

On Some Pseudo-Corrections in Early Mandaic Epigraphic Texts*

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[In this article, I present new examples of pseudo-corrections from a specific genre of epigraphic material (amulets and magic bowls) written in Mandaic. The scribes' pseudo-corrections fall into two categories: the impact of common historical spellings upon parallel forms (such as ܘܬܡܘܢ 'bay tree' → ܘܬܡܘܢܐ under the influence of ܘܬܡܘܢܐ 'earth' and ܘܬܡܘܢܐ 'Abanda [a Personal Name]' → ܘܬܡܘܢܐܘܢܐ under the influence of ܘܬܡܘܢܐܘܢܐ 'knowledge') and the addition of apparently superfluous graphemes (such as the letter *He* [= Mandaic *hā*] in ܘܬܡܘܢܐܘܢܐܘܢܐ 'your faces', ܘܬܡܘܢܐܘܢܐܘܢܐܘܢܐ 'I beswear you', etc; and the letter *Nun* in ܘܬܡܘܢܐܘܢܐܘܢܐܘܢܐ 'great', etc). The new examples reveal that already at the earliest stage of Mandaic the language of the scribes differs from the literary idiom.]

Keywords: Pseudo-Corrections, Early Mandaic, Classical Mandaic, Incantation Bowls, Amulets.

1. Introduction

One of the most important keys to revealing the actual phonetic state underlying historical spellings in classical languages is the identification and analysis of pseudo-corrections.¹ In the current article I present a new sampling of pseudo-corrections from a relatively homogeneous corpus of epigraphic material (amulets and magic bowls) written in Mandaic around the middle of the first millennium CE (Early Mandaic Epigraphic Texts). These texts comprise the earliest extant direct evidence of the Mandaic language, a dialect of Aramaic.² The examples reveal the influence of a “standardized language” on the orthography of the scribes, one that differs from the actual pronunciation, already at the earliest documented stage of Mandaic writing.³

* I wish to thank Prof. Shaul Shaked, Dr. James Nathan Ford and Prof. Matthew Morgenstern for sharing with me their unpublished studies of Mandaic incantation bowls from the Schøyen Collection (Shaked, Ford and Bhayro) and other private collections (Ford and Morgenstern = JNF, Davidovitz, Wolfe, Moussaieff, SD, PC) and for the permission to quote from them. I am also grateful to Dr. James Nathan Ford and Dr. Christian Stadel for reading and commenting on early drafts of this article. The following abbreviations have been used: BA = Biblical Aramaic, BM = British Museum, Gs = Ginza Smala, Gy = Ginza Yamina, DC = Drower Collection, IM = National Museum of Iraq, MS = Bowls in the Schøyen Collection, QA = Qumran Aramaic.

1. For a detailed study on pseudo-corrections in Semitic languages see Blau 1970.

2. For an updated periodization of the Mandaic language, see Morgenstern 2009: 124.

3. Additional examples of pseudo-corrections in later Mandaic manuscripts can be found in Abudraham 2016: 411-413.

1. (ארעא) ארעא (= ערעא/ארעא) 'bay tree' → ארעא under the influence of ארעא 'earth' (ארעא)

Mandaic is the only Late-Aramaic dialect that occasionally preserves the ancient orthography of the Proto-Semitic consonant /d/ through use of the letter *Qof*, typical of Old and Official Aramaic.⁴ Despite the gap of over a thousand years between the Old and Official Aramaic inscriptions and Classical Mandaic, the latter still consistently adopts the former's spelling in three words: ארעא 'wool' instead of ערעא (see BA and all the subsequent dialects),⁵ ארעא 'sheep, cattle, flock' instead of ערעא (see QA and all the subsequent dialects)⁶ and ארעא 'earth' instead of ארעא (see BA and all the subsequent dialects).⁷ In light of this striking phenomenon Nöldeke tentatively suggests that the *Qof* in these words may reflect the actual pronunciation of the Proto-Semitic /d/ as a fricative /q/,⁸ but other signs support the position that it is merely an orthographic convention from older Aramaic. For each of these words there is either direct or indirect evidence indicating that the orthography is historical and does not reflect actual pronunciation.

The pseudo-corrected Classical Mandaic spelling ארעא for ארעא 'dust' (common Aramaic ארעא) must have developed in tandem with the common historical spelling ארעא 'wool'.⁹ Since the *Ayin* in ארעא (historical /'aprā/) derives from Proto-Semitic /'/, the spelling ארעא for ארעא (/afrā/) with a "non-etymological" *Qof* must be based by analogy on the archaic spelling ארעא. This analogy can only be understood if ארעא was in fact pronounced /amrā/.¹⁰

Pronunciation	Spelling ¹¹		
/amrā/	ארעא		'wool'
/afrā/	ארעא	ארעא	'dust'

Passages from classical literary compositions which include both spellings in the same context reinforce this assumption: ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא 'dust from the underworld riseth, riseth dust from the underworld' (Gy 97:11-13), ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא 'with her nails she diggeth the dust, with her nails the dust she diggeth' (Gs 99:6-7), ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא ארעא 'dust on their heads they throw, dust they throw on their heads' (Gs 53:14). The repeated writing appears to suggest that the

4. For Early and Official Aramaic, Degen 1969: 36-37; Muraoka and Porten 2003: 8-9; Folmer 1995: 63-70; Coxon 1979: 16-17. For Mandaic, see Nöldeke 1875: 72-73; R. Macuch 1965: 95-96. For the most recent and pertinent literature on Mandaic see Gzella 2015: 359-366.

5. The historical spelling is already attested in Early Mandaic Epigraphic Texts in defective writing: ארעא ארעא ארעא 'and wool from the front face of a camel' (Christie's: 65-66 [amulet]). Published by Müller-Kessler 1999a: 427-443.

6. Attested already in Early Mandaic Epigraphic Texts: ארעא ארעא 'the shepherd on his flock' (JNF 40:22-23).

7. The historical spelling ארעא is widespread in Early Mandaic Epigraphic Texts (almost two hundred attestations).

8. Nöldeke 1875: 72-73.

9. The spelling ארעא is as yet not attested in Early Mandaic. The phonetic writing ארעא, by contrast, is well known. For example, ארעא ארעא ארעא 'dust in their mouths' (SD 37:7).

10. Cf. Blau 1970: 47-48. At present the only possible evidence against this interpretation is the rare variant reading ארעא 'dust' which appears in Manuscript Paris 4 (See Nöldeke 1875: 72-73). In our opinion, this variant may be a result of mechanical reading (*abāgādical* reading in Macuch terms), rather than reflecting the actual pronunciation of the word in normal speech.

11. The whole process can easily be formulated as proportional analogy between the pronunciation and the orthography: /amrā/ : ארעא :: /afrā/ : x; x = ארעא.

author(s) of the *Ginza Rabba* integrated two variant spellings perhaps for stylistic reasons. The first part of the poetic construction includes the phonetic writing ܘܡܝܢܐ , while the second the semi-historical ܘܡܝܢܐ .¹²

Regarding the spelling ܘܡܝܢܐ ‘sheep, cattle, flock’ the situation is simpler and is, therefore, well understood as historical writing. Alongside the conservative forms there are witnesses for the phonetic ones. Compare for example: ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ‘I am the shepherd who loveth his flock’ (Jb. 40:7) to ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ‘my flock was lying down in peace’ (Jb. 41:8) and ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ‘I raise my flock’ (Jb. 43:10) to ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ‘how it grieves me about my flock’ (Jb. 44:4).

Taking into account the phonetic spelling of ܘܡܝܢܐ , ܘܡܝܢܐ , ܘܡܝܢܐ , etc. together with the Classical Mandaic construction ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ‘humble servant’ [literally: ‘earth on the foot’]¹³ it becomes clear that the word ܘܡܝܢܐ ‘earth’ was also pronounced without any reflection of the *Qof* (probably as *lārāl* or *larrāl*). In this particular sequence the archaizing spelling was abandoned due to lack of transparency regarding the etymological components of its construction ($\text{ܘܡܝܢܐ} + \text{ܘܡܝܢܐ}$). In other cases when the origin of the word was known, the scribes continued writing ܘܡܝܢܐ without hesitation. The fact that the traditional pronunciation of Mandaic deviates from the orthography and that ܘܡܝܢܐ is always read as *arā* in the manuscripts gives further credence to this conjecture.¹⁴

New evidence emerging from an unpublished Mandaic incantation bowl clearly shows that the traditional pronunciation was already widespread by the seventh century CE:

And may he be crushed like	ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ
a snake,	
and burst like <i>arqa</i> ,	ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ
and be curved like a	ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ
distorted reed,	ܘܡܝܢܐ
and split open like a	ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ
tamarisk	
(PC 27:55-58). ¹⁵	

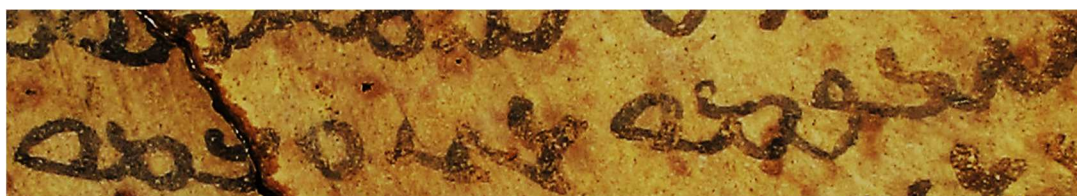


Fig. 1: ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ (PC 27:56)¹⁶

12. Cf. ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢܐ ‘perversity and pollution they did not take, they did not take perversity and pollution’ (Gy 307:14, Codex Paris 2). See Abudraham, 2016: 405. Compare the spellings ܘܡܝܢܐ and ܘܡܝܢܐ in Jer 10:11.

13. Nöldeke 1875: 79; Macuch 1965: 53-54; Drower and Macuch 1963: 39.

14. Macuch 1965: 54, 96; Mutzafi 2014: 77-78.

15. The bowl will be published by Ford and Morgenstern, forthcoming.

In this context, the word **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** evidently refers to a type of plant and parallels **ܦܘܚܘܩܐ** ‘reed’ and **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** ‘tamarisk’. It corresponds to JBA **ܐܘܪܐ** ‘bay tree [*Laurus nobilis*]’ (= Syriac **ܚܘܛܐ** ‘idem’)¹⁷ in a very similar formula in several JBA incantation bowls. Compare, for example, **ܘܢܝܦܩܐ ܕܝ ܐܘܪܐ ܘܢܝܨܬܪܝ ܕܝ ܒܝܢܐ** ‘may he burst like a bay tree and be split open like a tamarisk’ (MS 2053/201:9).¹⁸ The new Mandaic cognate **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** ‘bay tree’ likewise appears in the Mandaic versions of this formula: **ܦܘܚܘܩܐ ܕܝ ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** ‘may he be burst like a bay tree and be split open like a tamarisk’ (Princeton Ex. 4283:54-55),¹⁹ **ܦܘܚܘܩܐ ܕܝ ܡܘܟܝܢܐ ܕܠܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܝ ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** (MS 2054/106:12).²⁰ A version of this expression also appears in a late document in the Drower collection: **ܕܝ ܡܘܟܝܢܐ ܕܝ ܡܘܟܝܢܐ ܕܝ ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** ‘if it is *sahir*, it will burst like a bay tree; if it is *dev*, it will split like a tamarisk; if it is *Lilith*, it will be crushed like a snake’ (*Bet Mišqal Ainia*, DC 26:37-40 or DC 28:47-49).²¹ In light of the Mandaic and JBA parallels, the spelling **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** in the phrase under discussion undoubtedly reflects the word **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** ‘bay tree’ (= JBA **ܐܘܪܐ/ܐܘܪܐ** and Syriac **ܚܘܛܐ**) due to a false analogy to the common historical spelling **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** ‘earth’. This, of course, means that both words must have been pronounced in more or less the same way as */ārā/* or */arrā/*. This pronunciation of **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** ‘earth’ in the incantation bowls receives additional confirmation from the redundant writing **ܕܡܘܟܝܢܐ ܕܡܘܟܝܢܐ** ‘to the heaven and the earth’ (IM 78159:16-17).²² The scribe first wrote the word phonetically as **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** and then rewrote it as **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** in accordance with the standard historical spelling.

Pronunciation	Spelling	
<i>/ārā-arrā/</i>	ܡܘܟܝܢܐ	‘earth’
<i>/ārā-arrā/</i>	ܡܘܟܝܢܐ	‘bay tree’

Surprisingly, the pseudo-corrected form **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** ‘bay tree’ also appears in a late manuscript from the Drower collection and was recorded in Drower’s and Macuch’s dictionary. Misinterpretation on the part of the lexicographers, however, obscured it from researchers. Drower and Macuch mistranslate the sequence **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ ܕܝ ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** as ‘she cometh out like a runaway’. They derive **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** from **ܘܪܩܐ** ‘to flee’ and classify it under the entry **arqa 3** (= **araqa** ‘fugitive’).²³ A reading of the broader context of the manuscript, however, confirms the new analysis of **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** as a type of shrub in pseudo-archaic disguise: **ܘܢܝܦܩܐ ܕܝ ܡܘܟܝܢܐ ܕܝ ܡܘܟܝܢܐ ܕܝ ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** ‘and may he burst <like> a bay tree, and be split open like

16. The photograph was taken by Dr. James Nathan Ford and is published here with his kind permission.
 17. M. Sokoloff 2002: 879-880; Sokoloff 2009: 1133.
 18. For this reading and additional parallels see Ford 2014: 241-242.
 19. Collated reading by James Nathan Ford (see Ford 2014: 242, n. 37). For an incomplete edition of this text, see Yamauchi 1967: 292-295 (based on Gordon 1941: 356-357).
 20. The word **ܡܘܟܝܢܐ** ‘bay tree’ is not listed in Drower Macuch 1963. For the identification of the word, see the editions of these texts by Ford and Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, respectively.
 21. Text and translation according to M. Morgenstern, *Bet Mišqal Ainia* (forthcoming). The provisional edition of Drower is marred by many errors and mistranslations. See Drower 1938: 31-54.
 22. Numan 1996: 43-49.
 23. Drower and Macuch: 39.

a tamarisk, and be crushed like snake, and may their body be crushed to pieces like a reed’ (*Šafta d-Qaština*, DC 43J:207-208).²⁴

2. $\text{ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ} \rightarrow \text{ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ}$ ‘Abanda [PN]’ under the influence of ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ‘knowledge’

Early in the history of Mandaic orthography the voiced pharyngeal /ʕ/ lost its consonantal value and the character representing it was assimilated into the *matres lectionis* system. Along with the letter *Yod* (ܝ), the letter *Ayin* (ܐ) began to indicate short and long vowels /i/ and /e/ at the beginning of words and, occasionally, in the middle of them. Consequently, in all Mandaic sources the *Ayin* serves exclusively as a vowel letter. However, it appears that in the epigraphic materials two exceptional words preserve the etymological spelling: ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ‘knowledge’ and ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ‘seven.’

Contrary to common belief, the writing of these words with the letter *Ayin* is highly prevalent in amulets and magic bowls.²⁵ We have found at least forty occurrences of the spelling ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ and more than twenty-two occurrences of the spelling ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ . The following are selected examples: ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ‘knowledge of life’ (BM Dep. 2197: 16, 18, 241-242 [amulet]);²⁶ A.O 21.055:12;²⁷ IM 114986:6;²⁸ IM 56543:4;²⁹ BM 132168:8, 35 [Segal 101M]; BM 136203:5 [Segal 104M]; BM 108824:8 [Segal 106M]; SD 63:6; Davidovitz 19:5; MS 2054/64:6; MS 1928/45:4-5; MS 2054/07:8; MS 2054/29:12; MS 2054/52:7; MS 2054/62:7; MS 2054/66:7; MS 2054/97:10; MS 2054/99:9; MS 2054/100:1; PC 19:9; PC 24:7; PC 29:6; Wolfe 89:65; JNF 40:7; BM 135794 II:70-71 [amulet];³⁰ BM 132947:7 [amulet];³¹ Davidovitz 1:3 [amulet]), ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ (BM 108824:2 [Segal 106M]); ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ (Pognon 22:3; Pognon 23:6-7;³² ROM 949.94:9, 16;³³ BM 91748:8 [Segal 104M]; IBC 3:5;³⁴ MS 2054/24:8, 9, 14; MS 2054/26:6; MS 2054/40:16; Moussaieff 25:6; Wolfe 83:16; Christie’s:70, 73 [amulet];³⁵ BM 135791:33 [amulet]; Davidovitz 1:25, 95, 96 [amulet]), ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ (BM 135791:31, 47 [amulet]).³⁶ It goes without saying that in later Classical texts both words are consistently spelled without an *Ayin*.³⁷

An additional key for determining the etymological writing of ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ and ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ as the historical spelling in early epigraphic material is the pseudo-correction of one frequently appearing client’s name: ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ‘May there be healing and arming and sealing for the house and threshold of *Abanda-Gušnaš son of Pidardost*’ (Davidovitz 21:1-4). In a number of other incantation bowls the same personal

24. The pseudo-spelling ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ ‘bay tree’ in the Drower collection was independently recognized by Morgenstern, *Ghost words and other phantoms in Mandaic Lexicography* (In preparation).

25. Müller-Kessler 1998: 86; Müller-Kessler 2005: 144; Lipiński 2014: 252; Macuch, 1967: 539; McCullough 1967: 54.

26. Previously known as the Lidzbarski amulet (re-published in Yamauchi 1967: 234-255).

27. Delcor and Aggoula 1986: 262-289. In a later copy in the Drower collection the parallel reading is ܠܝܕܡܪܝܩܘܡ (*Pašar Miħla*, DC 40:1107; see Drower and Macuch 1963: 325 [sidma]).

28. Hunter 1994: 605-618.

29. Müller-Kessler 1998: 86; Müller-Kessler 2005: 143-144.

30. Müller-Kessler 2002: 183-189.

31. Müller-Kessler 1999b: 200.

32. Pognon 1898: 61-69.

33. McCullough 1967: 48-51, 54.

34. Abu-Samra 2013: 55-69.

35. Müller-Kessler 1999a: 427-443.

36. Müller-Kessler 1998: 83-88.

37. Drower and Macuch 1963: 247, 452; Nöldeke 1875: 75, 188.

name is written according to the Persian etymology without the *Ayin*: ܡܢܕܪܝܬܗ ܥܢܡܘܪܝܬܗ (MS 1928/03:4; MS 1928/40:4, 9; MS 1928/45:4-5; MS 2054/19:4; MS 2054/21:3; MS 2054/43:4; MS 2054/67:11, 12; MS 2054/115:4; Davidovitz 15:3-4, 9, 10; etc.).



fig. 2: ܡܢܕܪܝܬܗ (Davidovitz 21:3)³⁸

Apparently, the scribe of Davidovitz 21 added the non-etymological letter under the influence of the religious term ܡܢܕܪܝܬܗ in which the *Ayin* is written almost as a rule but not pronounced:

Pronunciation	Spelling ³⁹		
/mandā/	ܡܢܕܪܝܬܗ		‘knowledge’
/abandā/	ܡܢܕܪܝܬܗ	ܡܢܕܪܝܬܗ	‘Abanda’

3. Addition of non-etymological *He* (=Mandaic *hā* ܗ)

An interesting innovation in several unpublished Mandaic incantation bowls from the Schøyen and Davidovitz Collections is the consistent insertion of a non-etymological *He* (ܗ) in a number of grammatical categories. Here are the examples:

3.a. 2 masc. pl. possessive suffixes attached to nouns and particles: The regular Aramaic suffixes ܟܘܢ- and ܐܝܚܘܢ- frequently have become ܟܘܢܝܢܗ and ܐܝܚܘܢܝܗ, respectively (34 attestations): ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܫܘܚܪܝܬܗ ‘your pebble-spirits’ (MS 1928/42:15; MS 2054/01:4, 11; MS 2054/51:10); ܫܘܚܪܝܬܗ ܫܘܚܪܝܬܗ ‘your troops’ (MS 1928/15:9); ܫܘܚܪܝܬܗ ܫܘܚܪܝܬܗ ‘your *sahra*-spirits’ (MS 2054/51:10); ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ‘your adjurations’ (MS 2054/51:11); ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ‘your mother’ (MS 1928/44:9); ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ‘your faces’ (MS 2054/46:9); ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ‘your mi[s]haps’ (MS 2054/51:4); ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ‘your mysteries’ (MS 2054/01:12; MS 2054/51:11); ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ‘your heads’ (MS 2054/46:9; MS 2054/67:10); ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ‘your names’ (MS 2054/28:10; MS 1928/03:11). With particles: ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ‘I said to you’ (MS 1928/44:10); ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ‘I adjure you’ (MS 1928/45:5, 9; MS 2054/28:9; MS 2054/67:1; MS 2054/63:6; MS 1928/03:9); ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ‘your’ (MS 1928/42:11;); ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ‘I invoke you’ (MS 2054/01:4); ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ‘I make you swear’ (MS 1928/03:5, 9-10; MS 1928/45:5, 10; MS 2054/28:5, 9; MS 2054/63:3, 7); ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ܟܘܢܝܢܗ ‘are spoken in you’ (MS 1928/15:9).

38. The photograph was taken by Dr. James Nathan Ford. It is published here with his kind permission.

39. The whole process can easily be formulated as proportional analogy between the pronunciation and the historical orthography: /mandā/ : ܡܢܕܪܝܬܗ :: /abandā/ : x; x = ܡܢܕܪܝܬܗ.

3.b. 2 masc. pl. direct object suffixes attached to verbs: The regular Aramaic suffixes $\text{--}נכון$ have frequently become $\text{--}נכונ$ (16 attestations): $\text{--}נכונ$ 'I have bound you' (MS 1928/45:11; MS 2054/28:10); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'he set you up' (MS 1928/45:10; MS 2054/28:9; MS 2054/63:7; MS 1928/03:10); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'he exposed you' (MS 1928/45:10; MS 2054/39:10; MS 2054/63:7); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'I have seen you' (MS 1928/45:10); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'I have written you' (MS 1928/45:11; MS 2054/28:10; 1928/03:10); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'I have buried you' (MS 1928/03:11; MS 2054/28:10; MS 1928/45:11).

3.c. Personal pronouns: The Classical Mandaic independent pronouns $\text{--}נכונ$ 'they', $\text{--}נכונ$ 'you' and $\text{--}נכונ$ 'we' exhibit variant spellings in three different incantation bowls (5 attestations): $\text{--}נכונ$ (MS 1928/15:7); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'you' (MS 2054/46:9; MS 2054/67:10); $\text{--}נכונ$ (MS 2054/46:9) or $\text{--}נכונ$ (MS 2054/67:10).⁴⁰

3.d. Imperfective forms with suffixes (6 attestations): The plural imperfective ending in Classical Mandaic is $\text{--}נכונ$. In the epigraphic corpus we have found rare exceptions, such as: $\text{--}נכונ$ 'do not raise' (MS 2054/67:10); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'do not lift' (MS 2054/67:11); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'will be destroyed' (MS 1928/15:9); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'will go' (MS 2054/51:10); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'they will go (f.pl.)' (MS 2054/01:12; MS 2054/51:10).

3.e. Pl. participle of the root $\text{--}נכונ$: The standard Mandaean doxology $\text{--}נכונ$ or $\text{--}נכונ$ 'Life is victorious' is occasionally found with the unusual addition of *He* in $\text{--}נכונ$ after the *Kaf* (10 attestations): $\text{--}נכונ$ (MS 2054/41:9, 10, 11, 12; MS 2054/51:12; MS 2054/62:9; MS 2054/115:35-36; MS 2054/14:11), $\text{--}נכונ$ (MS 2054/43:10),⁴¹ $\text{--}נכונ$ (MS 1928/15:11 [sic.]).

3.f. Other cases (5 attestations): $\text{--}נכונ$ 'I am clad' (MS 2054/51:9); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'You are bound' (Davidovitz 21:7); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'they go' (MS 2054/22:6; AS 18); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'bad' (MS 1928/06:10).

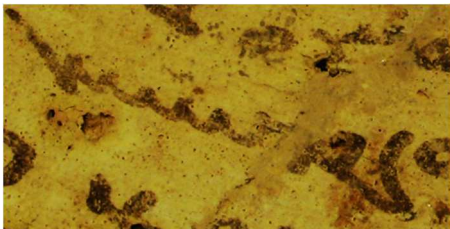


fig. 3: $\text{--}נכונ$ (MS 2054/46:9)⁴²

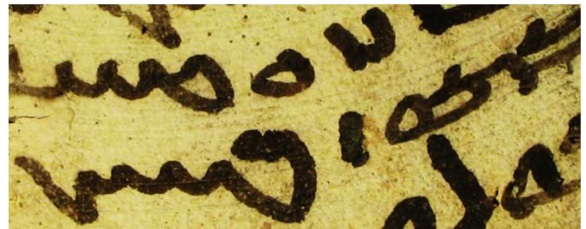


fig. 4: $\text{--}נכונ$ (MS 1928/44:9)

The findings presented here show that the insertion of a non-etymological *He* ($\text{--}נכונ$) is not limited to a few isolated cases. The examination reveals almost eighty attestations in nineteen different

40. Nöldeke (1875: 87) adduced similar examples from the great literary compositions. It is interesting to note that in some of these examples the unusual writing stands next to the common pronoun: $\text{--}נכונ$ 'we will capture the world, we the world will capture' (Gy 105:2-3); $\text{--}נכונ$ 'we were with them, we were with them' (Gy 107:15).

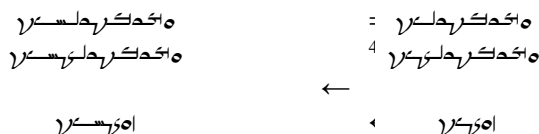
41. The word $\text{--}נכונ$ 'life' is written with three *Yuds*.

42. The photographs of the bowls in the Schøyen Collection were taken by Prof. Matthew Morgenstern. They are published here with his kind permission.

Aramaic. In over-eagerness to adhere to the historical forms the scribe transfers the *He* of the masculine third person plural suffixes to other grammatical forms belonging the masculine third person plural (ܫܪܝܚܝܢ → ܫܪܝܚܝܢ; ܪܝܬܝܚܝܚܝܢ → ܪܝܬܝܚܝܚܝܢ) and in the next stage even to the masculine second person plural forms:

Second person plural masculine		Third person plural masculine	
ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ	ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ	ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ	ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ
ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ	ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ	ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ	ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ
ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ	ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ	ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ	ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ

The twelve examples near the vowels /i-e/ (ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ/ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ ‘we’ and ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ ‘victorious’ [x10]) can be explained as the product of a false analogy to the corresponding feminine third person plural suffixes ܫܪܝܚܝܢ and ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ which are also frequently reduced in Mandaic to ܫܪܝܚܝܢ and ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ respectively. In light of the high degree of extended spellings near the consonant *Kaf* it is not exaggerated to assume that at some point in the development of the language the digraph *Kaf-He* became a complex sign indicating the fricative /k/ (=ܫܪܝܚܝܢ) as opposed to the plosive pronunciation of /k/ (=ܫܪܝܚܝܢ). This may have accelerated the penetration of the additional *He* to the participle forms (such as ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ ‘victorious’).



On the other hand the remaining six examples near the final vowel /a/ (ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ ‘they will go (f.pl.)’, ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ ‘I am clad’, ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ ‘they go (f.pl.)’, ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ ‘bad’) can be explained as the result of an analogy to the historical form of the feminine second person singular suffixes ܫܪܝܚܝܢ which is often written ܫܪܝܚܝܢ in the epigraphic corpus (e.g., ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ ‘her son’, ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ ‘all of her’, ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ ‘will be to her’), but sometimes probably pronounced without /h/, as the standard spelling ܫܪܝܚܝܢ indicates (e.g., ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ, ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ, etc.).⁵⁰

ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ	ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ
ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ	ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ
ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ	ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ

4. Addition of non-etymological *Nun* (ܢ)

In his groundbreaking grammar Th. Nöldeke draws attention to the “eigentümliche Form” ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ instead of the regular form ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ ‘other (f.)’ in Classical Mandaic.⁵¹ The Early

49. Although these forms are not so far documented by witnesses at our disposal it seems that they indeed existed in the language of the scribe(s) and that it is only a matter of time until examples are found.

50. A simplified formulation of the process may be proposed as follows: /-on#/ : ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ; /-in#/ : ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ; /-a#/ : ܫܪܝܚܝܚܝܢ. The above explanations clarify the main reasons and the particular circumstances under which it took place.

51. Nöldeke 1875: 186.

Mandaic epigraphic sources contribute two more examples (with five attestations) for the exceptional feminine singular adjectival ending ܟܝܪܬܐ instead of the usual Eastern Aramaic ending – ܟܝܪܬܐ .⁵²

4.a. $\text{ܟܝܪܬܐ} > \text{ܟܝܪܬܐ}$ ‘great (f.s.)’

I stand upon the mountain of *Hispon*,
 at a great hill⁵³ of iron
 my feet are placed,
 at a great vault firmament
 my head is laid up/leaned⁵⁴ (...)
 I have bound *Hispon* with a bond,
 I have bound the secrets that are in it
 and the inhabitants that are in it.
 I have bound *Ewat Ruha*⁵⁵
 [and I] have bound the great hill
 (IM number unknown).⁵⁶

ܠܫܘܘܪܝܢ ܠܚܝܠܝܘܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ
 ܠܝܚܘܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ
 ܠܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ
 ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ (...)
 ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ
 ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ
 ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ
 ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ

The interpretation of ܟܝܪܬܐ in this context as a feminine singular adjective is corroborated by similar expressions with the same structure A // B *rabbā* in Mandaic and JBA magical texts.⁵⁷ Compare, for example: $\text{ܐܘܪܪ ܓܠܝܠ ܩܢܝܢܐ ܘܐܬܘܪܐ ܪܒܐ ܕܓܠܝܠܐ}$ ‘I stand upon a mountain of rock and upon a great mountain of rock’ (MS 2053/59:1-2); $\text{ܠܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ}$ ‘I stand upon the earth of copper, and at the great gate of the House of Life’ (DC 40: 681-2).

4.b. $\text{ܟܝܪܬܐ} > \text{ܟܝܪܬܐ}$ ‘the hated one/hateful (f.s.)’

To the best of my knowledge there is only one additional extant source containing the unusual spelling of the feminine form of *rabbā*: ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ ‘may there be a great protection of truth for him’ (Moussaieff 139: 9).⁵⁸ Significantly, this bowl contains another feminine adjective with the final non-historical *Nun*:

Bound is the wrathful (demoness),
 Bound is Prangus,
 Bound is the hated (demoness)
 (Moussaieff 139: 22)

ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ
 ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ
 ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ

52. Epstein 1960: 119; Nöldeke 1875: 154.

53. Poetic word from the root ܟܝܪܬܐ parallel to ܟܝܪܬܐ ‘mountain’. Cf. Sokoloff 2009: 642.

54. An unpublished parallel amulet reads: ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ (BM 134699 [five lines from the end]).

55. See Drower and Macuch 1963: 342.

56. Read by the present author from an unpublished photograph. The new incantation bowl is parallel to unpublished amulet in the British Museum. The relevant passages in the amulet read as follows: $\text{ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ (...)} \text{ܟܝܪܬܐ ܟܝܪܬܐ}$ (BM 134699 [author’s reading]).

57. This structure is discussed at length by Morgenstern and Ford forthcoming.

58. For further information and comparison to JBA sources concerning the additional *Nun*, see Ford and Morgenstern forthcoming.

Early and late documents exhibit the original spelling: **ܘܕܗܘܢܐ ܘܗܘܢܐ ܘܗܘܢܐ** ‘the hated (demoness) who is called *Zatan Lilita*’ (HS 3011:13-14);⁵⁹ **ܘܗܘܢܐ ܘܗܘܢܐ ܘܗܘܢܐ** ‘may the hated (demoness) and the blow and the curse and the poverty and the confusion and wickedness get out of his house’ (BM 91731 [Segal 090M]: 15-16); **ܘܗܘܢܐ ܘܗܘܢܐ ܘܗܘܢܐ** ‘hateful spirit’ (DC 48).⁶⁰

A notable phenomenon in Late Mesopotamian Aramaic is the loss of /n/ in the final position. In Mandaic this phenomenon is especially prominent in participles and plural absolute-state forms and occurs sporadically in a number of other grammatical categories, such as cardinal numbers, possessive suffixes, direct object suffixes, enclitic personal pronouns attached to active and passive participles, imperfective endings, etc.⁶¹ Given this phonological feature it is somewhat surprising to find feminine singular adjectives in which a final *Nun* has been appended without any etymological reason. The most likely explanation is that the *Nun* was added to **ܘܗܘܢܐ**, **ܘܗܘܢܐ** and **ܘܗܘܢܐ** through a process of pseudo-correction:

Pronunciation			Spelling		
/nāhtīn/	or	ܘܗܘܢܐܢ	→	ܘܗܘܢܐ	‘they (3 m. pl.) go down’ ⁶²
/nāhtī/					
/lāṭaten/	or	ܘܗܘܢܐܢ	→	ܘܗܘܢܐ	‘you (2 f. pl.) have cursed’ ⁶³
/lāṭatel/					
/rabtī/		ܘܗܘܢܐܢ	←	ܘܗܘܢܐ	‘great (f. s.)’

2. Conclusion

Mandaic epigraphic sources go directly back to Late Antiquity (4th-7/8th century C.E.). In contrast to the early-modern manuscripts of the great Mandaic literary works which have undergone centuries of copying and linguistic editing, the magical texts inscribed in ink on earthenware bowls or incised with a sharp instrument on metal amulets present an authentic picture of the Mandaic language in the middle half of the first millennium. The primary character of the epigraphic sources gives us the opportunity to propose well-grounded arguments with respect to the time and origin of the linguistic features that appear in them. In the present study we have identified and analyzed four different types of pseudo-corrections. Two of them seem to be distinctive features of Early Mandaic (**ܘܗܘܢܐܢ** ‘your faces’ etc. and **ܘܗܘܢܐܢ** under the influence of **ܘܗܘܢܐܢ** ‘knowledge’), while the other two show unexpected links to the modern manuscripts (**ܘܗܘܢܐܢ** ‘bay tree’ [identified now also in *Šafta d-Qaština*, DC 43J:207] and **ܘܗܘܢܐܢ** ‘great’ and **ܘܗܘܢܐܢ** ‘hated one’ [certainly related to the Classical Mandaic variant **ܘܗܘܢܐܢ** ‘other’]). These new examples reveal that already at

59. Müller-Kessler 2005: 110.

60. Drower and Macuch: 311.

61. For updated examples and a detailed discussion see Morgenstern, forthcoming; Abudraham 2016: 400-404.

62. Compare: **ܘܗܘܢܐܢ ܘܗܘܢܐܢ ܘܗܘܢܐܢ** ‘voice of the men that are fighting and go down in the battle’ (IM 60494), // **ܘܗܘܢܐܢ ܘܗܘܢܐܢ ܘܗܘܢܐܢ** ‘voice of the men that are fighting and go down in the battle’ (Harvard 8669 [Gordon M] line 5-6). For IM 60494 see Hunter 1997: 114-122; For Harvard 8669 see Gordon 1937: 95-100.

63. For the form **ܘܗܘܢܐܢ** see Harvard incantation bowl number 8669 [Gordon M] line 11 = Gordon 1937: 95-100.

the earliest known phase of Mandaic the spoken language of the scribes differed from the literary idiom.⁶⁴

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64. On the other hand, new evidence from the epigraphic corpus may confirm the authenticity of the Classical Mandaic pronouns אנת 'you (sg.)' and אנתון 'you (pl.)'. Spellings like אנתון/אנתון instead of אנתון 'their faces', אנתון/אנתון instead of אנתון 'their limbs', אנתון instead of אנתון 'date palms' (σανδαράκια) and אנתון instead of אנתון 'sandals' (σάνδαλον) indicate that the new vowel letter after the *Nun* (אנתון → אנתון) has a phonetic purpose (in addition to internal analogical development as argued by Nöldeke and others).

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