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Studies in the syntax of Targum Jonathan to Samuel

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INTRODUCTION

1. PROLEGOMENA

One hundred and fifty years ago, in the latter part of the 19th century, the origin and history of Targum Onqelos [TO] to the Pentateuch and Targum Jonathan [TJ] to the Prophets became an important topic in the fields of Jewish studies and Aramaic philology. Whereas no one objected that these two corpora, sometimes referred to as the ‘Official Targums’, had received their final shape in Babylonia, disagreement arose as to whether TO and TJ were entirely Babylonian creations, or originally Palestinian compositions that had found their way to Babylonia at a later stage. The former point of view was maintained by prominent scholars such as A. Geiger, Z. Frankel and W. Bacher. When T. Nöldeke, who has rightly been described as the ‘first great master of Aramaic dialectology’,¹ put forward the latter point of view, no one could have suspected that the question of the date and place of origin of TO and TJ would become a topic of ardent scholarly exchanges for more than a century.

At present, a consensus of some kind reigns among scholars. Details of individual views may vary, but since E.Y. Kutscher’s work on the Genesis Apocryphon (GenApoc; 1Q20) in the 1950s Palestine has, with only a very few exceptions, become a part of the picture of TO and TJ in one way or another. However, even if the Palestinian component in the history and development of TO and TJ is now generally agreed upon, it has never been definitively demonstrated.

Another difficulty in the matter in hand is that in order to make their point the scholars involved in the debate operated at different levels, which were not always mutually intelligible. Geiger, Frankel, Luzzatto, Bach in the 19th century, and Kahle as late as in the 20th century, argued for a Babylonian origin on literary and religious grounds; linguistic considerations played hardly any role in the discussion. On the contrary, scholars such as Nöldeke, Dalman and Kutscher, who were proponents of a Palestinian origin, emphasized the importance of

¹ Goshen-Gottstein (1978: 170).

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the linguistic argument in the debate. Naturally, that observation is most sensible: one can hardly be convinced by a theory laying claim to the linguistic nature of a text if no linguistic arguments are actually brought to bear on the discussion. But as recent contributions to the debate show, despite Kutscher's important statement 50 years ago the introduction of linguistic considerations into the discussion has not been able to settle the matter any more than the non-linguistic arguments put forwards by other parties. As hinted at above, nowadays it is widely accepted that TO and TJ, or at least their language, have ultimately a Palestinian origin, but in the final analysis nobody *knows*.

Obviously, then, the next question is: what do we actually know about the language of TO and TJ? As Cook explains, '[t]wo facts are admitted by all parties: (1) that Onqelos and Jonathan, whatever their origin, had their final redaction in the East and bear a number of linguistic traces of this redaction; and (2) that, despite these Easternisms, the language as a whole is not much like the Eastern Aramaic known from the Babylonian Talmud or from Mandaic. Any theory of Onqelos/Jonathan's language must accommodate these data'.² Beyond these two facts, however, we are in troubled waters.

In view of the above, the aim of the present study is to contribute to the debate by presenting a treatment of certain essential syntactic aspects of the Aramaic of TJ. This treatment will be conducted along two axes: synchronic and diachronic/comparative. The various points of syntax to be dealt with in the present study will first be analysed synchronically, in order to gain as thorough an understanding as possible of the way they function in the Aramaic of TJ. Subsequently, these findings will be confronted with other types of Aramaic, in an attempt to learn more about the way the Aramaic of TJ relates to the broader context of Aramaic as a whole. The remaining parts of this introduction will deal in more detail with the way this study is envisioned.

First, as in any work of a comparative character it is essential to set the background of the discussion by clarifying the way the history and the development of the Aramaic language as a whole is to be understood in this study (section 2).

Subsequently, the current state of the discussion on the origin and linguistic nature of TO and TJ will be reviewed. To begin with, our assumptions on the relation between the Aramaic of TO and the Aramaic

² Cook (1994: 143).

of TJ will be briefly assessed (section 3.1); the next section will dwell at some length on the history of the debate on the language of TO and TJ (section 3.2) and, finally, the existing literature on the grammar of the Aramaic of TO and TJ will be assessed, with a special emphasis on its syntax (section 3.3).

The background having been set, the following section of the introduction will explain the scope and the limitations of this study. It will introduce the syntactic aspects to be dealt with and the way their treatment is to proceed in concrete terms (section 4.1), the methodology adopted to that end (section 4.2) and the corpus serving as basis for the investigation (section 4.3).

Finally, these introductory notes will be rounded off by a few practical remarks (section 5).

2. THE PHASES OF THE ARAMAIC LANGUAGE

The history and development of the Aramaic language has been understood in various ways by different generations of scholars. To be sure, this variation is due to the particularities of the views entertained by scholars on the linguistic peculiarities of the many Aramaic corpora that have reached us. Inevitably, our understanding of Aramaic is reliant on the linguistic material that we have at our disposal, and the discovery of a previously unknown body of texts is liable to alter profoundly the picture that we have of Aramaic as a whole — the findings at Qumran in the 1940s are a case in point.

An immediate result of the above is that the history and development of the Aramaic language has been charted, i.e. periodized, in a number of ways over the years.³ Within the present study, the history and development of Aramaic will be understood along the lines originally set out by Fitzmyer in the 1960s, which were later adopted and refined by other prominent scholars such as Kutscher and Greenfield, and which appear to have gained wide (though not universal) acceptance among Aramaicists since then.⁴ Fitzmyer's model can be outlined as

³ For a good, recent overview of the matter, cf. Gleßner (1995: 17ff.).

⁴ E.g. Kutscher (1970a; 1971); Greenfield (1976; 1978a); Kaufman (1997). An important exception is Beyer (1984) who favours a different classification.

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follows:⁵

- ±925 - ±700 BCE: Old Aramaic
- ±700 - ±200 BCE: Official (or Imperial) Aramaic
- ±200 BCE - ±200 CE: Middle Aramaic
- ±200 - ±700 CE: Late Aramaic
- Today: Modern Aramaic

The main innovation of Fitzmyer's model was the integration of the then recent findings of the Qumran Caves into the general picture of Aramaic. These findings were of unprecedented importance, as the wealth of Aramaic literature that they represented abundantly filled a significant gap between Imperial Aramaic (IA) and its last testimonies on the one hand and the earliest attestations of the Aramaic dialects of the Christian Era on the other. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls led Fitzmyer to posit a new phase in the development of Aramaic: the Middle Aramaic (MA) period, which was positioned between Official Aramaic and Late Aramaic (LA) and included Qumran Aramaic (QA) among other types of Aramaic.

It should be emphasized, however, that some of the labels used by Fitzmyer are only tentative, as are some of the dates proposed to frame the different periods. The following remarks are of importance for the present study:

1. In Fitzmyer's model, the labels 'Official Aramaic' and 'Imperial Aramaic' are meant to apply in a broad sense to linguistic material from the Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods. The use of these two labels is justified only inasmuch as in those three periods Aramaic was used as a general medium of communication for diplomacy and administration (*Kanzleisprache*). Notwithstanding, the labels 'Official Aramaic' and 'Imperial Aramaic' are rather unfortunate, insofar as they can be misleading, suggesting some linguistic uniformity in the use of Aramaic in those three periods where obviously there is none.⁶ This is reflected in the fact that certain scholars use the

⁵ Fitzmyer first proposed this model in J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I: A Commentary* (1st edition; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1966). In Fitzmyer (1979) he expounded his model in a more systematic way. Finally, Fitzmyer (2004) presents us with his most recent views on the matter, and this is used for the exposition of his model in the present study.

⁶ For an extensive discussion of the relationship between the Aramaic of the Achaemenid period and previous forms of Aramaic, cf. Folmer (1995: 1-6).

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label ‘Imperial Aramaic’ in a restricted sense, i.e. to refer solely to the Aramaic of the Achaemenid period.⁷ In agreement with Fitzmyer’s view, also espoused by Folmer,⁸ that it is not desirable to introduce new terminology, within the present study the label ‘Imperial Aramaic’ will be used, but in a restricted sense, i.e. to refer solely to the Aramaic of the Achaemenid period, as recently described in a few important studies.⁹ As a result, the IA period is assumed to have had its onset in the second half of the 6th century BCE.

2. According to Fitzmyer, the IA period includes the whole of Biblical Aramaic (BA), i.e. ‘the Aramaic of Ezra [...] and probably also that of Daniel’.¹⁰ Critical aspects of the question, obviously, are one’s views on the nature of the Aramaic parts of the Bible on the one hand and one’s opinion on the lower limit of the IA period on the other. Concerning the latter, it may be useful to note that Fitzmyer’s setting the end of the IA period at 200 BCE is a matter of debate.¹¹ According to the current state of research on the Aramaic portions of the Bible, the official documents in Ezra fit well into the context of the Achaemenid Empire, whereas the Aramaic parts of Daniel are usually considered a product of the Hellenistic period.¹² As a result, in the present study I will follow Kaufman and categorize the Aramaic of Ezra as IA and that of Daniel as MA,¹³ the BA corpus thereby spanning two periods in the history of the Aramaic language.

A final remark on terminology: when speaking of Western and Eastern varieties of a specific period in the history of the Aramaic language the reference to the (Middle, Late) period will follow rather than precede the geographic designation (e.g. ‘Western Late Aramaic’ rather than

⁷ Cf. Folmer (1995: 9-13) for an excellent treatment of the terminological issue.

⁸ Folmer (1995: 13).

⁹ Folmer (1995) and Muraoka & Porten (2003).

¹⁰ Fitzmyer (2004: 31).

¹¹ Stefanovic (1992: 16-17).

¹² Cf. Folmer (1995: 41). Concerning the Aramaic of Daniel specifically, see also Stefanovic (1992: 17-20) for a useful survey of the scholarly discussion.

¹³ Kaufman (1997: 115-116).

‘Late Western Aramaic’), so as to avoid the ambiguity that a designation such as ‘Middle Eastern Aramaic’ might give rise to.

3. THE LANGUAGE OF TARGUM JONATHAN

Status Quaestionis

3.1 RELATIONSHIP OF THE ARAMAIC OF TARGUM JONATHAN TO THE ARAMAIC OF TARGUM ONQELOS

More than one hundred years ago, Dalman stated that the grammar of the Aramaic of TO and the grammar of the Aramaic of TJ were identical.¹⁴ Dalman’s initial statement appears to have been adopted by later scholars, to the effect that the linguistic congruence between the two is usually taken for granted.¹⁵

That so many scholars — among whom some of the great minds of the Aramaic philology of the 20th century — have followed in Dalman’s wake is not to be underestimated. Yet, it ought to be borne in mind that all these statements are essentially based on the phonology, orthography, morphology and lexicon of TO and TJ, and that even these aspects have not been studied comparatively in detail.¹⁶ As for syntactic matters, however, so far the syntax of TO has hardly been touched upon (cf. I:3.3 below); the syntax of TJ not at all. Any definitive judgement regarding the identity (or lack thereof) of the Aramaic of TO and the Aramaic of TJ must therefore be suspended until some comparative work on *all* the aspects of their grammar has been carried out in a systematic and comprehensive way.

Such, obviously, will not be pursued in the present study. Any attempt

¹⁴ Cf. Dalman (1905: 15): ‘Der Wortvorrat beider Targume ist zwar verschieden, ihre Grammatik aber ist die gleiche’.

¹⁵ Cf. e.g. recently Smelik (1995: 14-15) and Bombeck (1997a: 23). In addition, the manifold references in the relevant literature to ‘the Aramaic of Targum Onqelos and Targum Jonathan’, as if it were a single linguistic entity, bear witness to that fact. Cf., among many others, Kutscher (1971: 267); Greenfield (1976: 40) and Beyer (1984: 35-36).

¹⁶ With the exception of the lexical aspect, which Tal (1975: 203-212) has dwelt upon at some length. Cf. also Smelik (1995: 14, n.80).

to assess the relationship between the Aramaic of TO and that of TJ from a syntactic viewpoint requires an in-depth study of the syntax of TO as well, which is beyond the scope of the present study. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the few studies available on the syntax of TO concur more often than not with the findings of the present study. Pending a more thorough treatment of the matter, there are therefore no valid reasons to reject *a priori* the view held by other scholars and, at the very least, a strong similarity between these two types of Aramaic can be assumed.

3.2 CLASSIFICATION OF THE ARAMAIC OF TARGUM JONATHAN

The classification of the dialect of TO and TJ has already caused much ink to flow.¹⁷ Following Goshen-Gottstein, the modern history of classifying the language of TO and TJ can be subdivided into three periods.¹⁸

The first period opened with Geiger's statement that TO was a Babylonian composition, written in 'Vulgar Aramaic' (*Vulgärrchaldäisch*), i.e. a vulgar form of the Aramaic practised by the Babylonian Jewry (as against the *Schulsprache* of the Gemara).¹⁹ Other renowned scholars such as Frankel, Luzzatto and Bacher followed suit and took the Babylonian provenance for granted.²⁰ As Goshen-Gottstein points out, the complete absence of linguistic arguments in the work of these authors is striking. TO is claimed to have been written in some form or other of Eastern Aramaic, without linguistic criteria being actually brought to bear on the issue; on the contrary, it is Goshen-Gottstein's

¹⁷ For a good overview of the debate, cf. Rosenthal (1939: 105, 127-132); Goshen-Gottstein (1978); Cook (1994). The ensuing discussion is indebted to Goshen-Gottstein's survey of the history of research on TO and TJ (Goshen-Gottstein 1978), as well as to Smelik's excellent treatment of the *status quaestionis* of the research on TJ up to 1995 (Smelik 1995: 1-112).

¹⁸ Goshen-Gottstein (1978: 169). As Goshen-Gottstein explains, most of the statements were made with regard to TO, but were overall meant to apply to TJ as well.

¹⁹ Geiger (1857: 159-170, esp. 163-167); Geiger (1858: 148).

²⁰ Cf. Goshen-Gottstein (1978: 170); Smelik (1995: 15-16); Frankel (1872: 1-12, esp. 6, 10-11); Luzzatto (1873: x); Bacher (1874: 55ff., esp. 59-60).

suspicion that Geiger's original statement had ideological motives.²¹ Be that as it may, Nöldeke soon adopted a diametrically opposed position, suggesting that TO and TJ, though revised and finalized in Babylonia, were ultimately Palestinian creations. Nöldeke based his judgement on the tight linguistic affinity between the Aramaic of TO/TJ and BA; the specifically Eastern Aramaic features of TO and TJ he attributed to their subsequent revision in Babylonia.²² This view would become the basis of all modern formulations of the Palestinian hypothesis.

According to Goshen-Gottstein, the first decisive step after Nöldeke was taken by Dalman, which likewise brought to an end the first period of characterizing the language of TO/TJ, and opened the second.²³ In Dalman's view, TO and TJ were composed in Palestine in an educated, even artificial Aramaic dialect.²⁴ Dalman's position was in favour of the Palestinian hypothesis in the extreme — he went so far as to deny the existence of Babylonian features in the text²⁵ — which, as Goshen-Gottstein points out, was not devoid of ideological motives either.²⁶ Notwithstanding, Dalman brought forward the notion of diglossia, which in hindsight can be considered a formulation *avant la lettre* of the view, not formally developed until the late 1920s / early 1930s, of a supradialectal, largely standardized type of Aramaic prevailing in the second half of the first millennium BCE and variously referred to as

²¹ Goshen-Gottstein (1978: 169).

²² Nöldeke (1875: xxvii, n.1); Nöldeke (1887: 32). Nöldeke's now famous verdict is worth quoting in full: 'Das Targûm wurde später schriftlich fixiert, aber die officiell recipierte Gestalt des Targûm's zum Pentateuch (sog. Onkelos) und zu den Propheten (sog. Jonathan) erhielt erst im 4. Jahrhundert ihre schliessliche Redaction, und zwar nicht im Heimathlande, sondern in Babylonien. Man bewahrte da allerdings leidlich den älteren palästinischen Dialect, aber der in manchen Stücken abweichende babylonische wirkte doch auch entstellend ein' (1887: 32). The gist of Nöldeke's argument for the Western provenance of TO and TJ, namely the tight linguistic affinity between TO and BA, is all the more remarkable when one considers that half a century later Kutscher would claim that BA — or at least its vocalization — goes back to Eastern Aramaic (Kutscher 1970a: 399-403). Nonetheless, as we shall see below Kutscher also concluded that TO and TJ had a Palestinian origin, but reached that conclusion from a different angle.

²³ Goshen-Gottstein (1978: 170-171).

²⁴ Dalman (1905: 13).

²⁵ Cf. Dalman: 'Eine entstellende Einwirkung des babylonischen Dialekts, wie sie Nöldeke [...] annimmt, wäre an sich wahrscheinlich genug, ist aber doch nicht nachzuweisen' (Dalman 1905: 13).

²⁶ Goshen-Gottstein (1978: 170).

‘Imperial Aramaic’ or ‘Official Aramaic’.²⁷

It is ironical that the implications — indirect though they may be — of Dalman’s formulations would ultimately turn against him. As Goshen-Gottstein explains, the suggestion that TO and TJ were composed in a supradialectal type of Aramaic, by definition unmarked for dialectal features, stultified all previous attempts to characterize TO and TJ along dialectal lines.²⁸ Albeit on various grounds and from different angles, the idea of a supradialectal type of Aramaic allowed scholars such as Kahle, Ginsberg, Rosenthal and Epstein to re-advocate Geiger’s idea, asserting that TO and TJ were the product of Babylonian Jewry, regardless of their possible Palestinian antecedents.²⁹

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls brought the second period to an end and opened the third. In his seminal study of GenApoc, Kutscher declared that the linguistic, especially lexical, affinity between the Aramaic of GenApoc and that of TO was such as to ‘clinch the matter’ in favour of the Palestinian provenance of the latter.³⁰ Kutscher’s pronouncement was to prove highly influential. His opinion on the origins of TO and TJ (Palestine, ca. 70-135 CE) was widely accepted, and became the basis of most contemporary views on the origins of TO and TJ.³¹ Thus, though in the years that followed Greenfield put forward the existence of ‘Standard Literary Aramaic’, a supralocal literary offshoot

²⁷ Cf. Folmer (1995: 9-13) for a full discussion of the terms and the history of their use.

²⁸ Goshen-Gottstein (1978: 171).

²⁹ Goshen-Gottstein (1978: 172-173). As Goshen-Gottstein points out, in this second period of classifying the language of TO Kahle, non-linguistic though his arguments may have been, presented virtually the only articulated view, cf. Kahle (1913: 203-216; 1959: 191-198).

³⁰ Cf. Kutscher (1958: 9-11). Importantly, Kutscher (1970a: 360ff.) also held the view that some of the linguistic features usually considered characteristic of the Western/Eastern divide prevalent in LA (e.g. word order patterns) were already current in IA, which may explain why the gist of his argumentation with regard to TO was essentially lexicographic in nature.

³¹ This is rather remarkable when one considers, as Cook (1994: 144) does, that the evidence put forward by Kutscher to make his point was relatively slender. What is more, in the course of the present study some of Kutscher’s initial statements have turned out to be puzzling when confronted with the actual facts of TJ, e.g. his observation (Kutscher 1958: 10, n.43) that ‘the most outstanding trait [pointing towards the tight affinity between the Aramaic of TO/TJ and Western Aramaic] is the nearly always correct use of the determination [which] would be very difficult to explain, had the text originated in the East’. As we shall see, Kutscher was to rephrase that statement one decade later (cf. D:1.2, footnote n.11).

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of IA after the demise of the Achaemenid Empire, and suggested that TO and TJ were composed in that literary Aramaic dialect, he did not question the Palestinian provenance of TO and TJ.³²

At about the same time, Tal produced the most thorough study of the Aramaic of TJ (more specifically TJFP) to date. In the main, he carried out a comparison of the Aramaic of TJFP with IA and other roughly contemporary Aramaic dialects such as Nabatean, Palmyrene and QA. Detecting many lexical correspondences between TJFP and these dialects, and noting that some items are found only there and not in any of the LA dialects, Tal put forward that these provided evidence for the existence of a supradialectal Aramaic dialect (*koine*) that prevailed in the Middle East in the early centuries CE, and inferred from that conclusion that TJFP had been composed prior to the Bar Kokhba revolt. Obviously, Tal also noted the presence of a number of items leaning towards LA. But, still according to Tal, it is Western Aramaic (CPA, SA) that displays correspondences; in contrast, an Eastern Aramaic dialect such as JBA does not exert a discernible influence upon TJ. From this second fact Tal concluded that TJ could hardly have originated in Babylonia. Notwithstanding, Tal did not deny the presence of Eastern Aramaic features in TJ as Dalman had done, but added that of all Eastern Aramaic dialects it was Syriac that was the most closely related to the language of TJ. In this Tal saw an indication that the classification of Syriac as Eastern Aramaic is not as straightforward as it appears on the surface, and added that the various aspects in which the earliest attestations of Syriac lean towards Western Aramaic and diverge from Eastern Aramaic suggest that Syriac might have belonged to that Aramaic *koine* prior to the emergence of local dialects. In the final analysis, Tal's view was that TJ was originally composed in a supralocal Aramaic dialect corresponding roughly to Greenfield's 'Standard Literary Aramaic', in Palestine, maybe even more specifically in Judea, prior to the Bar Kokhba rebellion.³³

Impressive though the arguments marshalled by Tal regarding the

³² Greenfield (1974: 287; 1978a: 35). Other scholars such as Black and Levey also accepted the Palestinian provenance of TO and TJ, cf. Black (1968: 22-23); Levey (1971: 191). Be that as it may, Kutscher's authoritative statement did not prevent various scholars from upholding the Babylonian hypothesis in the years that followed, e.g. Beyer (1966: 253) who, however, appears to have since rejoined the majority opinion (Beyer 1984: 35-36).

³³ Tal (1975: ix-xi, 213-216). Since then, Tal has also refined his views on the dialectal map of Western LA (cf. Tal 1986).

origin of TJ may be, some scholars did not show themselves entirely convinced by his views and adopted a more cautious stance. Thus Ribera Florit questioned the validity of Tal's methodology, in that e.g. dialects such as CPA and SA do double duty in his analysis, serving both as evidence for a Western substratum of the first two centuries CE and as proof for the late date of the Palestinian Targums.³⁴ Goshen-Gottstein, opening his own contribution with a critical appraisal of the *status quaestionis* — which, incidentally, has been gratefully welcomed by the scholarly community, considering the number of studies that have used it as a point of departure for their own discussion — concludes rather pessimistically that on the basis of linguistic criteria alone there is no way to establish authoritatively the geographic provenance of TO/TJ. As he explains, the concept of Standard Literary Aramaic, once developed to its logical conclusion, neutralizes any and all linguistic criteria that may be brought to bear on the issue. As a result, he sets himself to the more modest task of assessing the different models that have been put forward and concludes that, all things being equal, positing an origin prior to the LA period outside Babylonia is the most economic and plausible solution. More specifically, Goshen-Gottstein rejoins Kutscher and states that 'a model that assumes the development of a second century Palestinian Proto-Onqelos leading towards a fourth century Babylonian Onqelos makes sense on the basis of both linguistic and extralinguistic facts'.³⁵

Cook,³⁶ for his part, also questioned the validity of Kutscher's, Greenfield's and Tal's analyses. Elaborating upon Goshen-Gottstein's observation that the idea of a supradialectal type of Aramaic invalidates all dialectological considerations with reference to TO and TJ, he rejects the idea of a *koine* for the MA period — in his view, the MA period is precisely characterized by the break-up of IA as a standard — and suggests that the dialects of that period may better be considered to constitute a dialect continuum, stretching from Nabatean in the West, to QA, Palmyrene, early Syriac, and Hatran in the East. Building upon Tal's recognition that the classification of Syriac as Eastern Aramaic is not unproblematic, he extends the argument to Palmyrene, suggesting that these two types of Aramaic, by some of their linguistic features, are both Western and Eastern or, rather, *neither Western nor Eastern*.

³⁴ Cf. Ribera Florit (1974: 8-9), and discussion in Smelik (1995: 18).

³⁵ Goshen-Gottstein (1978).

³⁶ Cook (1994).

The next logical step in his argument is to dissolve the rigid boundary between Western Aramaic and Eastern Aramaic, and posit the existence of a third dialectal zone in the middle, ‘Central Aramaic’, that would encompass Palmyrene, Syriac and, last but not least, the Aramaic of TO and TJ. The rest of his contribution is then devoted to isolating isoglosses for Central Aramaic, mainly in the form of morphological features that would bind Syriac, Palmyrene and TO/TJ together as against the other Western and Eastern Aramaic dialects.³⁷

Kaufman³⁸ joined Cook in the latter’s criticism of Tal, yet on different grounds. According to Kaufman, the problem lies in the fact that most of the similarities between the Aramaic of TO/TJ and the later Western Aramaic dialects involve shared retentions of common Aramaic patterns rather than shared innovations, whereas only the latter are decisive for the purpose of linguistic classification. He further concludes that TO and TJ should be seen as a systematically modified version of a Proto-Targum, from which the Palestinian Targums and TO are separately descended. Finally, suggesting that the relationship between the Aramaic of TO/TJ and QA ‘becomes more and more troubling as we learn more about the variety in the types of [QA] and more about variation in targumic manuscripts’,³⁹ Kaufman notes that a possible solution to the problem may be ‘to remove Onqelos from the Palestinian mix’,⁴⁰ i.e., as I understand it, to look elsewhere for the provenance of TO.

Finally, the most recent addition to the debate emanates from Müller-Kessler.⁴¹ Her views on the origin and language of TO and TJ are so different from previous treatments that they deserve to be studied with some care. In a recent publication, Müller-Kessler raised doubts on Cook’s suggestion that the Aramaic of TO/TJ and Syriac are very similar, noting that for all these similarities TO/TJ and Syriac also deviate

³⁷ Cook’s views on MA dialectology are more systematically exposed in Cook (1992).

³⁸ Kaufman (1994).

³⁹ Kaufman (1994: 123-124).

⁴⁰ Kaufman (1994: 124).

⁴¹ Müller-Kessler (2001). In her most recent publications, Müller-Kessler maintains her views on the Aramaic of TO/TJ without further modifications (cf. Müller-Kessler 2002: 99; 2005: 4). In actual fact, the most recent contribution to the debate was offered by D. Gropp (Catholic University of America) in a paper held at the Symposium ‘Aramaic in its Historical and Linguistic Setting’ in Leiden, Aug. 24-27, 2006. Unfortunately, as of this writing I have no written version of that paper.

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considerably from each other. Having distanced herself from Cook's view, Müller-Kessler offers her own solution to the problem of the origin and language of TO/TJ. According to her, TO and TJ were written in Babylonia, not in Palestine, but in some standardized type of Aramaic that ultimately goes back to Palestine. To put it differently, TO and TJ do not originate in Palestine, but their language does. That language, which she refers to as 'Standard Literary Babylonian Aramaic' (SLBA), would be 'a kind of standard rabbinic (artificial) dialect',⁴² Palestinian in origin, that would have found its way to Babylonia after the destruction of the Second Temple or the Bar-Kokhba revolt and would have undergone further developments there, signifying the transition to SLBA. All in all, SLBA would be a rabbinic import from Palestine to Mesopotamia, where it would have been used not only for the composition of TO and TJ, but also for other text material, such as 90 per cent of the incantation bowls inscribed in Aramaic square script dated to 4th-7th centuries CE. The reason why SLBA, ultimately a Palestinian import, could be used at all in Babylonia, was that 'the Palestinian learned idiom was considered superior to the local Babylonian tongue' (Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic).⁴³

Continuing along Goshen-Gottstein's lines, perhaps we can see in these contributions by Goshen-Gottstein, Cook and Müller-Kessler a fourth period in the discussion of classifying the language of TO and TJ. The third period, ending with Greenfield and Tal, would be characterized by Kutscher's view that TO and TJ were composed in Palestine and later transferred to Babylonia, a view further refined by Greenfield's and Tal's suggestions that the language of TO and TJ was essentially a standardized type of Aramaic (SLA, *koine*) prevailing in the MA period. The fourth period would then be characterized by a criticism, I believe at times too severe, of the views of the scholars of the third period on the Palestinian provenance of TO/TJ. At the heart of this fourth period would lie the difficulties connected with the very notion of a standardized type of Aramaic. As Goshen-Gottstein explained, if TO and TJ are to be assigned to a *koine*, then all dialectological discussions as to their geographic provenance are *de facto* nullified. (Incidentally, this is reminiscent of the 'Official Aramaic' issue of the second period of the classification of the language of TO/TJ, cf. above). Whereas Goshen-

⁴² Müller-Kessler (2001: 184).

⁴³ Müller-Kessler (2001: 191).

Gottstein, despite his rather pessimistic conclusions, still stood by Nöldeke's, Dalman's and Kutscher's Palestinian hypothesis, Cook and Müller-Kessler investigated new avenues of explanation. In the wake of Goshen-Gottstein, Cook rejected the notion of *koine* for the MA period, favouring the idea of a dialect continuum, and explained the similarities between the Aramaic of TO/TJ and Syriac by bringing them together under one roof, 'Central Aramaic'. For her part, Müller-Kessler did not reject the notion of a standardized type of Aramaic underlying the language of TO and TJ, but preferred to see its natural home in Babylonia, which then allowed her to account for the alleged similarity between the language of TO/TJ and that of some of the magic bowls.

Interesting though these two alternative models may be, I think that neither of them can be considered conclusive at this time. Cook certainly made a strong case for the idea that the MA dialects should be seen as forming a continuum rather than as the by-products of a *koine*. This idea is tempting and, I believe, deserves further investigation. The problem with Cook's argumentation, however, is that ultimately his notion of 'Central Aramaic' fails to convince, insofar as the Aramaic of TO/TJ and Syriac are not as similar as he would have it.⁴⁴

The main difficulty with Müller-Kessler's argumentation is the alleged 'identity' between the Aramaic of TO/TJ and the Aramaic of the magic bowls. To be sure, the list of features that she claims the two have in common is puzzling.⁴⁵ But shared features and linguistic identity are two different things, and I cannot escape the impression that Müller-Kessler is somewhat too quick to take the latter for granted.⁴⁶ Although this possibility should by no means be discarded *a priori*, I believe that her notion of 'Standard Literary Babylonian Aramaic', and therefore

⁴⁴ As cogently argued by Müller-Kessler (2001: 185), though it ought to be borne in mind that in questions of dialect classification it all comes down to which linguistic features one deems significant in one's diagnosis. On the other hand, I believe that Smelik (1995: 20) misconstrues Cook slightly in suggesting that Cook classifies QA as Central Aramaic along with the Aramaic of TO and TJ. I fail to find any indication to that effect in Cook's study; on the contrary, QA is variously referred to as 'Western' (Cook 1994: 150) and as representative of the 'Aramaic of Palestine' (Cook 1994: 149). Be that as it may, Cook's notion of Central Aramaic does not appear to have met with wide acceptance in the scholarly community, even if it is widely recognized that it is difficult to categorize Syriac as either Western or Eastern, e.g. Boyarin (1981), and recently Kaufman (1997: 117-118) who, in his classification of the Aramaic dialects, would divide the LA period into three branches (Palestinian, Syrian, Babylonian) rather than the traditional two.

⁴⁵ Müller-Kessler (2001: 188-190).

⁴⁶ E.g. Müller-Kessler (2001: 186).

also her alternative model for the origin of TO/TJ, should be left in suspense until the exact nature of the linguistic relation between TO/TJ and the magic bowls (and hence the very existence of SLBA) has been clarified. It should be emphasized, however, that one way or the other Müller-Kessler's views have no bearing on the discussion of the language of TO and TJ. The point that Müller-Kessler is trying to make is the existence of SLBA, a standardized type of Aramaic that would be common to TO/TJ and some of the magic bowls. As such, she does not contest the ultimately Palestinian character of the language of TO and TJ, and therefore does not radically question the foundation of Kutscher's conclusions. As far as the *language* of TO and TJ is concerned, the pendulum does not swing back to Babylonia.

3.3 PREVIOUS STUDIES ON THE SYNTAX OF TARGUM ONQELOS AND TARGUM JONATHAN

Studies in the grammar of TO and TJ are surprisingly few in number when one considers the interest that TO and TJ have aroused over the years and, most specifically, the manifold judgements that have been passed on the nature of the Aramaic in which they were composed. On the whole, one is still dependent on Dalman's classical work.⁴⁷ Though it was far ahead of its time when first published, it is generally agreed nowadays to be in need of radical revision and supplementation at many points. This is due to the subsequent discovery of many new manuscripts, identification of divergent Targum traditions, and the numerous Aramaic texts subsequently discovered (most notably in Qumran). Moreover, Dalman's grammar is limited to orthography, phonology and morphology and, aside from a few stray remarks, lacks syntax and morphosyntax altogether.

In the 1960s, Kaddari produced a few studies that dealt with the syntax of TO, either specifically or within a broader Aramaic context.⁴⁸ His analyses have proven useful but, as will be pointed out in the course of this study, his largely quantitative approach often limited the scope of his results.

Tal's monumental study of TJ has significantly improved the situation,

⁴⁷ Dalman (1905).

⁴⁸ Kaddari (1963a; 1963b; 1969).

and is especially important, since it deals with the language of the book of Samuel, the immediate object of the present study. Unfortunately, while it exhibits significant advances, characterized by awareness of fundamental methodological, diachronic and dialectological issues, it deals only with a rather limited number of linguistic features. More specifically, aside from a few scattered remarks it leaves, like Dalman, syntactic and morphosyntactic questions mostly unconsidered.⁴⁹

Segert has produced a grammar of 'Old Aramaic',⁵⁰ which, in his view, actually covers Aramaic until (and including) the MA period. In contrast to Dalman and Tal, it also deals with syntactic issues. Though Segert's work is certainly valuable, his methodology is at times questionable.⁵¹ A major problem is the fact that the various types and corpora of Aramaic, as well as the rich and manifold developments that the Aramaic language has undergone in the course of the millenary history covered by the book, are insufficiently marked out, which makes the overall value of that work relative. For that reason, Segert's grammar has been used only parcimoniously in the present study.

Beyer's *magnum opus* on QA is invaluable. Beyer's scholarship is impressive, and although his work deals primarily with QA, it actually presents Beyer's views on the history and development of the whole of Aramaic up to QA, which by common consent is very close to the Aramaic of TO/TJ. The only drawback for our purpose is that, once again, syntactic issues are not taken into consideration. As a result I have but occasionally been able to benefit from Beyer's insights.⁵²

In the final analysis, the only significant work that deals with the syntax of the Aramaic of TO and TJ is Bombeck's study of the verbal system of some of the translations of the Bible into Aramaic: TO, TJ, Peshitta, Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan (PsJ).⁵³ Bombeck's work has proven most useful for the present study. Its contents and contribution to the field of Aramaic philology will be discussed in more detail in due course (V:1.2). Concerning the verbal system specifically, a few short *Einzelstudien* deserve to be mentioned here: Bombeck (1995a; 1995b);

⁴⁹ Tal (1975).

⁵⁰ Segert (1975).

⁵¹ Cf. the review by Degen (1979), which is essential reading when using Segert's work.

⁵² Beyer (1984).

⁵³ Bombeck (1997a).

Sepmeijer (1999). One may also mention Stevenson (1962), who in his work, originally intended as an abridged version of Dalman's work in English, saw fit to add a few syntactic observations on the use of the verb forms.

To conclude this review of the literature on the syntax of the Aramaic of TO and TJ, mention must be made of Lambdin and Huehnergard's as yet unpublished *Introduction into the Aramaic of Targum Onqelos*. Although intended as an introductory textbook at a fairly elementary level, it deals with all aspects of the language, including the syntax, and comprises a few concise but highly perceptive notes on some of the matters to be discussed in the present study.

4. THE PRESENT STUDY

4.1 OBJECT OF THIS STUDY

As the preceding discussion has amply shown, the question of the nature of the Aramaic of TO and TJ has not yet received all the attention that it deserves, which is all the more surprising when one considers the many past attempts to classify this dialect within the broader context of Aramaic.

In addition, we have also seen that so far the linguistic discussion on the position of the Aramaic of TO and TJ has in the main taken place at the levels of phonology, orthography, morphology and lexicography. Syntactic questions have been mostly left out of the debate, and the few studies available are in need of reassessment. This last statement is not intended as a vain criticism of the work of some of the great scholars of the past two centuries. Rather, it expresses the awareness of the existence of a significant fact. Our very understanding of language in its multiple formal and functional implications has considerably evolved in the course of the 20th century, which in turn has resulted in tremendous developments in the field of general linguistics. Especially syntax as an object of study benefitted from these new trends, inasmuch as it came to occupy a central position in the development of contemporary linguistic thinking. A linguistic paradigm such as Generative Grammar, originally conceived by N. Chomsky in the 50s, bears witness to the emancipation of syntax, as it was integrated into Chomsky's model as a fully autonomous component, largely independent

of the other levels of linguistic organization.⁵⁴

In the light of the preceding discussion, it is clear that a study of the syntax of the Aramaic of TJ and of its twin TO from the vantage point of modern linguistics is a desideratum, and it is the aim of the present study to contribute to filling this lacuna. Within this study, the question of the nature of the Aramaic of TJ is tackled from the angle of syntax and morphosyntax. Five main topics have been addressed, which between them cover some of the critical issues of Aramaic syntax and morphosyntax: the expression of determination, i.e. the use of the states of the noun (chap. 1), the morphosyntax of the numerals (chap. 2), the distribution of the genitive constructions (chap. 3), the use of the verb forms (chap. 4) and word ordering patterns in the verbal clause (chap. 5). For each of these topics the text of TJS has been subjected to a close scrutiny and the results of the investigation exposed as thoroughly and methodically as possible.

Subsequently, these five topics have been considered from a diachronic/comparative perspective, the main linguistic features involved in each of them in other Aramaic dialects being discussed on the basis of the work of other scholars.⁵⁵ This comparative discussion forms the section entitled ‘wider perspective’ that rounds off each of the five chapters. Inevitably, the breadth and depth of the wider perspective is dependent on the linguistic information available in the relevant literature, which, as we shall see, varies widely from topic to topic and from dialect to dialect.⁵⁶ Be that as it may, with reference to each of these five topics the findings of TJS have been confronted with what is known at present of the syntax of the other Classical Aramaic idioms, and an attempt has been made to reach some preliminary conclusion as to how the Aramaic of TJS relates to, and is positioned among, the other Aramaic dialects.

⁵⁴ Cf. Khan (2002) for a masterly survey of the study of the Semitic languages from the Middle Ages until the present day, and for a critical appraisal of the role played by Generative Grammar in contemporary linguistic thinking in general and Semitic linguistics in particular.

⁵⁵ An important restriction set on the comparative perspective is the omission of Modern Aramaic, as the time gap between Modern Aramaic and the Aramaic of TO/TJ makes the former of limited value for the positioning of the latter. Generally, the comparison has been extended to Aramaic dialects ranging from OA up to (and including) LA. I refer collectively to these pre-Modern Aramaic dialects as ‘Classical Aramaic’.

⁵⁶ Cook (1986: 212) also recognized that fact.

Finally, after these five points of syntax and morphosyntax have been analysed, both synchronically and diachronically/comparatively, the five preliminary conclusions have been brought together so as to offer, as far as possible, a unified account of what a study of the syntax of TJS can tell us about the position of the Aramaic of TJ within the broader context of Aramaic.

4.2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted to investigate the five syntactic topics under discussion varies from chapter to chapter, as each aspect of (morpho)syntax requires to be addressed and understood on its own terms. Be that as it may, any work of this type needs a theoretical foundation, and to that end I have resorted to *Functional Grammar*.

As was suggested above, the emergence of new trends in the field of general linguistics in the course of the 20th century dramatically altered the way languages in general and syntax in particular were envisioned. Chomsky's ideas played a seminal role in that process. Generative Grammar launched a revolution in the field of theoretical linguistics, which opened new avenues of investigation and ultimately generated a wide array of linguistic models. Together with many other approaches, Functional Grammar [FG] is an heir to that revolution. Originally designed by Simon Dik (University of Amsterdam) in the 1970s, FG has been developing constantly and swiftly from that time to the present day in the hands of many distinguished linguists.

When compared with other linguistic models such as Generative Grammar that had been prevailing until then, the strength and originality of FG is that it grants at least as much importance to the *functionalities* as to the formal aspects of linguistic structures, and incorporates those functionalities at three distinct levels of linguistic organization (semantic, syntactic, pragmatic) in a fully integrated model.⁵⁷ Since its inception in the 70s, FG has repeatedly proven itself a potent theoretical framework suited for the study of the most varied languages. The Semitic languages are no exception. Thus FG has been used to investigate various linguistic aspects of Arabic,⁵⁸ Hebrew⁵⁹ and Aramaic.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ FG1 (25-27).

⁵⁸ Cf. Moutaouakil (1984; 1985; 1989; 1994).

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The use of the insights of FG within the present study acknowledges, and hopes to pay tribute to, the developments of the past few decades in the field of general linguistics. Although I have gained much from the insights of FG all along this research, it is mostly in my study of the verbal system (chap. 4) and of word order patterns (chap. 5) that those insights have proven most adequate.⁶¹ The theoretical aspects of FG relevant to these syntactic matters will be systematically laid out in the introduction of the relevant chapters.

4.3 CORPUS

As suggested above, the text of Samuel serves as the basis for the present study. The choice of that corpus was dictated by the circumstances of the broader scientific project of which this linguistic study is a part (*Origin and History of Targum Jonathan to the Prophets: Towards a Critical Edition*, Theological University of Kampen). A major consideration in this regard was the fact that within the whole of TJ the text of Samuel contains a representative amount of poetical passages and chapters (unlike e.g. Joshua), and a lot of simple prose as well (unlike the books of the Latter Prophets). The text of Samuel underlying the present study is MS Or. 2210 (British Museum), the standard published edition of TJ as edited by Sperber (1959-1973). Though it is generally agreed that Sperber's methodology is to a certain extent questionable, his edition of TJ is by far the most reliable that we have until now.⁶² As a rule, variant readings of TJS, as featured in Sperber's critical apparatus, have been consulted only when Sperber's rendition of MS Or. 2210 raises textual problems that could not be solved otherwise.

In addition, the limited scope of the text of Samuel has not always

⁵⁹ Cf. Buth (1992; 1994; 1999); Rosenbaum (1997); Anstey (unpublished).

⁶⁰ Cf. Buth (1986; 1995). The official website of Functional Grammar (<http://www.functionalgrammar.com/>, as of this writing) offers a listing as exhaustive as possible of all linguistic studies using FG as a framework.

⁶¹ In addition, in the wake of Buth (1987; 1995; 1999) certain concepts derived from discourse-based approaches have been employed in the analysis, especially in the discussion of the verbal system (Chap. 4). However, I have been rather eclectic in my use of discourse-based approaches, inasmuch as in my view many of the concepts employed there, though valid in themselves, are as yet insufficiently formalized to be fully integrated into a linguistic model.

⁶² Houtman (2000); Van Staalduine-Sulman (2002: 49ff.).

permitted scholars to reach definite results on certain syntactic matters. In certain cases, the scope of the analysis has then been extended to the whole of TJFP — on occasions even to TO — so as to enlarge the range of the available material. In such cases, concordances have been consulted, whether in print (*BCTP*) or in digital format (*Accordance*).

Finally, in the present study I will often use the expression ‘the Targumist’, in the singular, as an abstract (and possibly collective) label to refer to whoever committed TJ to writing. It should be emphasized, however, that this label is used for the sake of convenience only; as such it is not intended to convey any opinion as to the nature, the identity and, for that matter, the number of the one/those who was/were involved in the composition. It is indeed my conviction that at this point, beyond the long-standing questions of the date and place of origin of TO/TJ, the history and proto-history of the Targums are still too much shrouded in mystery to venture any opinion on the ‘human factor’ behind the Targumic texts.

5. PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

1. References to the text of Samuel follow the format e.g. I.3.17 or II.4.25, which stand for 1 Sam. 3:17 and 2 Sam. 4:25 respectively. When variant readings are adduced in the analysis, they are indicated as e.g. I.3.17^v. Finally, references to other books of TO and TJ use the abbreviations standard in the relevant literature.

2. For obvious reasons, the Vorlage of Samuel as encountered in the Masoretic Text (MT) has been used constantly throughout the analysis. In order to allow the reader to make a clear distinction between TJ and the Vorlage, as a rule quotations from the Vorlage are featured between square brackets (and the absence of corresponding Vorlage, i.e. when TJ inserts a passage, is accordingly indicated by [/]), e.g.:

I.1.1 יהי איש אחד ‘and there was a man’ [יהי איש אחד]

I.2.5 ואתשאו ית מסכנותהון ‘and they forgot their poverty’ [/]

In certain cases dealing specifically with the Vorlage, however, this custom has been reversed. In such cases, to dispel any ambiguity the tags ‘BH’ and ‘TJ’ have been added to the quotations, e.g.:

I.1.1^{BH} יהי איש אחד ‘and there was a man’ [TJ יהי איש אחד]

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3. The MT is usually featured in consonantal script only. With only a few exceptions, Masoretic additions such as the vowel points, the cantillation marks, the Maqqef (etc.) have been consistently omitted.

4. For the English rendition of the quoted passages I have relied upon D. Harrington and A.J. Saldarini's translation of TJFP in the *Aramaic Bible* series (Harrington and Saldarini 1987). Notwithstanding, on many occasions my own grammatical interpretation of the text has led me to distance myself from their work.

5. Within the present study, cross-references to other sections of the analysis follow the format e.g. D:3.2.3, where the roman capital indicates the chapter intended (I: Introduction; D: Determination; N: Numerals; G: Genitive; V: Verbal system; W: Word order; C: general Conclusions) and the digits following indicate the relevant section within that chapter.