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IN JEWISH EASTERN ARAMAIC

BY
TAPANI HARVIAINEN

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DIGLOSSIA IN JEWISH EASTERN ARAMAIC

The Aramaic of Targumim, incantation bowls, tractate Nedarim, and Geonim vs. standard Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic

In his doctoral dissertation *The Aramaic dialect of Nedarim*, Solomon F. Rybak¹ has dealt the grammatical, lexical, and orthographic features which distinguish this tractate² from standard Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic (= BTA). Rybak has collected earlier statements of differences between Nedarim and other tractates,³ collated this material with a great number of manuscripts and medieval quotations⁴ in order to reveal the text tradition as reliably as possible, and demonstrated that the distinctive features are present in all parts of Nedarim, although they represent three centuries of Amoraic discussions as well as later additions.⁵ Furthermore, he has compared these peculiarities of Nedarim with BTA, Geonic Aramaic, and Targumic Aramaic (i.e. Onqelos and Jonathan). The results can be summarized in the form of the following tables:⁶

A. Features in common with Geonic Aramaic as opposed to BTA:

1. Assimilation in contact⁷

אנת "you" sg., masc. & fem.

vs. את⁸

1 Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Bernard Revel Graduate School, Yeshiva University, New York, June 1980. An authorized facsimile printed by microfilm/xerography in 1982 by University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor - London, 8021253.

2 These differences are at least partly shared by the tractates Nazir, Temura, Me^cila, Keritot, and Tamid. Rybak, p. 1; J.N. Epstein (אפשטיין), דקדוק ארמית בבליית (A Grammar of Babylonian Aramaic. Jerusalem 1960), p. 14.

3 Rybak, p. 2-20. Rashi (1040-1104) seems to be the first scholar to note that there is a difference between Nedarim and BTA, see Rybak, p. 2.

4 List of these sources, Rybak, p. 22-50.

5 idem, p. 74-78.

6 For details, occurrences etc., see idem, p. 82-116.

7 The wording of headings is that of Rybak.

8 According to Rybak this form also occurs in the Targumim.

אנהתא "woman"	vs. אתתא ¹
באנפי "before"	באפי ¹
הקדמא sg. masc.; קדמייתא pl. fem. "first" ^{1,2}	קמא, קמייתא
2. Assimilation at a distance	
הלין pl. "these" ³	הני
-זיל "belonging to" ⁴	-דיד
לחמא "bread" ^{1,5}	נהמא
3. Deletion - Medial	
הדא sg. fem. "this" ^{1,6}	הא
4. Deletion - Final	
ין- pl. masc. absolute ending ^{1,7}	י-
כון-, הון-, יכון-, יהון- poss. suffixes ^{1,8}	ייהו-, יכו-, יהו-, כו-
תון-, יתון- verbal suffixes ^{1,9}	יתו-, תו-
קאים "stands" ¹	קאי
עם "something" ¹	מיד
ת- third pers. sg. fem. past ending ^{1,10}	ת-/א-
תמיר "it was taught (?)" ¹¹	מירתיא
תור "again"	תו

1 According to Rybak this form also occurs in the Targumim.

2 Also קמא and קמייתא occur in the variant readings of Nedarim, see Rybak, p. 81.

3 Alongside הני in the Vilna text and competing with הני and the earlier form אלין in the variant readings, see idem, p. 82
The Targumim employ אלין or האלין, Geonic Aramaic הלין and אלין, idem.

4 Preferred in Nedarim over the BTA -דיד; -זיל is widely used also in the Targumim, idem, p. 83.

5 נהמא appears in Nedarim only in the variant readings, idem, p. 84.

6 Well attested in Nedarim, but competes in the variant readings with the BTA הא, idem, p. 85.

7 In MSS and printed editions at times abbreviated by a stroke (י-) which could later lead to the substitution of ך or ם, on the one hand, or to the elimination of the stroke (i.e. BTA forms), on the other, idem, p. 86.

8 Well attested in the text and the variant readings of Nedarim; the BTA form also appears, idem, p. 87.

9 Fuller forms are evident alongside the standard BTA ones in Nedarim, idem, p. 88.

10 The text and the variant readings of Nedarim usually appear to preserve the final consonant, idem, p. 91.

11 The meaning is not safe. According to the variant readings of Nedarim מירתיא is a variant of (earlier) תמיר, idem, p. 92.

5. Deletion - Medial, Final

הדין sg. masc. "this"¹ vs. האי

6. Cliticization

על preposition ^{2,3}	-א
לא איח "there is not" ⁴	ליכא, לית
תלה עשרי "thirteen" ⁵	תליטר
כד "when" ²	-כד
כי ד "like that" ⁶	-כד

7. Lexicon

הי דין sg. masc. "which"⁷ הי מיניה

8. Jargon

הכי "because of this" ⁸	משום הכי
מיחיבי "they respond" ⁹	תא שמע, תנן
קתני "he learns"	"Sir said" אמר מר

9. Orthography

מיכן "from here" ¹⁰	מכאן
היידנא "now" ¹¹	האיידנא

1 The Targumim employ both the form הדין and הדין. In Nedarim הדין is well attested alongside the BTA form האי, a fact which indicates a text in transition. In Geonic Aramaic הדין is still preserved. Rybak, p. 94-95.

2 This form also occurs in the Targumim.

3 על often remains in Nedarim alongside -א. The change does not occur in Karaite Aramaic at all; על is typical of Geonic Aramaic. Idem, p. 96.

4 Attested in Nedarim alongside the BTA ones. The uncontracted forms are also found in the Targum to the Psalms and in Geonic Aramaic. Idem, p. 97.

5 Targumim: תלה עטר, idem, p. 98.

6 Appears very often in Nedarim and the variant readings. -כי ד is not used in the Targumim. Idem, p. 100.

7 Appears twice in Nedarim (and once in Keritot). Targumim: אידין. Idem, p. 101.

8 מטרול ד- occurs in Nazir and in the Munich MS of Nedarim. -טרול ד- is found in the Targum to the Psalms. Idem, p. 102.

9 מוחיבי is a typical Geonic variant, idem, p. 103, fn. 128.

10 The spelling has been preserved in the variant readings of Nedarim, idem, p. 105.

11 Found in the variant readings; very common in Geonic and Karaite Aramaic, idem, p. 106.

B. Features of Nedarim as opposed to Geonic Aramaic and BTA:

דרהיט ותני "rushes and learns" ¹	vs. ∅
הינן pl. masc. "they" ²	נינהו, אינהו
הנין pl. fem. "those" ³	הנך
יאות "well" ⁴	שפיר ⁴
תובעי "let it be asked" (ליה) ⁵	תיקו "let it stand" ⁵

C. Features of Nedarim in common with Geonic Aramaic and BTA:

- There seem to be no syntactical features in the language of Nedarim which would deviate from those found in the standard tractates.⁶
- The use of the verbs נקט and נטב does not deviate from that of the standard tractates.⁷
- *Nota dativi* - ניהל- is found in the text and in variant reading of Nedarim.⁸
- הימך sg. masc. "from you" appears only in Nedarim, but other inflected forms of this preposition (-הימ) are found throughout BTA.⁹
- א indicating a medial [ā] vowel is well attested in the text and in variant readings of Nedarim. However, word finally ה is employed in this function.¹⁰

D. Features of Nedarim in common with BTA as opposed to Geonic Aramaic:

- With few exceptions ל- is the ending of the pl. masc. emphatic status in BTA. In Nedarim the final stroke (ל־) could hide the presence of

1 Occurs only in a Geniza fragment of Nedarim and in Me^cila. Rybak, p. 107.
 2 אינן and אינן are found only in the variant readings of Nedarim. In Geonic and Targumic Aramaic only the form אנון is attested. Idem, p. 108.
 3 Appears once in Nedarim and is found only in Syriac, idem, p. 109.
 4 The adjectival form יאלי or וואלי is found in the variant readings. The adverb יאות is attested three times in BTA and is used in the Targumim; in Geonic Aramaic שפיר seems to occur both adverbially and adjectivally. Idem, p. 109.
 5 Both of them indicate an unresolved problem. Besides תיקו, תובעי is employed once in Nazir and once in Aboda Zara (texts in transition?). ל־ תובעי is used both in BTA and Geonic Aramaic. Idem, p. 110-111.
 6 So according to M. Schlesinger, *Satzlehre der aramäischen Sprache des babylonischen Talmuds* (Leipzig 1928), p. 309-310; Rybak, p. 112.
 7 As suggested by Z.W. Rabinowitz (רבינוביץ), בארץ, התפשטות התלמוד הבבלי בארץ, (ירושלים י', 1913, עמ' 233-254) ישראל.
 8 Pace C. Levias (*A Grammar of the Aramaic Idiom Contained in the Babylonian Talmud*, Cincinnati 1900, p. 2); Rybak, p. 113.
 9 Pace B.M. Lewin (10 עמ' ,1942, נדרים, אוצר הגאונים, לוינ, ב.מ. לוינ); Rybak, p. 113.
 10 According to E.Y. Kutscher (מחקר דקדוק הארמית של התלמוד הבבלי, קוטטר, 174-173 עמ' ,1962, 26 לשוננו), the use of א as the counterpart of a medial [ā] is characteristic of reliable Talmudic manuscripts; Rybak, p. 114.

the final \aleph or allow for the substitution of the absolute ending ן- . However, the tractate Nazir discloses an example of יֵא^- (חבריֵא 59a). In Targumic and Geonic Aramaic יֵא^- is retained.¹

- The object particle $\text{יֵת}^-/\text{-יֵת}$ is found only with pronominal suffixes in Nedarim and the standard tractates. In Targumic and Geonic Aramaic יֵת is common with or without the pronominal suffixes.²

When compared with BTA, the distinctive features of Nedarim represent a more archaic type of development; many of them are shared by both Targumic and Geonic Aramaic³ which, however, are not mutually identical.⁴ On the other hand, the dialect of Nedarim is similar in many respects only to Geonic Aramaic.⁵ However, יֵאוּח occurs only in Nedarim and the Targumim but not in Geonic Aramaic,⁶ while the plural ending of masculine nouns in the emphatic status is י^- in Nedarim and BTA but יֵא^- in both Targumic and Geonic Aramaic.⁷ In addition to that, certain forms of Geonic Aramaic are analogous to Official Aramaic but not to that of the Targumim.⁸

Rybak (p. 4-15, 117-118) enumerates the following suggestions to explain the origin of the exceptional features found in Nedarim; they reflect:

- (a) the original Aramaic of Nedarim once common to the entire Talmud (Levias 1900; De Vries)⁹
- (b) the Aramaic of Pumbedita (Rabbinowitz; Levias 1930)¹⁰

1 Rybak, p. 115.

2 -ל may also indicate the direct object in both Nedarim and BTA, idem, p. 116.

3 $\text{תון-}/\text{כון-}$, יין- , יין (?), הדא , לחמא , דיל- , האלין-אלין-הלין , קדמאה ייתון (?), על , כד , see above, p. 4-5.

4 Geonic אמטול , אנה , אנתחא , באנפי , תוב and לא אית do not appear in Targumic Aramaic, see above, p. 3-5, and Rybak, p. 120-121.

5 הי דין and אנתחא , אנה , אמטול , תוב , לא אית ; the difference between the Targumic תלה עטר and תלה עשרי is hardly more than orthographic, see the list of Rybak (p. 121, fn. 14) where also הדא and הדין appear.

6 See above, p. 6 & fn. 4, and Rybak, p. 121.

7 See above, p. 6-7, and Rybak, p. 121 & fn. 16. יֵת also belongs to this group, see above.

8 אמטול (א), אנתחא , אנה , Rybak, p. 120 & fn. 11.

9 Nedarim neglected by the Geonim remained closer to its original form. Levias 1900, p. 2; B. De Vries (דה-פריסט), 26 לשוננו בלי בתלמוד בבלי המינוח בתלמוד בבלי (1962), p. 165-166.

10 Rabbinowitz 1913, p. 244-256; idem, שערי תורת בבל (Jerusalem 1961), p. 305; C. Levias (לויאט), דקדוק ארמית בבלי (New York 1930, reprint Jerusalem 1972), p. 17.

- (c) the Aramaic of Maḥoza (Epstein 1962)¹
 (d) the Aramaic of a late period (Weiss; Epstein 1960)²
 (e) the Aramaic of a Palestinian editor (Halevi)³
 (f) the dialect of a Palestinian editor and the usage of the Saboraic period (Lewin)⁴.

Among these explanations Rybak is inclined to accept the first one (a)⁵ according to which the entire Talmud was originally written in an Aramaic literary dialect closely resembling the Aramaic of the Targumim. This literary Aramaic was also used by the Geonim centuries later, and it thus appears older than BTA. Nedarim was completely neglected by the early Geonim and thus it probably has been copied fewer times than the standard tractates. Consequently it was less altered "to conform to popular speech during that period". In the later Geonic period the study of Nedarim was revived, but by that time "it was too late for Nedarim to catch up with those tractates which had already been substantially altered". Although the conforming process was still continued in favour of BTA forms in European study houses, the distinctive dialect of Nedarim could not be totally obliterated.⁶

M.H. Goshen-Gottstein has also touched this question in his article "The language of Targum Onqelos and the model of literary diglossia in Aramaic".⁷ He mentions the observations which indicate "that we encounter

1 J.N. Epstein (אפשטיין), *מבואות לספרות האמוראים* (Tel Aviv 1962), p. 69-70.

2 A. Weiss (וייס), *לקורות התהוות הבבלי* (Warsaw 1929, reprint Jerusalem 1970), p. 115 and 128 [according to him Nedarim contains both older (Amoraic) and late (editorial) features]; Epstein 1960, p. 15-16.

3 Y.I. Halevi (הלוי), *דורות הראשונים, ג'* (הלוי) (Pressburg 1897), p. 49.

4 Lewin 1942, p. 6, fn. 8, and p. 7.

5 For the suggestions b (Pumbedita) and c (Maḥoza) Rybak refers to R. Yehudai Gaon (c. 760) according to whom the idiom of Nedarim reflects many of the features of Geonic Aramaic as spoken in both the academies of Sura and Pumbedita: "it is difficult, therefore, to maintain that Nedarim reflects the idiom of only one particular center of learning" (Rybak, p. 122).

Since the distinctive Aramaic features of Nedarim are present also in Geonic Aramaic in general, and even in the Geonic text of Nedarim itself, these forms are hardly Palestinian; in addition some features of Nedarim (אנת) are not present in Palestinian Talmudic Aramaic. Thus the suggestions e and f are not probable. Idem, p. 123.

The theory of a later Geonic "literary enrichment" presented by Weiss (see also above, fn. 2) and Epstein cannot be confirmed nor denied on the basis of evidence collected by Rybak, see idem, p. 122-123.

6 Idem, p. 124-126.

7 *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37 (1978), p. 169-179.

within the same literary corpus different crystallizations of what may be termed "Babylonian Jewish Aramaic". This kind of evidence is provided by the tractates representing the type of Nedarim, post-Talmudic texts (such as Halakhoth pesuqoth), as well as by certain fixed (documentary, rhetorical, liturgical) expressions which deviate from which has been called standardic BTA.¹ This has been interpreted as a proof of literary polyglossia prevailing among the Babylonian Jewry; in fact we would encounter here a case of "pentaglossia" (or "hexaglossia"), i.e. two (or even three) variants of literary Aramaic (Targumic, BTA and "non-BTA"), spoken Aramaic dialect, as well as Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew. Although such a linguistic model is not impossible, Goshen-Gottstein concludes: "The literary polyglossia within Babylonian (sc. Babylonian Jewish, T.H.) Aramaic is still best accounted for if we assume that differences point back to different times and places. This is true on one level for the language of Proto-Onqelos and of legal or liturgical formulations embedded in the Babylonian Talmud, and it is true on quite a different level for the differences between various types of Babylonian Talmudic and Geonic Aramaic. The formula, difference in origin plus later coexistence, is still the best explanation."²

I would adduce one more source of evidence into this discussion. We have no decisive proof of the Jewishness of the so-called Jewish incantation bowls, although the use of "Hebrew" square characters as well as of Biblical citations found on them speak in favour of this view.³ The linguistic material provided by the texts on these bowls seems to offer a number of replies to the questions raised above, while, at the same time, leading to new difficulties.

1 Differences appearing only in vocalizations are not dealt with in this context, Goshen-Gottstein 1978, p. 173, fn. 21.

For various vowel systems of Babylonian Jewish Aramaic (which also remain beyond the scope of this paper), see D. Boyarin, On the history of the Babylonian Jewish Aramaic reading traditions: the reflexes of *a and *ā (*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, 1978, p. 141-160).

2 For details, see Goshen-Gottstein 1978, esp. p. 174-178.

"We are at loss, just as we were a generation ago, to invent a reason for the use of two different literary Aramaic idioms in Babylonia around 300-400 C.E.", idem, p. 175.

3 See C.D. Isbell, The story of the Aramaic magical incantation bowls (*Biblical Archeologist* 41:1, 1978, p. 5-16), p. 13-14; S.A. Kaufman, A unique magic bowl from Nippur (*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 32, 1973, p. 170-174); B.A. Levine, The language of the magical bowls (in J. Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia, V, Later Sassanian times*. *Studia Post-Biblica*, Vol. XV, Leiden 1970, p. 343-375), p. 343-344.

In the texts of "Jewish" incantation bowls we encounter most of those features which Rybak has presented as linguistic peculiarities of Nedarim. The following items are easily found with the help of the already classical *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* by James A. Montgomery:¹ דיילי (6:7, 10:3),⁵ קמדה (10:3),³ באנפי (13:5),² אינתתיה (9:4),² הדין (7:12, 28:4),⁶ הדא (1:4),⁷ קים (13:8),⁸ מינדעם (5:2),⁹ תוב (2:1),¹⁰ הדין (3:6),¹¹ על *passim*,¹² אינון (13:4),¹³ א as a medial [ā] e.g. in איסתרמתא (19:9),¹¹ מן קדאמיה (3:7)¹⁴. Both נקט and נטב are found in bowl texts.¹⁵ Additional occurrences are to be found with the help of the *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls* published by Charles D. Isbell.¹⁶ לחמא occurs in two bowls published by Gordon,¹⁷ לן- as the absolute ending of masculine plurals is usual in bowl texts, although ל- also is well attested.¹⁸ The same is true as regards the pronominal suffixes -כוון, -הון, -יוון, and -יהון¹⁹ as well as the verbal endings -תון and -יתון.²⁰ ת- is the perf. ending of sg. 3. pers. fem.²¹ כד "when" is used as in

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- 1 University of Pennsylvania, The Museum, Publications of the Babylonian Section, Vol. III. Philadelphia 1913.
 2 See also W.H. Rossell, *A Handbook of Aramaic Magical Texts* (Shelton Semitic Series, Number II. Ringwood Borough, New Jersey 1953), p. 24.
 3 See also Rossell 1953, p. 55.
 4 Idem, p. 31.
 5 Idem, p. 28.
 6 Idem, p. 29-30.
 7 Idem, p. 28.
 8 Idem, p. 74. קאים occurs in Isbell (see below, fn. 16) 7:11 [= Gordon 11:11, C.H. Gordon, *Aramaic incantation bowls* (*Orientalia*, Vol. X, 1941, p. 116-141, 272-280, 339-344), p. 273].
 9 See also Rossell 1953, p. 30.
 10 Idem, p. 61-62.
 11 Idem, p. 27-28.
 12 Idem, p. 57.
 13 Idem, p. 27.
 14 Idem, p. 20.
 15 See the vocabulary of Montgomery 1913, p. 295-296.
 16 Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), Dissertation Series 17. Missoula, Montana 1975 (henceforth: Isbell); glossary, p. 157-185.
 17 C.H. Gordon, Two Aramaic incantations (*Biblical and Near Eastern Studies. Essays in Honor of William Sanford LaSor*, ed. by Gary A. Tuttle. Grand Rapids, Michigan 1978, p. 231-244), ZRL 48:10, p. 233; Gordon 1941, BM 91776:11, p. 343.
 18 Rossell 1953, p. 18-19; without -ן: אסירי, זריזי, דיכרי, מחראשי, לי, א(י)ליה "these", for occurrences, see idem.
 19 Idem, p. 18-19, 38-39; without -ן: לפומיכני "you" pl. fem.
 20 Idem, p. 18-19, 46-48; without -ן: חלפתו.
 21 Idem, p. 47.

Nedarim.¹ The plural ending of the masc. *status emphaticus* is usually י- in bowl texts; יא- and ייה-² are also attested. Nevertheless, the last mentioned forms do not necessarily indicate that the old ending [-ayyā] was still retained. In Mandaic similar spellings reflect the plural ending [-i] and "alef" is only a spelling convention used also in the *st. cstr.* plural.³

In bowl texts the personal pronoun of sg. 2. pers. masculine is always אה. Contrary to that, ו is found in the feminine form אנהי as well as is the plurals אנהו (masc.) and אנהי / אנהין (fem.) (besides אהו, אהון; אהין, אהן).⁴ 'Etp^{ec}el of the root \sqrt{mr} does not occur in "Jewish" bowls⁵ but p^{ec}al with ר preserved in the end is usual in these texts.⁶ ע and ש appear in the numbers עשר עשר, חד עשר, תרי עשר and תריין עשר,⁷ while the bowl texts do not provide us with the Aramaic counterpart of "thirteen". כמא ד- is used as the conjunction "like that", "as" in one or two bowls, כי refers to a comparison "as", "like".⁸ אמטו להכי does not appear as such in bowls, but the forms מ(י)טול ד- and אמיטול ד-⁹ represent a parallel expression.

The contrary evidence, i.e. forms which are in agreement with BTA (and Targumim!) as opposed to Nedarim, consists of אה "you" masc. sg. (but cf.

1 See Rossell 1953, p. 61 and 67.

2 ייה- e.g. in שמיה T. Harviainen, An Aramaic incantation bowl from Borsippa. Another specimen of Eastern Aramaic "koiné". Appendix: A cryptographic bowl or an original fake? (*Studia Orientalia*, Vol. 51:14, 1981), in lines 1 and 11, p. 4-5.

3 See Rossell 1953, p. 36, and R. Macuch, *Handbook of Classical and Modern Mandaic* (Berlin 1965), p. 206, 219, 121-122.

4 See Rossell 1953, p. 26-27.

5 אהמר mentioned in the vocabulary of Montgomery 1913 (p. 282) is not quoted from a "Jewish" bowl; the reference (30:7) is an erroneous one *pro* 32:7, a Syriac bowl text. According to V.P. Hamilton (*Syriac Incantation Bowls*. Unpublished dissertation, Brandeis University, Department of Mediterranean Studies, 1971. An authorized facsimile, University Microfilms International, 1978, 71-30,130), text 4:7 (p. 101), this word is to be read אהקר "were uprooted".

6 See references in Rossell 1953, p. 123.

7 See *idem*, p. 19 and 33.

8 *Idem*, p. 60-61.

-ד כמא occurs in Isbell 22:6 (published by C.H. Gordon, An Aramaic incantation, *Annual of the American School of Oriental Research*, Vol. XIV, 1943, p. 141-143, line 6), in Isbell 19:6 (published by C.H. Gordon, Aramaic magical bowls in the Istanbul and Baghdad museums, *Archiv Orientalní*, VI, 1934, p. 319-334, 466-474, text G, line 6; מ of כמא is lacking), and in BM:91751:9 (Gordon 1941, p. 342).

9 See Rossell 1953, p. 57.

אנתי, אנתו and אנתין above, p. 11). In addition to that, there are a few forms of BTA besides those of the type of Nedarim. They are איתתא,¹ אפא,² דיד-³ (absolute ending of masc. plurals, see above, p. 10 & fn. 18), possessive and verbal suffixes without final ן (see above, p. 10 & fn. 19-20), תבו/חובו which may reflect the loss of the final [b],⁴ and כדשפיר "as is right" and כדנא "likewise"⁵ which resemble the BTA -כד "like that". The ending of the pl. masc. emphatic status has been presented above, p. 11.

As for the pairs ליח - לא איכא,⁶ הי מיניה - הי דין, ליכא - לא איכא,⁶ היאדנא - היידנא, מכאן - מיכאן, אמר מר - קתני,⁷ תא שמע / תנן - מיתבי,⁸ תיקו - תיבעי (ליה),¹¹ שפיר - יאות, הונך - הנין,¹⁰ נינהו/אינהו - הינן,⁹ (and דרהיט ותני), the bowl texts do not include a counterpart of either of them - topics dealt with in bowls deviate considerably from those of the Talmudic literature. Nor do the object particle ניהל- and the preposition הימ- (features of Nedarim in common with Geonic Aramaic and BTA) appear in our incantations.

The object particle יח is used either independently or with a pronominal suffix in bowl texts; this follows the usage of Targumic and Geonic Aramaic.¹²

Concluding, we may state that the characteristic features of the dialect

1 For references, see Rossell 1953, p. 24 and 124, nr. 62; occurs also in Targumim.

2 Idem, p. 124, nr. 60, and Isbell 58:7; occurs also in Targumim.

3 See Rossell 1953, p. 29-30.

4 Idem, p. 61-62.

Also the variation תורף - תורב in Isbell 7:7,8 (= Gordon 1941 11:7,8, p. 273) may speak in favour of a weakening of the final consonant.

5 See Rossell 1953, p. 59-61 and 67.

6 When combined with -ד the א of אית may disappear in bowl texts: דיתילוהן (according to Isbell 19:5 read ליהון), Rossell 1953, p. 30.

7 The prefix -ק does not occur in bowl texts known to me.

8 אהשתא and כען are their counterparts in bowls, Rossell 1953, p. 59.

9 הינין and הן proposed by Schwab (I & Q) are questionable in lack of textual facsimiles, see Rossell 1953, p. 27.

10 הנהון and הנון (Isbell 56:3,6 = C.H. Gordon, Aramaic and Mandaic Magical bowls, *Archiv Orientalni*, IX, 1937, p. 84-95, L:3,6) resemble Syriac more than BTA, Rossell 1953, p. 29.

11 שפיר in Montgomery 1913 13:7 (= Isbell 25:7) is an adjective.

12 Rossell 1953 (p. 37): "This usage of יח is a literary affectation from Biblical Aramaic, or, still more likely, the Targumim in dialects using יח. (Genuine dialect mixture is, of course, also conceivable)."

of Nedarim have close counterparts in bowl incantations. On the other hand, features of bowl texts in common with BTA as opposed to Nedarim are limited to אה which, however, is a Targumic form of this pronoun. Compared with the Targumim, the bowl texts use e.g. חרב and מ(א)מ(י)טול *pro* Targumic עור and בדיל, and from Geonic Aramaic they deviate e.g. through the employment of ל- in the emphatic status of masc. plural as well as through the pronoun אה. While the idiom of bowl texts¹ is not entirely identical with any of these other types of Aramaic, nevertheless, it clearly sides with Targumic and Geonic Aramaic as well as with the language of Nedarim against BTA which leaves the impression of a "younger" modification of Aramaic.

The "non-Babylonian" features of Babylonian Aramaic presented and reanalyzed by Sh. Friedman² are, according to him, dependent on the literary genre. Friedman has focused attention on the exceptional imperfect prefix -י (*pro* -נ or -ל),³ pronouns אנת, אנתו,⁴ and -יה as the fem. possessive suffix (*pro* ה-).⁵ In addition to them, he refers to other deviations from BTA: קדם, poss. suff. -הון, עלוהי, תרין / תרתין, הלין, ויהביון (with obj. suff.), *status absolutus* of the type בישו,⁶ the pers. suffix of perf. תון,⁷ and the possible occurrences of *haf^eel*.⁸

Friedman states that while a part of the -י examples given by Epstein⁹ are untrustworthy as evidence of genuine BTA this impf. prefix occurs a

1 It is more than likely that the bowl texts do not represent only one dialect; however, the differences are not very conspicuous and there is no special investigation of them.

For the "koiné" features, see Harviainen 1981, p. 23-24. "Koiné" features which - as far as I know - have not been found in other sources besides bowl incantations are the use of ל as the counterpart of Aramaic /ā/ (testifying to the labial realization, see also Boyarin 1978, p. 155-158), conformation of masc. plural nouns (and similar prepositions) supplied with possessive suffixes to the corresponding singular forms (יתביה, עליה 'over him'), and the confusion of genders occurring in pronominal suffixes of plural; for details, see *idem*, p. 19-22.

2 Sh. Friedman (פרידמן), -1973, 43, תרביץ, גבליה (ארמית בדקדוק ארמית בגבליה, עמ' 69-58, 1974).

3 *Idem*, p. 58-62.

4 *Idem*, p. 62-64.

5 *Idem*, p. 64-69.

6 These occur in the מטכת חלומות (Berakhot 55b-56a), see *idem*, p. 61-62.

7 Found in pleas (טענות) in particular, see *idem*, p. 64, fn. 33.

8 *Haf^eel* מהנפיקנא occurs also in a bowl text (Myhrman, line 12, see Montgomery 1913, p. 146), Rossell 1953, p. 54. See Friedman 1973-4, p. 64.

9 See Epstein 1960, p. 13, 21, 32, 79, 89, 96 and 101.

few times in certain literary contexts (a prayer, poetic expression, *semikha*-ceremony). More reliable cases are found in Talmudic mss. of the *מטכת חלומות* (Berakhot 55b-56b) dealing with the cure of bad dreams. This passage also contains other features of "Official Aramaic" (see above, p. 13, קדם etc.). The impf. prefix -ו is also found in bowl incantations.¹ In the Talmud the pronominal variants אנת and אנתו appear predominantly² in pleas (טענות) which were voiced orally in court, as well as in arguments mentioned by the Talmud as being valid claims. Such a context also reveals *status absolutus* forms without final ת-.

Contrary to these two features the possessive suffix יה- indicating the 3. pers. *feminine* of singular (ליה 'to her', מיניה 'from her', דעתיה 'her mind') is not incorporated with certain contexts; it is quite common in BTA (both in mss. and prints) as well as in Geonic and medieval texts. Corresponding feminine suffixes are found in Samaritan Aramaic³ and in Palestinian marriage contracts from the Cairo Geniza.⁴ The bowl incantations also include the very same form. According to Rossell this suffix is either ה- or וה-, the second one is attested in a bowl published by Gordon.⁵ However, the ו of the suffix goes back to Gordon's reading in a text where ו and י are sometimes rather similar. Since יה- has been proven to occur also as feminine, not even the hand-copy reproduced by Gordon leaves any place for hesitation: the correct reading is יה- (with the exception of ונקנינה, line 3, where there is no ו or י before ה).⁶ The confusion of the singular suffixes of the 3rd person has taken place also in Classical Mandaic where the masc. suffix is mostly used for the feminine as well;⁷ in Modern Eastern Aramaic both of the suffixes, masc.

1 See Harviainen 1981, p. 22.

2 Others belong to Nedarim or passages with a Palestinian colouring.

3 R. Macuch (*Grammatik des samaritanischen Aramäisch*. Studia Samaritana, Band IV, Berlin - New York 1982, p. 133) admits that the genders of suffixes are often mixed in Samaritan Aramaic; nevertheless, he accounts [-e] as feminine for the lack of grammatical consideration.

4 For details (Ben Ḥayyim and M. Friedman), see Friedman 1973-4, p. 64-65 & fn. 36-37.

5 Gordon 1941, text 6 [p. 124-127 & hand-copy, p. 136-138 (= Isbell 43, p. 102-103)], lines 1, 3 and 7: זרעוה, ביתוה, בקנינוה.
Rossell 1953, p. 21 and 39.

6 Gordon was misled by the context, cf. his note (1941, p. 126): "So... rather than the paleographically possible alternative בתיה פקניניה זרעיה, בתיה פקניניה זרעיה "his seed, his house and his property"."

7 See R. Macuch 1965, p. 158. However, the distinction ([ī] vs. [ā]) exists in Modern Mandaic, idem, p. 160.

[-u] and fem. [-o], go back to the same basic form.¹ Thus the feminine ending $\eta\text{-}$ seems to reflect one step in the coalescence of gender forms of pronominal suffixes, a phenomenon which has also left its traces in the treatment of plural suffixes of bowl incantations.²

With the exception of the feminine suffix $\eta\text{-}$, these non-BTA phenomena appear in contexts (cure of bad dreams) which closely resemble bowl incantations (dreams are often mentioned in them); on the other hand, we encounter them in claims and pleas which were voiced orally and recorded in this form.³ It is true that the claims may have also been rather conventional and formal in their oral wording. Thus the linguistic affinity of quite conventional bowl incantations to claims and dream texts would corroborate the conclusion of Friedman with regard to the existence of certain archaistic features in specific contexts.⁴

As for the topics, the bowl texts may well be classified in the realm of the formular language (cf. also above, p. 9). However, the inconsistency of their orthography, numerous mistakes, phonetic spellings, and linguistic peculiarities which deviate from the literary dialects of Aramaic⁵ point back to unlearned scribes who more or less wrote as they spoke.⁶ Consequently, we could anticipate that they would have mixed their

1 K.G. Cereteli (Tsereteli, Церетели), *Современный ассирийский язык* (Moscow 1964; also in Italian [Naples 1970], English [Moscow 1978], and German [Leipzig 1978]), p. 32.

However, [-e] indicates masc. and [-a] fem. in $\text{t}\ddot{\text{u}}\text{r}\ddot{\text{o}}\text{y}\ddot{\text{o}}$, see A. Siegel, *Laut- und Formenlehre des neuaramäischen Dialekts des Tūr Abdîn* (Beiträge zur semitischen Philologie und Linguistik, Heft 2. Hannover 1923, reprint Hildesheim 1968), p. 68.

2 For details, see Harviainen 1981, p. 19-21.

3 Friedman (1973-4, p. 61 and 62, fn. 25) also refers to the possibility of written dream books and claims.

4 Idem, p. 58-59 and 61-62.

On the other hand, we have to bear in mind that popular or vulgar writings of this type, as well as oral statements preserved in official records, represent a material which has often been evaluated as the most reliable evidence of a vernacular in contrast to the literary and more conservative language.

5 Rossell 1953 (p. 121): "The student will soon learn that the script of the bowl texts presents many problems, for each scribe has his own individual - often wretched - style." Idem (p. 13): "There is nothing rigid or unchanging in the rules of orthography."

For phonetic spellings and exceptional ("koiné") linguistic features, see Harviainen, 1981, p. 23-24.

6 Rossell 1953 (p. 13): "The fact that these men were often ignorant does not lessen the worth of our texts. Rather, the unlearned style with its many variations of spelling frequently reflects actual speech, thus throwing new light on the phonetics and other linguistic features of J(ewish)B(abylonian)A(ramaic)."

inherited incantation formulae with contemporary linguistic properties, i.e. with forms and words more or less resembling BTA. As we have seen above (p. 10-14), the opposite is true: the incantations reveal almost all of the "non-BTA" features discerned so far in other sources, while their BTA counterparts are lacking.

Now we are back to the fact that we encounter numerous different "crystallizations" inside of Jewish Eastern Aramaic in roughly the same period. (cf. above, p. 8-9). As for the chronology, the incantations have been dated to the 4th-6th centuries A.D.¹ which means that they were contemporary with the Babylonian Talmud; the Targumim (Onqelos and Jonathan) obviously go back to the 4th-5th centuries,² while the Geonic texts have been composed in 7th-11th centuries. If BTA were the youngest one among these crystallizations, no problem would arise: BTA which looks like the youngest one would represent the latest stage in the development of Jewish Eastern Aramaic and, since the Talmud had a prestige of its own, BTA was not bound to follow earlier literary and linguistic models. However, this is not the case. Targumic Aramaic, Nedarim and bowl incantations are well-nigh contemporary with BTA, on the one hand. On the other, Geonic texts are later than the Talmud but linguistically they do not cling to standard Talmudic Aramaic, although the decisions of the Geonim have been derived from the Talmud and its discussions. Despite the directive status of the contents, the linguistic typus of the Talmud was not qualified by the Geonim to be their vehicle of expression. Instead of BTA these sages (and their Karaitic opponents!) preferred the "non-Babylonian" language type which only sporadically appears in the Talmud. Although Geonic Aramaic is not identical with any of other "non-Babylonian crystallizations", numerous features in common have been presented (see above, p. 3-7). Furthermore, these features belong to the basic level of a language (pronouns, usual patterns of inflection, prepositions etc.), a level which, as a rule, is not easily affected by foreign influences. Consequently, Geonic Aramaic does not represent a model *towards* which BTA had developed from the earlier type of Aramaic.

1 See Neusner, V, 1970, p. 217 and the literature mentioned there, in fn. 1.

2 There is a quotation of Targum Jonathan (Jer. 2:2) in a bowl text, see Kaufman 1973, p. 170-174.

Standard Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic is now surrounded by four other, mutually closely related types of Aramaic of which one (Geonic) is later, one (Targumic) contemporary and also characterized by a certain prestige, one (Nedarim) a part of the same scholarly Talmudic tradition, and the fourth one (bowl incantations) also contemporary but popular and unorthodox.

On the basis of these observations I would propose a hypothesis which partly deviates from those suggested by Goshen-Gottstein (above, p. 9), Friedman (p. 13), Rybak and others (p. 7-8).

In order to fulfill their function the Targumim had to represent a dialect which was well comprehensible to the listeners and readers; nevertheless, these versions could include features which were literary and stylistically superior to the actual vernacular. Although the centuries have left their imprints, this type of Eastern Aramaic still survived during the Geonic period and was employed by the Geonim (cf. Levias, De Vries and Rybak, above, p. 7-8). Prior to that, incantation bowls, dream texts, and Nedarim (as well as other tractates resembling it) were written in dialects which - without being completely identical to either Targumic Aramaic or to one another - were nevertheless part of a cluster of similar idioms; the differences derive partly from a natural development of living vernaculars and partly from adherence to older literary conventions. The peculiarities of claim and other formulae may equally belong to this type of dialect group (cf. Friedman, above, p. 13-15).

The study of the Law created a new literary genre in the area of Jewish Eastern Aramaic. Thus the Talmudic scholars were not bound to follow a linguistic pattern fixed by predecessors. The Babylonian academies were located in Nehardea, Sura, Maḥoza, Neresh and Pumbedita which were urban centres.¹ As far as I know, we have no factual evidence which would verify that the Jewish Eastern Aramaic of towns differed from that or those of the countryside. However, if we resort to that which is known to us concerning the distribution of Arabic dialects to urban and rural varieties

¹ See J. Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia, II (The early Sasanian period)*. *Studia Post-Biblica*, Vol. XI, Leiden 1966), p. 248-249, and *IV (The age of Shapur II)*. *Studia Post-Biblica*, Vol. XIV, Leiden 1969), p. 185, 287 and 388; M. Beer, Pumbedita (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 13, Jerusalem 1971, c. 1384-1385).

- a phenomenon which seems to have prevailed in Arabic ever since the pre-Islamic ages¹ - this analogy offers us a natural explanation of the two main types of Jewish Eastern Aramaic.²

Since Hebrew was known to scholars, the Targumim were allowed to have their rural appearance.³ The more changed (i.e. developed or distorted) urban vernacular (augmented with trends of an academic slang)⁴, in contrast, was considered by the Talmudic scholars to be the most appropriated idiom for the recording of the new genre, viz. their discussions and decisions. If we now combine the composition of the standard tractates of the Talmud with the development of an urban dialect (or sub-dialects), there is no need to speculate that the language of these tractates has changed all the way from the type of Nedarim into BTA (cf. above, p. 7-8), nor is it necessary to ask what the model was towards which this change took place (above, p. 16). For one reason or another Nedarim (as well as other tractates resembling it) was composed in the rural dialect and it retained the non-BTA type of language in which certain non-scholarly texts (dream books, incantations) were also sometimes written by less educated people.

Finally, the relationship of Geonic Aramaic to BTA should be integrated into this hypothesis. I have referred above (p. 16) to the surprising fact that the Geonim, successors of Talmudic scholars, did not carry on the use of standard Talmudic Aramaic but preferred the non-BTA type which in the works of their predecessors occurs especially in the tractate which

1 The rise of Arabic diglossia has been accounted for the linguistic development taking place in towns, so irrespective of the differences of opinion concerning the date of this dichotomy (first century of the Islamic era vs. pre-Islamic times), see W. Fischer, *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie* (hrsg. von W. Fischer, Band I: Sprachwissenschaft, Wiesbaden 1982), p. 87-88 and the literature mentioned there.

The emergence of dissimilarity between the contemporary town and village dialects of Syro-Palestine is an open question; in Iraq and North Africa the varieties go back to migration waves of different times.

2 Urban and rural do not imply any connotations of rank value in these contexts; thus we have here no case of "Schulsprache" and "Vulgärdialekt", cf. Goshen-Gottstein 1978, p. 170-172 and 175.

3 A living reading tradition may also have impeded changes.

4 For lexical differences between the rabbis and ordinary people, see J. Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia, III (From Shapur I to Shapur II)*. *Studia Post-Biblica*, Vol. XII, Leiden 1968), p. 65-67, and idem, *V* (1970), p. 209-210 ("a sign of membership in the rabbinical estate").

they neglected, viz. in Nedarim. A solution to this question might be found in the history of Mesopotamia. After more peaceful times the Jews of the Sasanian empire fell victims to persecutions and restrictions in the second half of the 5th century (Yazdagird II and Peroz). The persecutions recurred during the reign of Kavad I (488-531), Hormizd IV (579-590) and Khusro II (591-628). In this period Jewish communities were destroyed and certain customs forbidden, the exilarchate was suppressed, and the academies were at times closed or they had to move new places.¹ Although we lack detailed facts, these circumstances could well have led to the absorption of an urban Jewish dialect with its rural, more conservative counterpart(s). When the Geonim renewed the Jewish literary activity in Mesopotamia in the 7th century, the urban dialect, BTA, had ceased to exist and was also in academies replaced by the rural Jewish Eastern Aramaic.² Since the Geonim did not pursue the compilation of the Talmud, they also introduced a new literary genre and were thus able to employ their vernacular in their writings without attempting to imitate the extinct BTA. Consequently, the rural Jewish dialect was henceforth to be called Geonic Aramaic.

Many pieces of this puzzle are imaginary but, I believe, the overall picture now appears quite clear.

1 For details, see G. Widengren, *The status of the Jews in the Sassanian empire* (*Iranica Antiqua*, Vol. 1, 1961, p. 117-162), p. 142-149, J. Neuser, *Babylonia* (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 4, Jerusalem 1971, c. 36-43), c. 41-43, and idem, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*, V (1970), esp. p. 60-72, 105-112 and 127-132.

2 Cf. the statement of R. Yehudai Gaon mentioned above, p. 8, fn. 5.

