

The Formative Milieu and Linguistic Profile of Christian Palestinian Aramaic

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Abstract In this article, I offer a possible answer to the question of the origins of CPA by reassessing the formative milieu of the dialect: Who wrote (and spoke) in CPA, where and when? And what could be a possible scenario for the adaptation of an Estrangelo-based script? In addition, I describe the linguistic profile of CPA, including features that distinguish it from Syriac and Eastern Aramaic dialects, its common Western Aramaic traits, and linguistics characteristics that are distinctive of CPA.

Keywords Inscriptions. Dialect geography. Morphological features. Western Aramaic lexical items.

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1 Introduction

Christian Palestinian Aramaic (CPA) is a Late Western Aramaic dialect that was used by some members of Melkite Christian communities in the provinces of *Palaestina prima*, *Palaestina secunda*, and *Arabia* (and adjacent areas) in Late Antiquity.¹ It is known from a small number of inscriptions and from fragmentary translations of Greek religious literature in manuscripts. The language is written

1 I extend my thanks to Ohad Abudraham, Riccardo Contini, and Matthew Morgenstern for their help in bibliographical matters.

in a unique offshoot of the Syriac Estrangelo script.² Hence, we have in CPA a Western Aramaic dialect that was put to writing in an alphabetic script that originated in the east. It is not clear which historical circumstances account for this situation.

In section 2 of this article, I shall offer a possible answer to the question of the origins of CPA by reassessing the formative milieu of the dialect: Who wrote (and spoke) in CPA, where and when? And what could be a possible scenario for the adaption of an Estrangelo-based script? In section 3, I shall describe the linguistic profile of CPA, including features that distinguish it from Syriac and Eastern Aramaic dialects, its common Western Aramaic traits, and linguistics characteristics that are distinctive of CPA.

2 The formative milieu of Christian Palestinian Aramaic

2.1 Christian Palestinian Aramaic and previous language stages

In the three thousand years of attested Aramaic language history, the most pivotal and formative event has been the promotion of an Aramaic dialect from Mesopotamia to serve as the quasi-universal administrative language in the Persian Empire. Prior to this fateful decision of Darius I, the use of Aramaic in writing was essentially limited to the core Aramaic-speaking areas in Syria, and later in Mesopotamia. In contradistinction, the standardized Official Aramaic of the Achaemenid chancellery was written throughout the vast Persian Empire, from Egypt in the west to Afghanistan in the east.³ And this Aramaic literary standard did not vanish with the demise of the empire that had brought it to life. Rather, it shaped the new regional languages of the Hellenistic and early Roman Near East that are commonly labelled Middle Aramaic, viz. Qumran Aramaic, Nabataean, Palmyrene, Old Syriac, and Hatra Aramaic. All of these adhere to some degree to the Official Aramaic literary standard but also show influence from local spoken Aramaic dialects.⁴ Most of these Middle Aramaic dialects, e.g. Nabataean and Palmyrene, vanished with the local kingdoms that had promoted them initially.

2 For an overview of the Syriac script, which first developed in the Osrohoene, see, e.g., Briquel-Chatonnet 2018.

3 For an overview of these early phases of Aramaic language history see Stadel 2020a, 320-7.

4 Gzella (2015, 212-80) offers a succinct sketch of these post-Achaemenid Official Aramaic dialects.

However, in a number of cases – Syriac being the most prominent example – the Middle Aramaic languages continued to be written and gradually adopted more and more vernacular features, whereas the scribal conventions inherited from the Official Aramaic literary standard gradually faded out, leaving only faint traces in the new literary idioms of the Late Aramaic period.⁵ Such residues of earlier scribal practice are important for assessing whether the precursors of the attested Late Aramaic dialects were continually used in writing since the Middle Aramaic phase. This must have been the case with Syriac, and to some extent also with Mandaic.⁶ The Jewish dialects from Palestine and Babylonia are *sui generis* in this respect, since the Jews canonized religious texts in the Official Aramaic literary standard (viz. Biblical Aramaic) and in a form of Middle Aramaic that has preserved features of this standard (viz. the language of Targum Onkelos and of legal deeds in rabbinic literature), and these prestige languages could potentially interfere with the written form of the Late Aramaic dialects.⁷

It is only CPA and Samaritan Aramaic that lack any traces of the Official Aramaic literary standard (that is reflected in various historical orthographies in other Aramaic dialects),⁸ and there are two possible explanations for this state of affairs. One may either assume written predecessors in which the process of fading out the earlier standard had already been completed before the principles for writing CPA and Samaritan Aramaic as literary languages were fixed. In this scenario, the standard for writing CPA would have developed similarly to Classical Syriac. Or one may alternatively assume that CPA had no written predecessor but was rather a spoken local dialect that was at some point in time promoted to a literary language. In this scenario, too, the written standard of CPA would of course not have been created *ex nihilo*, but neither would it have been the outcome of a natural and gradual development. Rather, one could hypothesize that basic orthographic principles (such as the use of *matres lectionis* or the use of a single grapheme for a lengthened consonant) would have been borrowed from Syriac together with the script,⁹ but apart from that written CPA would essentially reflect a local spoken dialect.

5 For Syriac, the standard treatment of these developments is Beyer 1966.

6 A residue of the Official Aramaic standard accounts for three archaic orthographic practices (and related hypercorrections) in Mandaic (mentioned by Abudraham 2022, 97-9; 152-3; 174-5), even though in this case the Middle Aramaic forerunner is difficult to pinpoint. Beyer (1984, 44; 62) thinks of Arsacid Aramaic.

7 Cf. Stadel 2020b, 105-9, *mutatis mutandis*, for the processes involved.

8 As noted by Beyer 1984, 67-8 and Gzella 2015, 317. For the situation in Samaritan Aramaic cf. Stadel 2020c, 133.

9 As suggested by Beyer 1984, 67-8.

It is impossible to tell which of the two scenarios is historically correct. However, the basic fact that CPA does not display influence from the Official Aramaic literary standard is noteworthy, especially in comparison with the other Late Aramaic dialects. Thus, while it cannot be proven that CPA as a literary language was shaped by other processes than Syriac, such a possibility should at least be considered. Incidentally, it would also fit in nicely with a peculiarity of the CPA literary corpus, which is restricted to translations from Greek Christian literature. Lack of an indigenous tradition of how to compose longer texts in Aramaic could well account for this state of affairs.¹⁰

2.2 The Emergence of Christian Palestinian Aramaic: Time and Place

The general time frame and place of origin of CPA are undisputed: The dialect was used in Late Antiquity in Palestine and surrounding areas. However, there is considerable variation in earlier attempts to narrow down the time when it was first committed to writing and to locate it more precisely on the map.¹¹ In the case of the CPA chronology, at least, we are on relatively secure ground. Since the early manuscript evidence – almost all in palimpsests – is notoriously difficult to date,¹² all agree that only datable provenanced inscriptions can provide a firm *terminus ad quem* for the dialect. This is provided by a short CPA inscription in a mosaic pavement of a church at Evron in north-western Israel, which can be securely dated to 415 CE.¹³ The proposal by Müller-Kessler, who dates the beginning of CPA writing to the 5th century while allowing for spoken forerunners in the 3rd and 4th centuries, is thus reasonable in general terms.¹⁴ However, one should also take into account that our epigraphic findings are subject to the whims of time (and modern archaeologists) and hardly ever provide the full picture. Hence, I am inclined to hypothesize that CPA writing started already in the 4th century.

10 But other reasons, theological or pastoral, for example, are also possible.

11 Cf. Rosenthal 1939, 153-9, for some early hypotheses.

12 This also holds true for the recently published epigraphic fragments from Nessana, for which Hoyland (2021, 35*) can offer only a very rough date of 500-700 CE.

13 Jacques 1987 provides an edition. It is evident from the adjacent Greek inscription that the CPA epigraph belongs to the first phase of the building, as Di Segni (2009, 354-5) points out.

14 Müller-Kessler 1991, 1. Incidentally, the epigraphic evidence thus confirms Nöldeke's (1868, 525) guess, who suggested a time frame of 300-600 CE. Bar-Asher (1988, 28) has suggested a later date, but he, too, maintains that spoken forerunners must have existed in the preceding centuries. Cf. also Díez Merino 2003, 124-5.

Establishing the location where CPA was originally spoken is even more challenging. Again, it is agreed that the geographical distribution of the epigraphic evidence rather than the manuscripts should inform our hypothesis. But additional factors should be accounted for as well. The cradle of CPA must have been located within the confines of the Western Aramaic dialect area in broad terms, in a location with a sizable Christian population. And since CPA is written in an offshoot of the Estrangelo script, one must assume that this location was exposed to the Syriac language and script as early as the 4th century. In addition, the choice of Aramaic over Greek points to an area where knowledge of the latter language was not well entrenched in the populace. Based mainly on the interpretation of the epigraphic evidence, many scholars have tied the dialect to the environs of Jerusalem.¹⁵ I disagree and would like to propose a different origin for CPA, based on an examination of the above-mentioned factors.

It is difficult to delineate the exact area where Western Aramaic dialects were spoken in Late Antiquity. It certainly comprised all of Palestine, from the northern Negev to the Galilee, as well as the Lebanon and Antilebanon mountain ranges.¹⁶ In addition, Western Aramaic was presumably spoken in the arable stretches of land east of the Dead Sea, the Jordan river, the Golan, and the Qalamun mountains.¹⁷ Since it is generally assumed that in Late Antiquity Aramaic formed a dialect continuum stretching from Palestine to Mesopotamia,¹⁸ one may presume that further to the north, in the Orontes valley and in the villages of the Limestone Massif of northern Syria, dialects of Aramaic were spoken as well. However, lack of evidence makes it impossible to establish whether these dialects would have belonged to the Western Aramaic group.¹⁹

15 Desreumaux 1987, 102; Bar-Asher 1988, 29; Müller-Kessler 1991, 2; Díez Merino 2003, 120; Morgenstern 2011, 630; Lipiński 2014, 187-90.

16 This is borne out by the Western Neo-Aramaic dialects of the Qalamun mountains in Syria, the last remnants of what had once been – according to historical sources and substrate in the Lebanese Neo-Arabic dialects – a larger Aramaic-speaking enclave. Contini (1999) offers a general conspectus.

17 Direct evidence for this is sparse. It is usually assumed that a local Aramaic dialect was spoken by the inhabitants of the Hawran in Roman times (Contini 1987-90, 34), which might be reflected in inscriptions in a special script (Macdonald 2021). That north-western Jordan was once inhabited by speakers of Aramaic is clear from toponyms (Ababneh 2009, esp. 77-82). The Aramaic captions (in Greek script) from the murals of a recently discovered Roman-era tomb at Bayt al-Ras in Jordan also attest to this, Aliquot et al. 2022.

18 See the programmatic study by Boyarin (1981).

19 Taylor (2002, 304-17) has assembled the meagre linguistic evidence.

Most of the provenanced CPA epigraphic material comes from within the confines of the Western Aramaic dialect area.²⁰ But as mentioned above, I do not think that the epigraphic remains suggest interpreting the environs of Jerusalem as the cradle of CPA. Rather, most of the find spots of CPA inscriptions are concentrated in the Northern Jordanian Highlands and the steppe region to the east.²¹ Progressing roughly from north to south, CPA inscriptions have been found in the northern part of the Decapolis around Irbid, in el-Burz, Qam, and Dayr el-Sa'neh; In Wadi Rājib west of Ajloun and in Jerash/Gerasa, as well as in the steppe region east of Jerash in Riḥāb, Ḥayyān el-Mušrif, and Ḥirbet el-Samrā; In the southern part of the Decapolis in the environs of Amman, in el-Quwaysmeh and Ḥirbet el-Kursi; And still further to the south in 'Uyūn Mūsā and Ḥirbet el-Muḥayyaṭ in the area of Mount Nebo. The Hospital inscription of unknown provenance might also be from the Northern Jordanian Highlands region.²² In addition, the inscriptions from 'Uyūn Umm el-'Aẓām (south of Hippos on the southern Golan) and Dayr el-'Adas in Syria (to the east of the Golan) can be interpreted as northern outliers of this well-defined cluster.²³ Three additional find spots in Jordan are removed from this cluster: The graffiti from the vicinity of Qaṣr al-Burqu' in the Basalt desert,²⁴ rock inscriptions from the monastic complex Qaṣr el-'Abyaḍ on the Lisān peninsula,²⁵ and a tiny parchment fragment from the pilgrimage center of Lot's cave at 'Ayn 'Abāṭah,²⁶ the latter two from the south-eastern end of the Dead Sea. One may hypothesize that CPA

20 I exclude the inscriptions from Egypt: The CPA caption from a painting on a wooden board (Desreumaux 1996), for which emigré monks might be responsible, and graffiti left by pilgrims in a valley on the Sinai peninsula (Puech 2014).

21 My analysis draws on the combined lists of inscriptions given by Hoyland (2010, 37-9), Desreumaux (2016), and Puech (2011). I have excluded the inscriptions from Tell Masos and Deir Makir, which are in Syriac, as well as inscriptions on small portable objects (the Tel Yunis and Umm el-Rašāṣ shards and the lamps). The unprovenanced amulets are also irrelevant for our purpose. For additional new material, I will refer to the relevant publications. In previous studies, the Arabic names of the findspots are often given in impressionistic transcription. In order to remedy this situation and facilitate locating them on Arabic-language maps of the area (or Google Maps with Arabic captions), I provide scholarly transcriptions for all Transjordanian findspots.

22 Puech 2011, 79-80.

23 The inscription from the hinterland of Hippos (Dvorjetski et al. 2022) is located at a distance of roughly 30 kilometers as the crow flies from the published inscriptions from northern Jordan and could thus be interpreted as part of the Northern Jordanian Highlands cluster. Be that as it may, it definitely links the Dayr el-'Adas inscription more closely with this cluster. Arguably, the site of Ḥirbet el-Mird in the Judean Desert could also be interpreted as such an outlier of the Northern Jordanian Highlands cluster.

24 Harahsheh, Desreumaux 2016.

25 Puech 2011, 91-3; Holmgren, Kaliff 2012, 61-63 with photographs and Puech's drawings.

26 Puech 2011, 93. The fragment has been edited by Brock (in Politis 2012, 418).

was imported to these remote places (the Basalt desert in particular) from the Northern Jordanian Highlands cluster.

A few inscriptions come from the environs of Jerusalem:²⁷ from Ḥirbet el-Mird and ʿĒn el-Šuwaynīt to the east in the Judaeen Desert, and from Umm el-Rūs and Mevo Modiim²⁸ to the west at the foot of the Judaeen hill country.²⁹ To the south of Umm el-Rūs, in the northern Negev, four additional find spots are known: Ḥirbet Qašra (south of Bet Guvrin/Eleutheropolis), Giv’ot Bar (south of Rahat),³⁰ ʿAnab al-Kabīr, and Ḥūrah.³¹ The papyrus fragments discovered at Nessana provide additional evidence for the use of CPA in the Byzantine settlements of the Negev.³² Three more find spots cluster in the coastal plain of the Upper Western Galilee: Evron, Shlomi,³³ and Kabri/Ḥirbet el-Ḥazneh. Another inscription from Ḥirbet Qastra on the Carmel is best grouped together with these.

All in all, the Northern Jordanian Highlands region has not only the largest number of find spots and individual CPA inscriptions (even excluding Ḥirbet el-Samrā), the epigraphic material is also more diverse than in other areas, featuring inscriptions on stone and mosaic from churches and monasteries as well as gravestones. The find spots form a clear cluster: All sites are within a maximum distance of approximately 30 km as the crow flies from the next one. Though less clearly defined internally (and comprising less inscriptions), the string of find spots in the Judaeen Desert, the environs of Jerusalem, and the northern Negev connects with this Northern Jordanian Highlands cluster according to the same criterion: The next site is hardly ever more than 30 kilometers away.³⁴ All other find spots,

27 Pace Puech (2001, 70-2, hesitatingly followed by Hoyland in Cotton et al. 2012, I.2: 213-14), I am not convinced that the cryptogram from the Bethany cave should be read as a CPA inscription. Milik (1953, 530) and Di Segni (in Cotton et al. 2012, I.2: 538) have wondered whether a now effaced inscription in a tomb in the Silwan neighborhood of Jerusalem was in CPA, but this is a moot question.

28 Abudraham 2020.

29 Another inscription from ʿAbūd in the Samaritan hill country (recently treated by Puech 2020) can be connected geographically to this cluster, but it is evidently late and hence not indicative of the formative stage of the dialect.

30 A fragmentary graffiti that was scratched on what perhaps was once a building block with one flat surface. The inscription remains unpublished. I thank Ohad Abudraham for bringing it to my attention.

31 Vainstüb, Sokoloff, Varga 2016.

32 Hoyland 2021.

33 Dauphin, Kingsley (2003, 68) as well as Desreumaux (2016, 94) provide some details. For a full publication, see now Puech 2024.

34 But in some cases, notably when looking at Ḥirbet el-Muḥayyaṭ and Ḥirbet el-Mird, the actual distance to be covered by anyone traveling from one site to the other could have been much longer.

and notably the inscriptions in the Upper Western Galilee, are at a distance of at least 60 kilometers from the nearest other CPA site.³⁵

I surmise that a spoken Aramaic dialect of the Northern Jordanian Highlands region served as the basis for the CPA literary language.³⁶ Such a hypothesis not only fits the geographical distribution of the epigraphic remains, it can also account for additional characteristics of CPA. On a general level, the choice of Aramaic as a Christian literary language points to an area where Greek was not widely spoken. This basic tenet is reflected in the micro-distribution of the CPA inscriptions, which all come from rural churches and monastic estates in peripheral areas, not from the big urban centres.³⁷ Locating the origin of CPA in the rural areas of the Northern Jordanian Highlands and the bordering steppe region in particular also accounts for a morphological and syntactical peculiarity of the dialect, which can then be interpreted as an instance of contact-induced interference from Arabic.³⁸ In addition, it is reasonable to assume that some inhabitants of this region were acquainted with the Syriac Estrangelo script as early as the 5th or 4th century, which they could then adapt to write CPA. The Syriac language and script, originally from the area around Edessa, is epigraphically attested in Christian contexts west of the Euphrates from the early 5th century onward, mainly in the villages of the Limestone Massif of northern Syria.³⁹ Similar inscriptions are occasionally found further south as well: close to Ḥnayder, southwest of Homs,⁴⁰ and in Dayr Māker, east of the Golan,⁴¹ though the latter inscription cannot predate the late 6th century. There are also a few 6th- and 7th-century Syriac

35 Dayr el-ʿAdas is ca. 65 km away from al-Burz, the northernmost site of the Northern Jordanian Highlands cluster, and Qaṣr el-ʿAbyad on the Liṣān peninsula is ca. 60 km south of Ḥirbet el-Muḥayyaṭ. Nessana is at a distance of ca. 70 km from Ḥūrah in the Northern Negev. Ḥirbet Qastra on the Carmel, the southernmost site of the Galilee cluster, is ca. 70 km away from Qam in the Northern Jordanian Highlands and ca. 90 km from Mevo Modiim. The graffiti from the vicinity of Qaṣr al-Burquʿ in the Basalt desert is at a 170 km distance from Riḥāb.

36 Thus also Beyer (1984, 68-9; 1995, 243).

37 Thus, e.g., Gzella 2015, 318.

38 Stadel 2021. Admittedly, the Arabic influence alone can also be accounted for by assuming an origin in the northern Negev, for example. In fact, the only CPA find spots that are removed from the steppe regions usually associated with Arabic-speaking nomadic populations comprise the Upper Western Galilee cluster and the area west of Jerusalem. Desreumaux (1987, 104; also in Desreumaux et al. 2011, 296) has also toyed with the hypothesis of an admixture of an Arabic population among the speakers of CPA. See now also Gzella (2025, 759-63), who finds that Arabic influence on the CPA lexicon is more extensive than generally acknowledged.

39 Briquel-Chatonnet 2013; Briquel-Chatonnet, Desreumaux 2011.

40 Kassis, Yon, Badwi 2004, 32.

41 Naveh 1978, 102-3.

manuscripts that were copied in the Damascene, including one that might originate in Dayr Māker.⁴² But further to the south, in modern day Israel and Jordan, evidence for the use of the Syriac script is conspicuously absent prior to the 8th century.⁴³

To sum up: The cradle of CPA is in all likelihood to be sought in the peripheral rural areas of the Northern Jordanian Highlands and the bordering steppe region. Beginning in the 4th and 5th centuries, this region saw the christianisation of Arabic speaking-nomads⁴⁴ that intermingled with the Aramaic-speaking sedentary population.⁴⁵ In these newly emerging congregations, Greek was not widely spoken, and this state of affairs gave rise to the promotion of a local Aramaic dialect to the CPA literary (and presumably liturgical) language. Since other Aramaic-speaking religious groups in Palestine, viz. Jews and Samaritans, had started to use their distinctive scripts as socio-religious markers,⁴⁶ the promoters of CPA took recourse to the only Semitic script that had by then come to be associated with Christianity – the Syriac Estrangelo – and adopted it for writing CPA.

3 The linguistic profile of Christian Palestinian Aramaic

In the preceding section, I have presupposed that CPA is a Western Aramaic dialect. I shall substantiate this classification in what follows by exemplifying morphological features that distinguish CPA from Eastern Aramaic dialects and Syriac, and by pointing to common morphological and syntactic traits shared by CPA, Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (JPA), and Samaritan Aramaic (SamAr), but absent from the Eastern Aramaic dialects and Syriac. In using the terms Eastern and

42 Hoyland 2009, 130.

43 Desreumaux (2016, 90-1) has collected the sparse evidence. The sole exception is the recently published early fifth-century Syriac funerary inscription from Zoar (Al-Shdeifat et al. 2023).

44 Cf. Hamarneh 2012, 281 and Bianchi 2021, 21 for the general time frame of these developments and their connection with the building of monastic complexes.

45 Cf. Stadel 2021, 298-301 for a possible contact scenario. In that article (295-8), I also presented evidence for contact between CPA and Arabic in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times. To the list of sites that yielded both CPA and Arabic epigraphic material (297), one may now add Nessana and ¹Ayn ¹Abāṭah. Boudier (2016, 281, 286) is to be counted among those scholars who had previously considered such contact (Stadel 2021, 297 n. 100). Additional evidence for the very early adaption by the Melkite communities of Arabic as a literary language (297-8) is also to be found in Muslim writings from the Umayyad period, as demonstrated by Baumstark (1932; for a recent treatment of the Arabic text cf. Anthony 2016, 257-66 and Conrad 2002, 129).

46 The use of script (and language) as an identity marker is evident, e.g., from the Christian and Jewish tombstones from ancient Zoar (Stern 2017, 158-9). For a similar use of the Samaritan script cf. Stadel 2020c, 145.

The first retention is evident in the 3m Imperfect prefix, which is *y-* (ܝܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ and ܝܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ), as in Imperial Aramaic, not *n-*, as in Syriac (ܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ and ܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ; or *l-*, as in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic).⁵⁰ In addition, one also notes that CPA, like earlier Aramaic and unlike Syriac, retains a morphological distinction between definite (ܝܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ for Greek ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ) and indefinite nouns (ܝܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ for Greek ἡμέραι).⁵¹

Another retention pertains to the masculine plural ending of the *status determinatus*, which is spelled *-y²* in CPA, presumably reflecting the original pronunciation *-ayyā*, not *-ē* as in Syriac.⁵² This is exemplified by the CPA rendering ܦܪܝܫܝܝܘܢ “Pharisees” (CCR1) in Mark 2:18,⁵³ as against Syriac ܦܪܝܫܝܘܢ.

Similarly, the 1cs pronominal suffix is usually reconstructed as *-ī* in CPA, whereas it was reduced to zero in pronunciation in the Eastern dialects and in Syriac.⁵⁴ Since Syriac retains the morpheme in spelling, this difference in pronunciation is not reflected in the traditional orthography, as in the versions of Matthew 26:26:

CPA (CCR1):⁵⁵

ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܝܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܝܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ [ܝܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ]

Peshitta:

ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܝܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܝܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ

“Take, eat; this is my body”

Another trait common to all Eastern Aramaic dialects is the generalization of Imperfect forms without *-n-* before object suffixes.⁵⁶ This is not an innovation *stricto sensu*, since forms with and

50 Western Neo-Aramaic also retains this feature, Arnold 1990, 72.

51 In the case of ܝܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ, the use of the anarthrous form might not be idiomatic in the Aramaic and could have been triggered by the Greek. The fact remains, however, that CPA marks definiteness morphologically.

52 Cf. the (archaic?) Western Neo-Aramaic variant ending *-ōya*, Arnold 1990, 289. However, the etymology of the form is contested, see Spitaler 1938, 105.

53 Müller-Kessler; Sokoloff 1996-99, 2A: 82.

54 Probably a retention rather than an innovation in the Western group (*pace* Gzella 2015, 288). Similarly, I would classify the form *’atti* of the 2fs independent pronoun as a retention, but the evidence from JPA is ambiguous (cf. Kutscher 1976, 31; Fassberg 1990, 111-2; Heijmans 2015, 19) and therefore the form cannot be characterized as Western Aramaic.

55 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 2A: 34.

56 Boyarin 1981, 615; Gzella 2008, 104-5.

without *-n-*, reflecting the regular and the short Imperfect/Jussive respectively, are attested in earlier forms of Aramaic.⁵⁷ However, it is nevertheless a morphological trait that can be reconstructed to proto-Eastern Aramaic. In CPA, on the other hand, as in the other western dialects, the object suffix on Imperfects is always preceded by *-n-*. Each of the two dialect groups generalized a different form.⁵⁸ The contrast comes to the fore in the CPA and Syriac translations of Luke 20:3.

CPA (Dam^c):⁵⁹

ܠܘܟܢ ܠܝܘܟܢ ܥܘܠܝܠܘܟܢ

Peshitta:

ܠܘܟܢ ܠܝܘܟܢ ܥܘܠܝܠܘܟܢ

“Me, too, I’ll ask you a question”

But Western Aramaic is not only defined by the absence of eastern innovations. There are also a number of common Western Aramaic traits that are typical of the group, in contradistinction to Eastern Aramaic. A notable morpho-syntactical feature is the direct object marker *yt*, a retention from earlier language stages that is not attested in the eastern dialects (except for remnants in early Syriac).⁶⁰ In CPA, it is only used with pronominalized objects.⁶¹ Syriac usually suffixes the object pronouns directly to the verbal form, as in the following rendering of Matthew 27:35.

CPA (CCR8):⁶²

ܡܘܬܘܢ ܥܘܠܝܠܘܟܢ ܐܘܪܝܢܐ

57 For Biblical Aramaic: Rosenthal 2006; For Qumran Aramaic: Muraoka 2011, 142-3.

58 Even Western Neo-Aramaic retains this feature, Arnold 1990, 207-12.

59 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 2A: 165.

60 Beyer 1984, 601 s.v.

61 Sokoloff 2014a, 168. The CPA tendency to avoid object suffixes on verbal forms (Müller-Kessler 1991, 259; “Unparalleled Variant Readings”, 364) might well be due to translation technique, mimicking the Greek, where pronominalized objects constitute separate words.

62 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 2A: 19.

Peshitta:

ܘܕܘܥܘܒܘܗ

“When they crucified him”

The direct object marker *yt* also forms one ingredient of new demonstrative adjectives that were innovated in Western Aramaic. These comprise *yt* and a cataphoric pronominal suffix.⁶³ The forms are relatively rare in JPA, but well attested in the other two dialects.⁶⁴ Consider the following noun phrase from John 19:27:

CPA (Dam^f):⁶⁵

ܘܕܘܥܘܒܘܗ ܡܢ ܗܘܪܐ

Peshitta:

ܘܕܘܥܘܒܘܗ ܡܢ ܗܘܪܐ

“and from that hour”

A third morpho-syntactic trait shared by all Western Aramaic dialects is the use of the *qātōl* nominal pattern – originally indicating a *nomen agentis* – en lieu of the active participle of the G-stem. This use is nicely illustrated in John 10:12.

CPA⁶⁶

ܘܕܘܥܘܒܘܗ ܡܢ ܗܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܥܘܒܘܗ ܡܢ ܗܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܥܘܒܘܗ ܡܢ ܗܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܥܘܒܘܗ ܡܢ ܗܘܪܐ

63 CPA attests to a few exceptional examples in which the demonstrative follows the noun, e.g., ܡܢ ܗܘܪܐ ܘܕܘܥܘܒܘܗ “on that day” in 1 Samuel 6:19 (CCR3), Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 1: 95. In these cases, the word order is unidiomatic and mimics the Greek (here: ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκεῖνῃ). The same phenomenon is also attested in the Samaritan Targum, mirroring Hebrew word order, cf. Stadel 2017, section 5.2.3.4.

64 For JPA: Sokoloff 2017, 263. A reflex of these forms survives in Western Neo-Aramaic, Spitaler 1938, 57. A comparable form is known from Tannaic Hebrew. It has been suggested with good reason that this innovative form developed at least in part under the influence of the phonetically similar Greek αὐτός etc. (Ariel 2021) or οὗτος etc. (Yadin-Israel 2015, 339) or both. Note that in JPA and in CPA, the same forms function as stand-alone demonstrative pronouns (as it does in Amoraic Hebrew, Ariel 2021, 168 n. 1). But since this usage is unattested for SamAr, it should not be reconstructed to proto-Western Aramaic.

65 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 2A: 178.

66 Land 1875, 160. This is a late manuscript from Egypt, Müller-Kessler 1991, 26.

distinct traits. Jewish Palestinian Aramaic has developed a unique 1cs Perfect ending for the verbal root \sqrt{hwy} , viz. הווינה “I was”,⁸¹ and a new prefix *n-* for the 1cs Imperfect.⁸² Samaritan Aramaic innovated the variant ending *-w* on 3ms Perfect forms of *tertia*e *y* verbs, e.g., בעו “he wanted”,⁸³ and 2nd person Perfect forms of the same class are consistently spelled with *k*, e.g., עמירך “you saw”, possibly reflecting palatalization.⁸⁴ The use of the prepositional phrase ביד “through”, not בן, for introducing the agent of a passive verb is also unique to SamAr.⁸⁵ In this regard, CPA is less innovative than its siblings. It evinces only one unique morpho-syntactic trait: The loss of the inflectional infinitive.⁸⁶ More common Western Aramaic elements as well as unique CPA traits can be found in the lexicon.

3.2 Lexicon

Lexical items typical for Western Aramaic have been mentioned sporadically in various publications,⁸⁷ but no attempt has ever been made to compile a comprehensive list. The situation is similar for the unique vocabulary of CPA. Even though we have an up-to-date dictionary of the dialect, the lexical items that are unique to CPA are usually only mentioned eclectically and in passing.⁸⁸ In what follows, I shall provide a preliminary list of distinctly Western Aramaic lexical items (excluding those not attested in CPA) and another list of distinctly CPA vocabulary.⁸⁹ I have compiled these lists in a three-step process: First, I have culled potential items from Sokoloff’s

81 Lund 1987.

82 Fassberg 1990, 166; Heijmans 2015, 79.

83 Fassberg 2017.

84 Stadel 2015.

85 Stadel 2013a, 173. This construction is also marginally attested in CPA, cf. Sokoloff 2014a, 45 s.v., examples Luke 22:22 and Hebrews 2:2. Usually, CPA uses *mn* in this function, Sokoloff 2014a, 230 s.v. meaning 3.

86 Stadel 2021.

87 E.g., Sokoloff 2011, 618; Stadel 2019, 628.

88 The most relevant publications are Müller-Kessler 1991, 6-8; 2003; 2021a. Müller-Kessler (2021a, 220-1) mentions two pertinent items from unpublished texts, which I have not included in my lists below: ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ “strife” and the phonological variant $\sqrt{b}^{\text{š}}$ “to be bad” with derivations. Stadel 2018, 256-7 lists Canaanite substrate words and literary loans from Hebrew; This list should now be updated in accordance with the material below. Note in particular that ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ “horn” (Sokoloff 2014a, 421), with its unique vocalization, is perhaps best interpreted as a late corruption of the common Aramaic ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ, which is attested once in an early manuscript (Sokoloff 2014a, 428).

89 Stadel (2024) provides comparable lists centered on Samaritan Aramaic that include Western Aramaic lexical items unattested in CPA.

dictionary of CPA;⁹⁰ Then I have checked the dialectal distribution of the item in S. Kaufman's *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* website;⁹¹ And in a last step, I have reviewed the printed dictionaries of the relevant dialects.

Identifying lexical items unique to CPA is straight forward and only subject to the general *caveat* that our knowledge of all Aramaic dialects is very partial and determined by chance, viz. the number and nature of the texts that have come down to us.⁹² Apart from this general constraint, anyone trying to identify Western Aramaic lexical items meets additional difficulties. A Western Aramaic item can be identified with certainty wherever its distribution is restricted to CPA, JPA, and SamAr. However, attestations of lexical items in three other dialects are ambiguous for matters of classification.

Targumic Aramaic, the dialect of Targum Onkelos and Jonathan, evinces a mix of western and eastern features.⁹³ While most scholars agree on a Palestinian origin of the Targum, which shows in a number of lexical isoglosses with Western dialects,⁹⁴ one cannot exclude the possibility of Eastern Aramaic lexical material in Targumic Aramaic. Hence, I provide a separate list for lexemes attested in the Western Aramaic dialects as well as in Targumic Aramaic.

Due to its intermediate position between the Eastern and Western dialect groups, Syriac is also problematic. Generally, I have treated Syriac attestations of a lexeme as an indication that it is not Western Aramaic. Hence, I have excluded such cases from the lists below. However, there are a number of otherwise typical western lexical items that are only marginally attested in Syriac, often in early texts. Prominent examples include the direct object marker *yt*, the verb $\sqrt{\text{hmy}}$ G "to see", the noun $\sqrt{\text{twr}}^2$ in the sense "field", and the verb $\sqrt{\text{gwb}}$ C "to answer". The interpretation of these lexemes in Syriac is contested, and this has implications for their classification. Joosten has argued that lexical items from the Old Syriac Gospels and Syriac Ben Sira represent literary loans from Western Aramaic

90 Sokoloff 2014a. In addition, I have perused recent text editions, but only Müller-Kessler 2019 contains a new lexical item.

91 *The Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* (<http://cal.huc.edu>), henceforth cited as Kaufman, CAL. The CAL searches have been performed in January and February 2022. I quote the website explicitly wherever Kaufman provides additional relevant information for the headword, e.g., by classifying it as Western Aramaic.

92 This is nicely illustrated by the recent publication of a CPA section from Leviticus, which has furnished the first Western Aramaic attestation of the verbal root $\sqrt{\text{šmd}}$ "to destroy", Müller-Kessler 2021b, 364. On a more general level, Mutzafi 2022 demonstrates that today's Neo-Aramaic dialects preserve authentic Aramaic lexical items that are unattested in the ancient dialects.

93 Cf. the *status quaestionis* on the classification of Targumic Aramaic provided in Kutty 2010, 6-12.

94 Tal 1975, 103-23.

Vorlagen, implying that the respective lexemes are pure Western Aramaic.⁹⁵ But Van Rompay has suggested an alternative explanation for some of the words, viz. that these are inherited common Aramaic lexemes which gradually fell out of use in Syriac.⁹⁶ Hence, it is only after the loss that these lexemes would have become typical for Western Aramaic. In addition, some lexemes might also represent diffusion of original Western Aramaic elements to Syriac in a dialect continuum.⁹⁷ Another group of lexeme than do not necessarily defy a classification as Western Aramaic are those that are only known from the indigenous lexicographical tradition and have not – to the best of our knowledge – been employed in Syriac literature.⁹⁸ Such lexical items with a marginal attestation in Syriac are also excluded from the lists below.

Though an Eastern Aramaic dialect in the strict sense, Jewish Babylonian Aramaic may also include Western Aramaic vocabulary. These western lexemes are for the most part literary loans (often with a technical meaning) from two other Jewish literary languages: Rabbinic Hebrew (with its numerous Aramaic loanwords) and Targumic Aramaic.⁹⁹ Western elements in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic are difficult to identify with certainty, but a western origin should be considered in the case of marginally attested lexemes and words with a technical meaning. I have included a few such items in the lists, always accompanied by a short discussion of the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic evidence.

I shall present the lexical material in four separate sections: 1) Western Aramaic lexemes *strictu senso* (according to the criteria outlined above); 2) Western Aramaic lexemes with partial attestation, i.e. lexemes shared by CPA with either JPA or SamAr, but not with both; 3) Western Aramaic lexemes also attested in Targumic Aramaic; and 4) unique CPA lexemes. I have excluded Greek loanwords, Arabic loan- or substrate words,¹⁰⁰ and nouns of the *maqṭōlī* nominal pattern

95 E.g., Joosten 1991; 2007.

96 Van Rompay 1994, 81-2, who is followed, e.g., by Brock 2003, 107-8 and Meehan 2007.

97 But one would rather expect these to cluster in later, not early Syriac manuscripts. Alas, the CPA use of \sqrt{ntl} “to give”, not \sqrt{ntn} , in Imperfect forms is perhaps better accounted for as due to diffusion in a dialect continuum than as a literary loan from Syriac (*pace* Müller-Kessler 1991, 6, 197; Sokoloff 2014a, 273).

98 Relevant items include: \sqrt{ngs} “to dine” and derivations (Sokoloff 2014a, 256, and in JPA) with the cognate noun ܢܘܢܘܢ recorded only by Audo 1897, 2: 34; $\sqrt{\text{šm}}$ G “to force, compel” (Sokoloff 2014a, 317, and in SamAr and JPA), attested only in the lexicon of Bar Ali (cf. Sokoloff 2009, 1127); $\sqrt{\text{šyr}}$ C “to sing” (Sokoloff 2014a, 428, and in JPA [Polel]), references only by Bar Bahlul (cf. Sokoloff 2009, 1554).

99 On Hebrew vocabulary in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic cf. Breuer 1999.

100 For the latter cf. Stadel 2021, 295.

(which I have discussed in the morphology section above). Also excluded are nominal derivations of common Aramaic roots, even if the combination of such a root with a specific nominal pattern is unique to Western Aramaic.¹⁰¹

In order to catch the Western Aramaic and CPA lexical characteristics more precisely, I have classified the material into the following categories: A) Phonological peculiarities: These include cases in which the CPA or Western Aramaic form has obvious cognates in Eastern Aramaic and Syriac, from which it differs by sound changes such as assimilation or metathesis; B) Morphological peculiarities: These include the use of distinct nominal patterns in obvious synonyms or of distinct stems in verbal roots. I have only included cases that are well attested in both dialect groups; C) Semantic peculiarities: These include cases in which CPA or Western Aramaic evince a different meaning for a common Aramaic word. Usually, the peculiar meaning is related to the meanings attested for the cognates from other dialects. Hence I have restricted myself to cases of non-trivial semantic developments; D) Collocations; and E) Words and verbal roots.

For each lexical item, I give the respective CPA base form and its meaning. Related forms or other derivations (including nouns derived from verbal roots) are not mentioned separately, but I indicate their existence in CPA. In brackets I provide the respective page number in Sokoloff's CPA dictionary. Pertinent information on a possible Canaanite origin, on the distribution, or on contrastive forms from other dialects follows. Any additional information or detailed discussions will be relegated to the footnotes. References to dictionaries of other dialects will only be provided if not mentioned in the CPA dictionary, or - for Targumic Aramaic - in Kaufman's CAL.

3.2.1 Western Aramaic Lexical Items

- a. Phonological peculiarities: ܡܢܪܐ "blood" (5; elsewhere without prosthetic vowel); ܠܡܢܐ "moon" (108; elsewhere with *s* [*< ś*]); ܘܗܠܫܘܩ "to be unclothed, strip off" (131; elsewhere ܘܫܠܗ); ܘܩܕܘܩ "to bow down" (318; Syriac ܘܩܕܘܩ); ܘܪܒܘܩ "to mix" (319; elsewhere ܘܪܒܘܩ).¹⁰²
- b. Morphological peculiarities: ܩܠܘܩܩܐ "herd of cattle" (58; elsewhere without *o/u*); ܘܢܩܪܐ "to know" and derivations

101 E.g., ܘܩܪܘܩܐ "object of derision" (Sokoloff 2014a, 5) from the common root ܘܩܪܘܩܐ "to incite", and ܘܩܪܘܩܐ "passion" (Sokoloff 2014a, 215) from the common ܘܩܪܘܩܐ "to suffer".

102 I interpret the rare Jewish Babylonian Aramaic attestations (Sokoloff 2002, 880) as literary loans from Tannaïtic Hebrew.

- (265; common in the sense “to be alien”);¹⁰³ √pwg polel stem “to provide enjoyment” and derivations (324; elsewhere without reduplication).
- c. Semantic peculiarities: ܘܥܘܢ “uncle” (117; elsewhere “beloved” in general);¹⁰⁴ ܠܥܘܒܝܢ “incense burner” and related nouns (209; elsewhere derivations of the root carry more general meanings associated with coal);¹⁰⁵ ܠܥܘܒܝܢ “thing, matter” (245; elsewhere meanings clearly reflect the basic “to stand”); ܠܘܬ “lot” (255; Imperial Aramaic “receipt”); √šmt D “to gather” and derivations (356; Syriac and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic “to inhibit, close”);¹⁰⁶ √qsr “to be short” and derivations (380; < Canaanite?; elsewhere “to be sick”);¹⁰⁷ ܠܥܘܩܝܢ “immediately” (415; elsewhere “equally”).¹⁰⁸
- d. Collocations: none
- e. Words and verbal roots: √bld “to frighten, upset” and derivations (49); √glg D, Dt “to chatter, boast, praise” (73); ܠܥܘܒܝܢ “loaf, cake” (129); √hps G “to search, dig” (136);¹⁰⁹ ܘܥܘܒܝܢ “upright” and derivations (168; < Canaanite); ܘܥܘܒܝܢ “something” (175); √lhš G “to press” and derivations (198);¹¹⁰ ܠܘܬ “fate, share” (255); √shn C “to possess, hold” (282);¹¹¹ √'yny “to guard, watch” (307); √psql “to make an agreement” (336);¹¹² √šwq G “to be distressed” and derivations (351; < Canaanite); √qrš G “to rise early” (384); ܘܥܘܒܝܢ “lamb” and feminine equivalent (388); derivations of √šgg G “to err” (413);¹¹³ ܘܥܘܒܝܢ “pustule” (431).

103 Attestations in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic are restricted to the Gt stem Participle (Sokoloff 2002, 755); The meaning “to know” is not securely attested in Syriac, cf. Sokoloff 2009, 921.

104 JPA and SamAr also attest to the feminine counterpart “aunt”.

105 The hapax attestations in both Qumran Aramaic and Nabataean demonstrate that the meaning existed in previous language stages of Aramaic. However, they can also be interpreted as colloquial (viz. Western Aramaic) intruders in these post-Achaemenid Official Aramaic idioms.

106 Attestations of √šmt D “to gather” in bSanh 109b belong to a quote from a Palestinian source, cf. Sokoloff 2002, 967.

107 Note that in SamAr the root is restricted to the Targum, perhaps suggesting a literary loan, cf. Tal 2000, 793-94.

108 Syriac attests to the Western Aramaic meaning, but adds an adverbial affix, ܘܥܘܒܝܢ (Sokoloff 2009, 1526).

109 An attestation in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (Sokoloff 2002, 478) is best booked as a literary loan from Mishnaic Hebrew.

110 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 1: 216 on a form of the root.

111 The basic root is Western Aramaic, but it is not productive in CPA, which rather uses the variant √swšn, see below section 3.2.4.

112 Müller-Kessler 1991, 6.

113 Sokoloff 2017, 618 s.v. *šghh*; Tal 2000, 871 s.v. *šgy*.

3.2.2 Western Aramaic Lexical Items with Partial Attestation

I distinguish between items unattested in the third dialect (indicated by ∅) and cases in which the third dialect attests to a different form (viz. where the item is not representative of the Western Aramaic group as a whole).

- a. Phonological peculiarities: ܘܫܐ “also” (8; SamAr and elsewhere ܘܫܐ *af*);¹¹⁴ √^lty C “to come” (34; SamAr and elsewhere √^lty);¹¹⁵ ܘܠܝ “but” (63; against ܘܠܝܢ in JPA and elsewhere); ܘܝܢܐ “perhaps” (89; JPA and elsewhere ܘܠܝܢܐ); √^hzn “to strengthen” (124; against JPA √^hsm, Syriac √^hsn); ܠܘܠܝܐ “spider” (173; SamAr ∅; Syriac with *g*);¹¹⁶ √swd C “to testify” (281; JPA and elsewhere √shd); √šwšy “to destroy” (421; JPA and elsewhere with *y*).
- b. Morphological peculiarities: ܘܠܝܢܐ “if (counterfactual)” (17; < ^lillū + ^līt, paralleled by SamAr ܘܠܝܢܐ “if” < ^lin + ^līt; unattested in JPA);¹¹⁷ ܠܘܠܝܐ “gift” (252; JPA and elsewhere without *o/u*).
- c. Semantic peculiarities: √nmr D “to adorn, embroider” (266; JPA and elsewhere “to be spotted”); ܘܠܝܢܐ “floor, storey, roof” (399-400; root in SamAr and elsewhere “to bind”, in other contexts).¹¹⁸
- d. Collocations: √^lrk + rūh “to be patient” (9; JPA ∅);¹¹⁹ ܠܘܠܝܐ “until, as far as” (301; SamAr ∅);¹²⁰ √qwm + ^lm G “to meet” (366; SamAr ∅).¹²¹
- e. Words and verbal roots: ܘܠܝܢܐ “time, period” (31; SamAr ∅);¹²² ܠܘܠܝܐ “hunchbacked” (67; SamAr ∅);¹²³ √dw^l C “to sweat” (83; SamAr ∅; Syriac and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic

114 Tal 2000, 55.

115 In CPA the form with *t* is common, whereas it is rare in JPA. Note that SamAr also attests to a single form with *t*, Tal 2000 342.

116 Sokoloff 2017, 271; *SL*, 211.

117 For the SamAr form cf. Stadel 2014, 170. The CPA form provides another piece of evidence for the semantic bleaching of *’it* in Western Aramaic, cf. Stadel 2013b, 340.

118 But the meaning “to cover” is marginally attested in SamAr, though not in an architectural context, cf. Tal 2000, 836.

119 For SamAr cf. Tal 2000, 62. The collocation is also attested in the Hebrew of Ecclesiastes 7:8 and Sirach 5:11.

120 In SamAr, the form ܠܘܠܝܐ “as far as” seems to be restricted to word-for-word translations in the Targum, cf. Tal, *DSA*, 463.

121 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 2B: 219.

122 Possibly a Hebraism, according to Kaufman, *CAL*, s.v.

123 JPA also attests to a variant with *š*. SamAr ܘܠܝܢܐ “hunchbacked” (Tal 2000, 155) could possibly be related.

have $\sqrt{d}t$);¹²⁴ ܡܘܠܢ “outer garment” (130; SamAr \emptyset); \sqrt{trs} G “to encircle” (154; SamAr \emptyset);¹²⁵ ܥܘܢܐ “sprout” (160; SamAr \emptyset);¹²⁶ ܥܘܢܐ “gnat” (169; SamAr \emptyset); \sqrt{kw}^s Gt “to feel sorrow” (176; JPA \emptyset);¹²⁷ ܕܘܥܩܐ “hard biscuit” (183; SamAr \emptyset);¹²⁸ $\sqrt{lw}k$ D “to soil” (196; JPA has the variant $\sqrt{lk}k$; SamAr \emptyset);¹²⁹ ܥܘܪܐ “cedar” (201; JPA ܥܘܪܐ “pine needle wool”; SamAr \emptyset);¹³⁰ ܥܘܪܐ “blow, stroke” (238; SamAr \emptyset ; elsewhere the root has the general meaning “to put aside” etc.);¹³¹ ܕܘܥܩܐ “column, standing stone” (243; JPA \emptyset);¹³² ܕܘܥܩܐ “patch, piece of cloth” and variant form (248; SamAr \emptyset); ܥܘܪܐ “cup” (286; SamAr \emptyset);¹³³ \sqrt{dr} “to hoe” (SamAr \emptyset);¹³⁴ ܥܘܪܐ “darkness” (321; JPA \emptyset); \sqrt{pry} G “to run, hurry” (340; SamAr \emptyset); ܕܘܥܩܐ “morsel of bread” (345; SamAr \emptyset); ܥܘܪܐ “gravel, pebbles” (359; < Canaanite; SamAr \emptyset);¹³⁵ $\sqrt{qr}t^i$ “to leap” (382; SamAr \emptyset); ܥܘܪܐ “dust” (387; JPA \emptyset);¹³⁶ $\sqrt{šn}š$ Gt “to be restricted” (438; SamAr \emptyset).¹³⁷

124 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 5: 210.

125 Pace Kaufman, CAL, s.v., I do not think that the dubious attestation of the verbal root in SamAr (Tal 2000, 325) should be counted as cognate.

126 Sokoloff 2017, 254.

127 Following Kaufman, CAL, s.v., I take SamAr \sqrt{kw}^s Gt “to be rebuked” (Tal 2000, 383) to be cognate with the CPA form.

128 For JPA, cf. the attestation in yPes 2:2 (28d), in Aramaic context.

129 Müller-Kessler 1991, 8. For JPA, cf. Sokoloff 2017, 306-7. The only attestation in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (Sokoloff 2002, 583) is conjectural and could be influenced by Mishnaic Hebrew.

130 Sokoloff 2017, 299.

131 I assume that the word was present in JPA since it is attested in the Amoraic Hebrew of the Tanḥuma (י״ח שׁוׁה ה״י, paragraph 3).

132 The noun is also attested in earlier dialects.

133 The word is known from Qumran Aramaic, where it could be interpreted as an intruder from the Western Aramaic vernacular. The noun survives as a substrate word in Arabic dialects of Syria-Palestine, cf. Hopkins 1995, 41-3.

134 For CPA, the root is only attested in the recently published sections of Proverbs, Müller-Kessler 2019, 160. For JPA, cf. Sokoloff 2017, 446-7.

135 Also a substrate word in Arabic dialects of Syria-Palestine, cf. Hopkins 1995, 43-9 and al-Salameen, 2016, 58 with an additional attestation from Wādī Mūsā in Jordan.

136 Müller-Kessler 1991, 6.

137 I interpret the rare Jewish Babylonian Aramaic verbal form (Sokoloff 2017, 1166) as a denominalization (D-stem!) of ܥܘܪܐ < Rabbinic Hebrew עָרַע.

“to count, finish” and derivations (288);¹⁴⁷ ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ “branch, shoot” (302); ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ “counsel” (307; < Canaanite; SamAr Ø);¹⁴⁸ √pšpš “to search, examine” (343); √šhb G “to quarrel” and derivations (352; SamAr Ø);¹⁴⁹ ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ “few, a little, small amount” (353-4); √šlhb “to redden, burnish” and derivations (355; SamAr Ø);¹⁵⁰ ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ “north” (358; < Canaanite);¹⁵¹ √qbl G “to become dark” (361);¹⁵² ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ “east(wind)” (362; < Canaanite; SamAr Ø);¹⁵³ √qrš G “to rise early” and derivations (384); ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ “winnowing fork” (399; < Canaanite; SamAr Ø; JPA ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ/ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ/ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ);¹⁵⁴ ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ “twisted” (424);¹⁵⁵ ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ “song” (428);¹⁵⁶ ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ “dawn, daybreak” (442; JPA and SamAr Ø);¹⁵⁷ ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ “abomination” (443).¹⁵⁸

3.2.4 Unique Christian Palestinian Aramaic Lexical Items

The additional section F) *hapax legomena* contains forms of uncertain meaning that are attested only once. Since these could be corruptions, I indicate whether they come from a manuscript of the early or late phase of CPA.

147 I consider Jewish Babylonian Aramaic √skm C “to agree” (Sokoloff 2002, 810) to be a literary loan from Rabbinic Hebrew.

148 A literary loan from Hebrew in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, and possibly also in other Jewish dialects.

149 As per Kaufman, CAL, s.v. šhb, in Targumic Aramaic there is only one attestation of the variant root √šhb (which is also known from JPA).

150 Pace Tal 2000, 731, the SamAr forms contain no indication of the root √šlb in that dialect. Synchronically, they are to be parsed as √šlb “to burn, be red, afflicted by disease”, viz. this might be another case of micro-variation in the dialect group.

151 Müller-Kessler 1991, 8. The noun is used in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic as a literary loan from Hebrew.

152 I assume that the single attestation in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (Sokoloff 2002, 980) is a literary loan, perhaps from Targumic Aramaic.

153 Müller-Kessler 1991, 8. Note that the CPA attestation in Jonah 4:8 does not mirror the meaning of the Greek (πνεύματι καύσωνος) and the Peshitta, but conforms to Targum Jonathan (and the Hebrew text). The attestation in bSanh 18b (Sokoloff 2002, 1010) appears in a passage with nouns in the absolute state and Imperfects with the y-prefix and is therefore hardly genuine Jewish Babylonian Aramaic.

154 Another case of micro-variation in the western dialect group. The JPA form survives as a substrate word in Arabic dialects of Syria-Palestine, cf. Neishtadt 2018, 231-5.

155 Western Aramaic according to Kaufman, CAL, s.v. The other dialects attest to additional derivations of the root.

156 In Syriac restricted to the name of Canticles.

157 Attested in Biblical Aramaic, Daniel 6:20.

158 The other Western Aramaic dialects attest to different derivations of the root. Jewish Babylonian Aramaic ܠܘܩܘܣܝܢ (Sokoloff 2002, 1040) is a literary loan from Hebrew.

- a. Phonological peculiarities: ܚܘܢܐ “hyena” (3; JPA and SamAr Ø; Eastern Aramaic with *p*); ܘܗܛܢ G “to embalm” and derivations (125; JPA, SamAr and elsewhere ܘܗܛܢ);¹⁵⁹ ܘܠܟܘܟ Gt “to respect” (173; JPA and SamAr Ø; Syriac ܘܠܟܢܟ);¹⁶⁰ ܘܨܘܗܢ “to possess, hold” (282; JPA and SamAr ܘܨܗܢ); ܘܨܪܫܝܡ “Seraphim” (292; JPA and Syriac without *w*);¹⁶¹ ܘܘܘܕܢ G “to remember” (302; JPA and SamAr Ø; Syriac ܘܘܘܕܢ); ܘܘܘܢܘܢ “family” (415; JPA and SamAr Ø; elsewhere ܫܪܒܗ);¹⁶² ܘܘܘܫܗ “to use” and derivations (425; JPA and SamAr Ø; elsewhere ܘܗܫܗ); ܘܘܘܫܗ “abyss” (451; elsewhere with *h*).
- b. Morphological peculiarities: ܠܘܫܝܡ “the thighs” (442; elsewhere plural ܫܩܝܢ);¹⁶³ ܘܘܘܠܕ “infant” (454; elsewhere ܝܢܘܩ);¹⁶⁴ ܘܘܘܕ “saw” (460; elsewhere with *m*- or *n*-).¹⁶⁵
- c. Semantic peculiarities: ܘܘܘܩܩ Gt “to contradict” and derivation (114; elsewhere “to be upright” and similar);¹⁶⁶ ܘܘܘܫܘܟܘܟ G “to forge metal” (197; elsewhere “to knead”);¹⁶⁷ ܠܘܘܫܘܟܘܟ “slope” (215; elsewhere ܘܘܘܩܩ “to stagger, leap for joy”);¹⁶⁸ ܘܘܘܘܩܩܘܩ “ship’s tackle” (430; elsewhere “completion” and similar).¹⁶⁹
- d. Collocations: ܘܘܘܘܩܩ “by means of, via” (65).
- e. Words and verbal roots: ܠܘܘܟܘܟ “a dish, bowl” (66); ܘܘܘܘܩܩ “mediation, chattering” (76); ܘܘܘܘܩܩ G “to dare, attempt” (94);¹⁷⁰ ܠܘܘܟܘܟܘܟܘܟ “ant” (129);¹⁷¹ ܠܘܘܟܘܟܘܟܘܟ “moisture” (199; < Canaanite); ܘܘܘܘܩܩ “clever” (218);¹⁷² ܘܘܘܘܩܩ “thicket, wood”

159 As Müller-Kessler 2003, 443 points out, ܘܗܛܢ might be attested once in SamAr.

160 Kaufman, CAL, s.v. has compared the Syriac ܘܠܟܢܟ, which is a better fit than ܘܠܟܘܟ (*pace* Sokoloff 2014a, 173). The categorization above follows this etymology. However, if the root was cognate with *mkyk* “low, humble”, one would have to assume a common root (and the entry should be delete from our list).

161 The nominal pattern of the CPA form is probably due to contamination from ܘܘܘܩܩܘܩ “cherubs”. But cf. the Samaritan Hebrew pronunciation *šārof* for the snake from Numbers 21, Ben-Ḥayyim 1977, 274.

162 ܠܘܘܟܘܟܘܟ is also the more common form in CPA, cf. Sokoloff 2014b, 422.

163 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 1: 216.

164 The common ܘܘܘܩܩ is also marginally attested in CPA, cf. Sokoloff 2014a, 164. Cp. also ܘܘܘܩܩ in Tannaitic Hebrew.

165 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 5: 211; Müller-Kessler 2021a, 220.

166 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 5: 209.

167 Müller-Kessler 1991, 6.

168 In CPA, the meaning of the root is restricted to downward movement.

169 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 2B: 220.

170 Müller-Kessler 2021a, 217.

171 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 5: 210; Müller-Kessler 2021a, 220. The form is probably cognate with JPA ܘܘܘܩܩܘܩ “a disease” (Sokoloff 2017, 458). The Syriac ܘܘܘܩܩܘܩ also carries the meanings of both “ant” and “eczema”, Sokoloff 2009, 1538.

172 Probably not related to the common ܘܗܪܕ “to tremble”.

- (281);¹⁷³ √sll Dt “to be poured as libation” and derivations (288);¹⁷⁴ √plm Gt “to be amazed” (spelled with inverted ʕ) and derivations (332);¹⁷⁵ √ṣṣṣ “type of small boat” (371); √ṣṣṣ “self” (372);¹⁷⁶ √ṣṣṣ “beam” (384; < Canaanite?);¹⁷⁷ √ṣṣṣ “a kind of locust” (390); √šlp G “to urge, do previously” (435, < Arabic?);¹⁷⁸ √špt D “to trouble” (440); √ṣṣṣ “usage, service” (441);¹⁷⁹ √štr Dt “to remain” (447);¹⁸⁰ √ṣṣṣ “furrow” (456; < Canaanite).
- f. *hapax legomena*: √ṣṣṣ “a rough place” (7-8; early MS); √glr D “?” (74; late MS); √ṣṣṣ “young man(?)” (103; early MS); √ṣṣṣ “care, order” (137; early MS);¹⁸¹ √ḥṭp Gt “to benefit” (143; early MS); √yʿr C “to be in danger” (164; late MS); √ṣṣṣ “beam (of light)” (200; early MS);¹⁸² √ṣṣṣ “small vessel” (248; early MS); √mrš C “to become insensitive(?)” (249; early MS); √sym C “to be bright(?)” (285; late MS); √pwr Ct “to be enraged” (324; late MS); √ṣṣṣ “target” (349; late MS); √spd C “to jump(?)” (357; late MS); √ṣṣṣ “bridle” (360; late MS); √ṣṣṣ “tendril” (372; early MS);¹⁸³ √ṣṣṣ “a kind of locust” (375; late MS); √rhṣ Gt “to be set over” (406; early MS);¹⁸⁴ √ṣṣṣ “hotness” (414; late MS); √ṣṣṣ “flood(?)” (426; early MS); 446) “(?)” √ṣṣṣ; late MS).

173 Perhaps a *plurale tantum* noun.

174 Müller-Kessler 1991, 6.

175 Pace Tal 2000, 100, a connection with the rare SamAr √blm “to be foolish(?)” is doubtful. Kaufman, CAL, s.v. considers the CPA root a variant of √blm “to muzzle, silence”.

176 Müller-Kessler 2021a, 217.

177 The noun is attested in Biblical Hebrew. If not a substrate word, one could think of a variant form of Syriac and JPA *gšwr* “beam”.

178 Müller-Kessler 1991, 7. For the possibility of early influence from Arabic cf. Stadel 2021, 295.

179 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 5: 210; Müller-Kessler 2021a, 217.

180 This is a secondary root derived from an original t-stem of √šʿr. Kaufman, CAL, s.v. notes that the same root is also attested in the Late Jewish Literary Aramaic of Targum Job.

181 Müller-Kessler 2003, 436.

182 Müller-Kessler, Sokoloff 1996-99, 5: 210.

183 Müller-Kessler 2021a, 220.

184 Why this root was booked as √rʿy escapes me.

Abbreviations

CAL = Kaufman, *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon*

CPA = Christian Palestinian Aramaic

JPA = Jewish Palestinian Aramaic

SamAr = Samaritan Aramaic

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