard.¹⁴ Mandaic does have a root GŠŠ, which means ‘to fathom or touch (bottom)’, from which derives the noun *giša*, ‘bottom’, but this root and its derivatives are all semantically unrelated to NM *geš*. It is also possible to derive NM *geš* from a root QYŠ or QŠŠ, as G is a frequent outcome of initial Q in Neo-Mandaic (note NM *gaṭelnā* above, ‘I will kill’, from the root GṬL; cf. BTA QṬL); the second root is attested, with the meaning ‘to be old’.

There is, however, a possible cognate in Arabic, from which a large part of the vocabulary of Neo-Mandaic has been borrowed. The root QŠŠ means ‘to collect, gather, or pick up’. The Arabic word *qašš*, ‘straw’ is derived from this root. Given the aforementioned paradigmatic levelling, the expected G-stem passive participial form of this root would

¹³ Macuch, *Handbook*, lvii.

¹⁴ Macuch, *Handbook*, 251–3; for the form of the G-stem passive participle of II–Y and II–III verbs in Classical Mandaic, see p. 318.

take the form * qiš or * giš ‘gathered’ in the construct; the latter form is identical both formally and semantically to our word. For this reason, the root QŠŠ is the most plausible root for NM geš . While this suggests at first glance that the word is an Arabic loanword, questions remain as to the etymology of the Arabic root itself. The same root appears in Mishnaic Hebrew, where it means ‘to join closely, to collect or gather (most often wood or rubbish)’¹⁵ and in Syriac as well, with the meaning ‘collegit (stramen, ligna)’.¹⁶ The fact that the sibilant takes the same shape in all three languages strongly suggests that the Hebrew and Arabic forms were not inherited directly from their Central Semitic ancestor, but were instead borrowed from Aramaic. While it is not impossible that the root passed through Arabic before assuming its current form in Neo-Mandaic, it is more likely that the form geš represents the Neo-Mandaic reflex of the construct state of the G-stem passive participle from the root QŠŠ.

¹⁵ Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York 1996), s.v. QŠŠ.

¹⁶ Carl Brockelmann, *Lexicum Syriacum* (Hildesheim 1995), s.v. QŠŠ.