

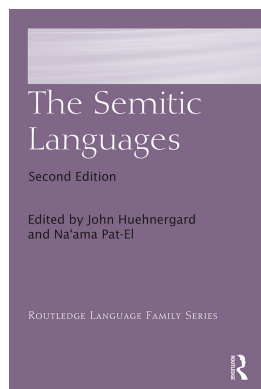
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### Mandaic

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# MANDAIC

*C.G. Häberl*

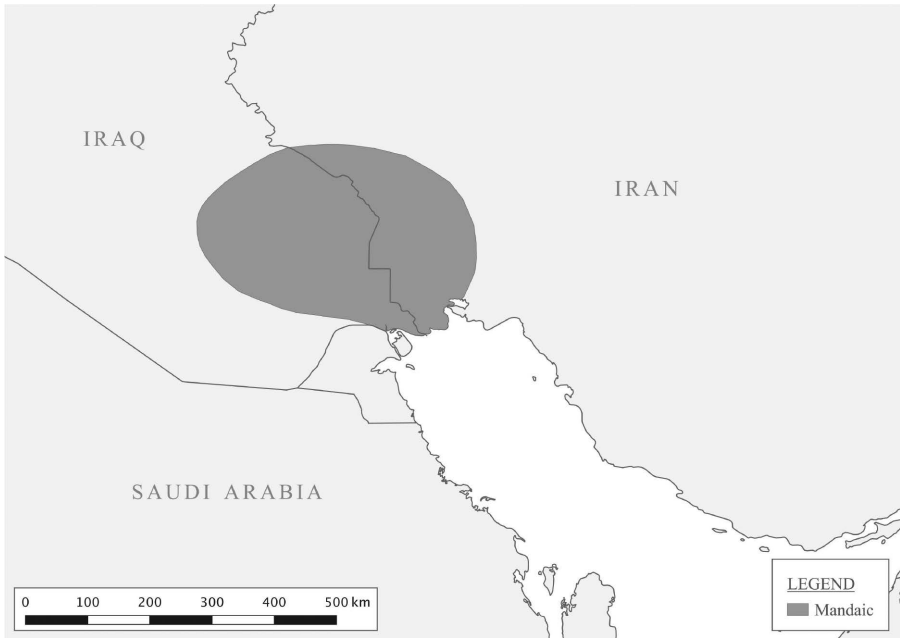
## 1 INTRODUCTION

Mandaic (in the form generally described as ‘Neo-Mandaic’ or ‘Modern Mandaic’; ISO/DIS 639–3: mid) is the language of the Mandæan community, which was formerly based in Iraq and Iran (Map 26.1) but is today distributed throughout the world, principally in Europe, Australia and North America, as the result of ethnic cleansing in its homeland. Despite its long history of attestation and copious literature, it is moribund today. Even though the members of the Mandæan community, numbering perhaps 60,000 adherents, are familiar with Mandaic through their sacred literature and liturgy, only a few hundred Mandæans, located primarily in Iran, speak it as a first language. Of these, even fewer use it regularly in writing, primarily to compose the colophons that accompany manuscripts (of which an example is given in §7).

Mandaic is the only known literary dialect of Aramaic to survive in vernacular usage to the present date. At first glance, its vernacular form appears to differ considerably from its literary form, primarily as a result of contact with neighboring languages, namely Arabic and Persian. All contemporary Mandaic speakers are bi- or even tri-lingual in these languages, and their influence upon the grammar of contemporary Mandaic is substantial, particularly in the lexicon (§6) and the morphology of the noun (§4.2). It was on the basis of this influence that Nöldeke (1875: XXI–XXV) first proposed his tentative periodization of Mandaic into two periods: an “Old Mandaic,” in which the principal works of the sacred canon were composed, and a “Young Mandaic,” the language of the later medieval and post-medieval manuscripts, including the aforementioned colophons and the priestly handbooks.

Nöldeke characterizes the latter by an abundance of Arabic and Persian loan words, and the former by their absence, although he is mute concerning their chronology. Macuch (1965a) classified the language of the former as “Classical Mandaic” (against the “Post-Classical Mandaic” of the latter compositions), even though the grammar of the former was never subject to the pervasive and sustained scholarly elaboration that characterizes all other classical languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Sanskrit and Syriac.

For that matter, Old or “Classical” Mandaic has never been used as a vehicle of communication or to create original compositions, in the manner of these other classical languages. Instead, the living vernacular tradition, Nöldeke’s Young Mandaic, has served in all such functions. The oldest surviving witness to this tradition is a polyglot glossary (the *Glossarium Sabicum, Persicum, Turcicum, et Arabicum*) incorporating a column of lexical items from the now extinct dialect of Basra. This manuscript was produced roughly three and a half centuries ago by the 17th-century Carmelite missionary Matteo di San Giuseppe (Borghero 2000) in collaboration with a local informant, and therefore predates most of the surviving manuscripts of the classical literature.



MAP 26.1 THE MANDAIC SPEECH AREA IN ANTIQUITY

The corpus of Mandaic texts available to scholars has grown considerably over the last century, particularly with regard to the spoken language. While samples of this language were collected and published by Nicholas Siouffi (1880) and Stefana Drower (1937), no complete Young Mandaic text was published until the beginning of the 20th century, when Jean Jacques de Morgan published facsimiles of five such texts in the fifth volume of his *Mission scientifique en Perse* (1904). In recent years, scholars have come to refer to the contemporary spoken forms of this language as “Neo-Mandaic” to distinguish them from those forms of Mandaic known only from manuscripts. Two surviving dialects of Mandaic have thus far been documented, those of Ahvāz and Khorramshahr. These dialects are mutually intelligible, to the extent that speakers of either dialect will deny that there are any substantive differences between the two. A third dialect, that of southern Iraq, is today extinct, but the samples of this dialect that were collected by Drower and published by Häberl (2010, 2013) are still completely comprehensible to speakers of Mandaic in their written form, despite some relatively minor phonological and morphosyntactic differences:

#### Phonological

	Old Mandaic	Iraq	Ahvaz	Khorramshahr
house	<b>baita</b>	<i>bejθæ</i>	<i>b(ij)eθa/ə</i>	<i>bieθə</i>
in, INS	<b>b-</b>	<i>gaw; b-</i>	<i>gu</i>	<i>gəw</i>
work	<b>ebada</b>	<i>wad</i>	<i>wəd</i>	<i>əwədə</i>
planet	<b>sibiaha</b>	<i>fewjæ</i>	<i>fewjəha</i>	<i>fewjəhə</i>
come! (IMP.PL)	<b>atun</b>	<i>doθi</i>	<i>d(ij)əθi</i>	<i>doθi</i>

## Morphosyntactic

	Old Mandaic	<i>Glossarium</i>	Iraq	Ahvaz	Khorramshahr
Emphatic	<b>-a</b>	<i>-a</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>-a/-ə</i>	<i>-ə</i>
1SG COP	<b>-na</b>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>-non</i>	<i>-nən</i>	<i>-nə</i>
3MPL PFV	<b>-(i)un</b>	<i>-jon</i>	<i>-jon</i>	<i>-jon</i>	<i>-jon</i>
DEONTIC	<b>-</b>	<i>ga-wəjeb</i>	<i>læ bod</i>	<i>bəjad</i>	<i>bəjad</i>
if	<b>hin/eu</b>	<i>eð</i>	<i>law s'ər</i>	<i>agar</i>	<i>agar</i>
that (DEM)	<b>hak</b>	<i>həχ</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>aχ</i> and <i>tə</i>	<i>aχu</i>
that (REL)	<b>ǰ</b>	<i>əleθə/əleθolli</i>	<i>elli</i> and <i>ke</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>elli</i> and <i>ke</i>
under	<b>atutia</b>	<i>θuθa</i>	<i>əl-tuθ</i>	<i>tuθ</i>	<i>tuθ</i>
with	<b>em</b>	<i>donba</i>	<i>ʕorqi</i>	<i>mork/orke</i>	<i>orke</i>
priest.PL	<b>tarmidia</b>	<i>tarmid-e</i>	<i>tærmid-an-æ</i>	<i>tarmid-ən</i>	<i>tarmid-ən-ə</i>
woman.PL	<b>enšia</b>	<i>eθθ-e</i>	<i>enf-æ/enf-ən-æ</i>	<i>enf-ən</i>	<i>enf-ə</i>
yet	<b>akandit</b>	<i>kandi</i>	<i>kændæ</i>	<i>kandi</i>	<i>kandi</i>

When compared to Old Mandaic, Young Mandaic appears remarkably conservative, and most of the features that distinguish the two stages of the language (in particular, the restructuring of the nominal morphology and the verbal system) are the result of developments already attested within the classical literature. These include the obsolescence of the system of states, the loss of a distinction between definite and indefinite nouns and the reinterpretation of the former emphatic state of the noun as the unmarked form, all of which are also characteristic of other eastern Aramaic languages (see Chapter 25 on Syriac). As Macuch (1965a: 207) notes, the classical texts also bear witness to the emergence of a new distinction in reference, which would become more fully elaborated in Young Mandaic. Another common eastern Aramaic phenomenon is the rise of an innovative participial present tense and its expansion to occupy all the syntactic roles formerly performed by the inherited prefix conjugation (§4.4). This gradual process, which has reached its natural conclusion in Young Mandaic, is well documented in the classical texts, in some of which the prefix conjugation is still quite productive, and in others it is increasingly restricted to fewer and fewer contexts, primarily to indicate irrealis moods (Häberl 2015). Uniquely among the surviving Eastern Aramaic languages, Mandaic preserves the West Semitic suffix conjugation to represent the perfective, which is as vigorous in Young Mandaic as it is in Old Mandaic.

In a few respects, Young Mandaic appears even more conservative than Old Mandaic; for example, Nöldeke (1875: 86–7) describes the Old Mandaic 2nd person independent pronouns **anat** and **anatun** (singular and plural) as the product of restructuring through paradigmatic leveling, but as Morgenstern (2010: 514) notes, Young Mandaic preserves more conservative forms of these pronouns, *ət* and *atton*.

## 2 WRITING SYSTEM

When writing Mandaic and occasionally Arabic, the Mandæans of Iraq and Iran employ a cursive and ligatured script unique to their community. Prior to 1963, scholars regularly transliterated Mandaic as if it were a pure abjad. The graphemic equivalents of *ʔ*, *j*, *w*, *ʕ* and *h* were (and occasionally still are) transliterated as consonants that could optionally be used to represent vowels. In fact, the reverse is true: these are primarily vowel letters, although *j* and *w* also represent the glides /j/ and /w/, and *ʔ* can be used to delineate the

margins of words that begin or end with a vowel other than *a* or *ɔ*, even though it lacks any phonetic value of its own in these contexts – something like the hashtag # used in linguistic glossing. *A Mandaic Dictionary* (Drower and Macuch 1963) introduced a new transliteration system, according to which transliterations are rendered in **bold type** to avoid confusion with transcriptions (see Table 26.1).

A final tally of the characters reveals 20 distinct segments represented by 21 different characters, of which two, **i** and **e**, overlap, albeit with a different distribution. The character **e** most often appears at the beginning of the word. The character **i**, by contrast, cannot appear at the beginning of the word, in which context initial *e-* or *i-* are represented by the combination **ai-**. These are joined by two morpho-graphemes, **h**, which represents the suffixed form of the 3SG pronouns, and **d**, which governs genitive relationships and relative clauses, and which is pronounced identically to **d**. The first and final character, *halqɔ* ‘circle’, brings the final tally of characters to 24 and returns entire series back to its beginning.

This script only exceptionally distinguishes vowel quality or consonant length, but it does regularly and consistently represent vowels, in contrast to the earliest Old Mandaic texts, such as the epigraphic incantation texts, which occasionally omit vowel letters. Some texts employ a bar beneath the vowel letters to distinguish them from the equivalent glottal or approximants (**a** vs. **a** /ʔ/, **i** vs. **i** /j/ and **u** vs. **u** /w/), and a single dot beneath a consonant letter to indicate doubling, but these conventions are not generally used outside the context of early childhood and primary education (Choheili 2004). In addition,

TABLE 26.1 THE MANDAIC ALPHABET

LETTER	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSCRIPTION	NAME
∘	<b>a</b>	ʔ, a, ɔ	<i>a/halqɔ</i> ‘circle’
⋈	<b>b</b>	<i>b, w</i>	<i>ba</i>
⋈	<b>g</b>	<i>g, ɣ</i>	<i>ga</i>
⋈	<b>d</b>	<i>d, ð</i>	<i>da</i>
⋈	<b>h</b>	<i>h</i>	<i>ha</i>
⋈	<b>u</b>	<i>o, u, w</i>	<i>wa/fennɔ</i> ‘tooth’
⋈	<b>z</b>	<i>z</i>	<i>za</i>
⋈	<b>h</b>	<i>-i</i> (3SG)	<i>i</i> ( <i>e</i> in Iraq)
⋈	<b>ʔ</b>	<i>tʰ</i>	<i>tʰa</i>
⋈	<b>i</b>	<i>e, i, j</i>	<i>ja/aksɔ</i> ‘reverse’
⋈	<b>k</b>	<i>k, χ</i>	<i>ka</i>
⋈	<b>l</b>	<i>l</i>	<i>la</i>
⋈	<b>m</b>	<i>m</i>	<i>ma</i>
⋈	<b>n</b>	<i>n</i>	<i>na</i>
⋈	<b>s</b>	<i>s</i>	<i>sa</i>
⋈	<b>e</b>	ʔ, e, i	<i>i</i>
⋈	<b>p</b>	<i>p, f</i>	<i>pa</i>
⋈	<b>s</b>	<i>sʰ</i>	<i>sʰa</i>
⋈	<b>q</b>	<i>q</i>	<i>qa</i>
⋈	<b>r</b>	<i>r</i>	<i>ra</i>
⋈	<b>ʃ</b>	<i>f</i>	<i>fa</i>
⋈	<b>t</b>	<i>t, θ</i>	<i>ta</i>
⋈	<b>d</b>	(ə) <i>d</i>	<i>du fennɔ</i> ‘ <i>du</i> tooth’
∘	<b>a</b>	-	<i>halqɔ</i> ‘circle’

four non-canonical letters represent sounds in Mandaic texts that are not inherited from Old Mandaic. One of these has been borrowed directly from Arabic; the other three are created by modifying existing letters with two dots below:

ⲉ	ⲥ	Ⲅ	Ⲅajn
ⲥ	<b>h</b>	h	ha
Ⲅ	<b>ṭ</b>	d <sup>ɕ</sup> , δ <sup>ɕ</sup>	d <sup>ɕ</sup> a, δ <sup>ɕ</sup> a
Ⲅ	<b>ʃ</b>	dʒ, ʃ	dʒa/ʃa

This same system can also be used to represent the fricativized reflexes of the Old Mandaic plosive series and equivalent sounds in other languages such as Arabic and Persian, but is only occasionally used in this manner.

ⲉ	g̣	ɣ	ɣa
Ⲅ	ḍ	ð	ða
Ⲅ	ḳ	χ	χa
Ⲅ	p̣	f	fā
Ⲅ	ṭ	θ	θa

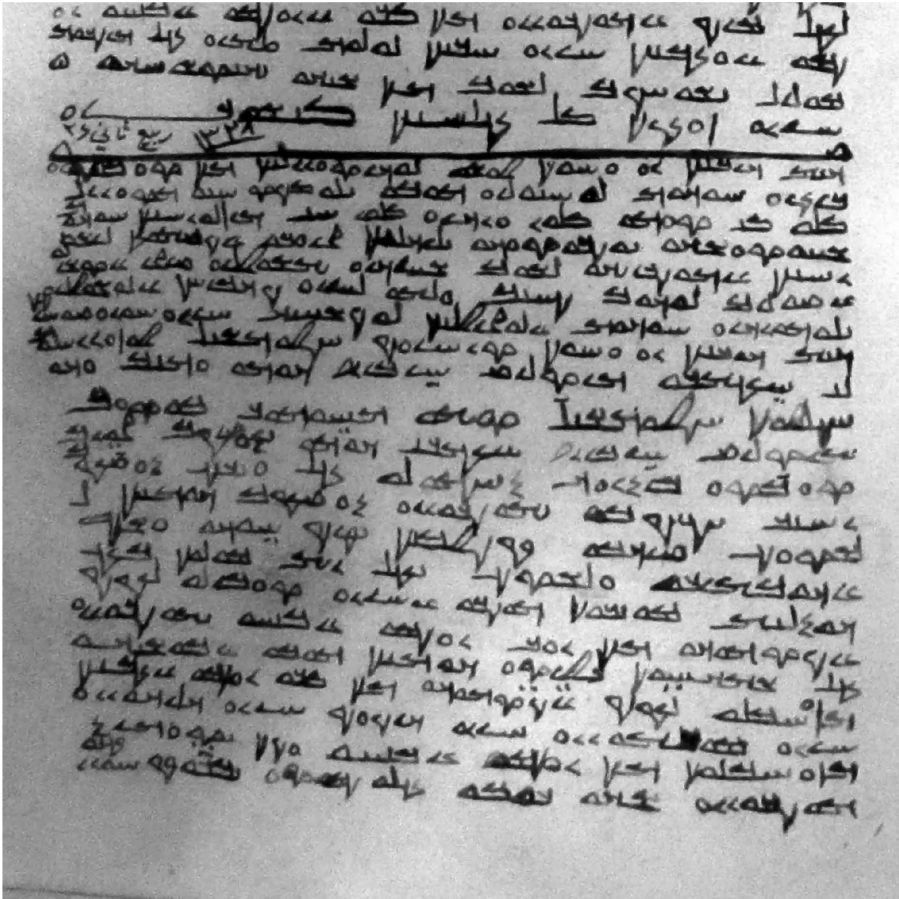
In Young Mandaic, *w* is regularly represented by **u**, even when it is historically a reflex of *\*b*, although occasionally a hypercorrect **b** is substituted for etymological *\*w*, even in the older texts, e.g. *zawjɔθɔ* ‘corners’ (from *\*zāwīj-*) appears once in the *Canonical Prayerbook* (Q 3:17) as **zabiata**.

As noted earlier, Mandaic is a ligatured script. Most of these characters can join indiscriminately to the adjacent characters on the left or the right. Five graphemes (**a**, **z**, **h**, **i** and **ʃ**) can only join to the right. The morpho-grapheme **h** is found exclusively at the end of a word, and **ḍ** appears only in isolation; the character **d** replaces it in ligature, e.g., **ḍ** ‘which’ but **udla** ‘and which does not’, except before a vowel, where it is replaced by **ṭ**, e.g., **ṭabid** [tʰɔwɛd] ‘the one who does,’ **ṭabahatan** [tʰawɔhɔθan] ‘of our ancestors’.

Mandaic orthography is largely (but not exclusively) phonetic, albeit with a marked tendency towards morphographemic and historicizing spellings. Macuch (1965a: 104) was the first to recognize a useful distinction between the inherited pronunciations of native speakers and learned pronunciations derived from the written forms, coining the term *abagadical* for the latter.<sup>1</sup> For example, in Mandaic as in many other related languages, the alveolar nasal /n/ regularly assimilates to the following plosive consonant, e.g., **nitin** ‘he gives’ (*\*nantin-*) and **nitilh** ‘he gives him’ (*\*nantin-li-hū*). This is an ancient phenomenon, inherited from earlier stages of the language. The spoken varieties attest to it as well, e.g., **npaq** ‘he left’ and **anpiq** ‘he caused s.o. to leave, expelled’, which are pronounced *nafaq* and *affeq*, and **hurina** ‘other (MSG)’ and **hurinta** ‘other (FSG)’, which are pronounced *horinɔ* and *horetɔ*. With a few possible exceptions (e.g., **enta** ‘wife’, consistently pronounced *eθθɔ*) these spellings should not be mistaken for “historical” spellings under any circumstances, since they operate on a purely synchronic basis. In most cases, historical *\*n* appears only where it might be restored through analogy.

Separate from these morpho-graphemic spellings are genuinely historical ones, which were either inherited from earlier stages of the writing system or perhaps influenced by other Aramaic writing traditions. For example, the Mandaic reflex of Aramaic *\*ð* is not infrequently represented by a **z** in writing, even when it is pronounced as a *d* in the spoken language, e.g., **zahba** *dahwɔ* ‘gold’ (abagadical: *zahba*) from *\*ðahab-*. This has resulted

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**FIGURE 26.1** COLOPHON OF A MANUSCRIPT OF THE MANDÆAN BOOK OF JOHN, COPIED BY SHEIKH MƏHATTAM, SON OF YAḤYA BEHRAM OF ʕAMĀRAH, IRAQ, IN 1910. FROM THE COLLECTION OF NASSER SOBBI OF FLUSHING, NEW YORK

Image courtesy of Charles Häberl.

in a series of by-forms, reflecting the received pronunciation and the abagadical one. In addition, the words *ziqla deqlō* ‘date-palm’ (abagadical: *zeqla*) and *zma dəmō* ‘blood’ (abagadical: *zəma* or *zammō*) are regularly spelled with a *z*, despite deriving from \**dīqil-ā* and \**damm-ā*, respectively. Such hypercorrections are also characteristic of Mandaic orthography.

Similarly, *q* sometimes represents *ø*, generally where it is the reflex of PS \**ʕ*, e.g., *arqa arrō* ‘land’ (abagadical: *arqa*) from \**ʕarʕ*-. The subsequent merger of PS \**ʕ* and \**ʕ* has provided an environment for occasional hypercorrect forms such as *aqapra afrō* ‘dust’ (abagadical: *aqafra*) from \**ʕapar-ā*. Note that in this example, as in the words for *aqna* ‘sheep’ and *aqamra* ‘wool’, it is appended to the beginning of the word in a separate syllable, hence *ʕaq-afrō*. Such silent prothetic syllables are not uncommon, particularly

in prepositions (e.g., **atutia** *tuθi* ‘under’, abagadical: *atuθi*), even when they are neither etymological nor reflected in the spoken language. Many of these words appear alongside by-forms, with and without the prothetic syllable, e.g., **amra** and **aqamra**, **ana** and **aqna**. Apart from the silent **a**, Macuch (1965a: 127–30) cites a few examples of a seemingly silent **u** that appears after **š** and/or before **m**, e.g., **šuma** *e/ino* ‘name’ (abagadical: *foma*). These orthographic conventions, and the continued use of inflected forms that have disappeared from the spoken language (such as the prefix conjugation), are part and parcel of Mandaic writing at all periods.

### 3 PHONOLOGY

There are 28 phonemic consonantal segments in Mandaic (see Table 26.2): eight stops, nine fricatives and six sonorants, all of which are inherited, and five loan-phonemes: the labiodental fricative *v*, the postalveolar affricates *f* and *ɟ* and the pharyngeal fricatives *ʕ* and *ħ*, all of which are found only in vocabulary of foreign origin, particularly Arabic and Persian.

#### 3.1 Stops and affricates

The glottal stop *ʔ* and two pharyngealized segments (a voiced alveolar stop and a voiced alveolar fricative *ð*<sup>3</sup>) are found in a few Arabic loan words, but I have excluded them from the phonemic inventory of Mandaic due to their marginal status.

This phonemic inventory is the product of a series of historical mergers and splits:

- the PS interdental merged with the dentals: *\*ð, \*d > d; \*θ, \*t > t; \*θ', \*t' > t'*
- the PS alveolar lateral merged with its central counterpart: *\*l, \*s > s*
- the PS velars merged with the pharyngeals: *\*ç, \*y > \*ç; \*ħ, \*χ > \*ħ*
- the PS *\*l'*, here reconstructed as a glottalic alveolar lateral, likewise merged with the voiced pharyngeal: *\*l', \*ç > \*ç*
- the pharyngeals then merged with the glottals: *\*ʔ, \*ç, > ø; \*ħ, \*ħ > h*

TABLE 26.2 CONSONANT INVENTORY

	BILABIAL	LABIO-DENTAL	INTER-DENTAL	ALVEOLAR	POSTAL-VEOLAR	PALATAL	VELAR	UVULAR	PHARYN-GEAL	GLOTTAL
Voiceless	<i>p b</i>			<i>t d tʕ</i>	<i>f ɟ</i>		<i>k g</i>	<i>q</i>		
<b>Fricatives</b>	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Inter-dental	Alveolar	Postal-veolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Voiceless		<i>f v</i>	<i>θ</i>	<i>s z sʕ</i>	<i>f</i>			<i>χ ʕ</i>	<i>ħ ʕ</i>	<i>h</i>
<b>Sonorants</b>	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Inter-dental	Alveolar	Postal-veolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Nasal	<i>m</i>			<i>n</i>						
Lateral				<i>l</i>						
Apical				<i>r</i>						
Approximant	<i>w</i>					<i>j</i>				



The “emphatic” consonants, which are today only very lightly pharyngealized, are here reconstructed as historically glottalic, as they are in the Ethio-Semitic languages, in light of evidence from the relative pronoun **ḏ**-. As noted in §2, it appears in two allophones, *tʰ* before a vowel (i.e., in contexts where it would historically have been followed by a glottal stop), and *d* in all other environments.

At some point in the history of Mandaic, the surviving non-emphatic stops (*b, g, d, k, p, t*) developed fricative allophones (*w, ɣ, δ, χ, f, θ*) in certain environments. Due to the regular deletion of short vowels in open pretonic syllables, analogical restructuring, and lexical borrowing from Arabic and other languages, the distribution of these former allophones is not at all predictable, and they have emerged as new phonemes in their own right, as illustrated by a number of minimal pairs, e.g., *bəwə* ‘father’ vs. *wəwə* ‘gate’, *sʰoprə* ‘bird’ vs. *sʰofrə* ‘yellow’, *atton* 2PL vs. *aθθon* ‘they brought’.

The vowel system (Table 26.3) in Mandaic is composed of seven distinct vowels, of which six (*a, e, i, o, u* and *ə*) are principal phonemes, and one (*ə*) is marginal. The vowels are distinguished by quality rather than quantity.

Three of the principle vowels, the ‘tense’ vowels *ɔ, i* and *u*, are lengthened in open accented syllables to [ɔ:] or [ɔ:], [i:] and [u:]. These normally represent the reflexes of the PS series of long vowels, \**ā, \*ī* and \**ū*, in all environments save for open pretonic syllables.

The other three principle vowels, the ‘lax’ vowels *a, e* and *o*, appear only exceptionally in open accented syllables. Their allophones are conditioned by the structure of the syllable in which they are found and presence or absence of stress. *a* is realized as [a] in closed accented syllables, and as [a] or [æ] elsewhere. *e* is realized as [e:] in open accented syllables, [ɛ] in closed tonic or post-tonic syllables and [ɪ] elsewhere. Likewise, *o* is realized as [o:] in open accented syllables, [o] in closed tonic or post-tonic syllables, and [ʌ] elsewhere. These three vowels usually continue the PS series of short vowels, \**a, \*i* and \**u*, in all environments save for open pretonic syllables, where they represent the reflexes of PS \**ā, \*ī* and \**ū*. The final vowel, schwa (*ə*), has the widest allophonic variation of all the vowels; it is regularly fronted, backed, raised or lowered in harmony with the vowel of the following syllable. It often represents the reflex of PS \**a, \*i* and \**u*, in open pretonic syllables, in which vowels are regularly subject to reduction or deletion.

There are also six diphthongs, *ej, ew, aj, aw, əj* and *əw*. The diphthongs *aj* and *aw*, which had collapsed to *i* and *u* in closed accented syllables already in the classical language, have collapsed in all accented syllables in the dialects of Ahvaz and Khorramshahr, apart from those in words of foreign origin.

Words of one, two, three, four and five syllables are common:

<i>men</i>	[mɪn]	from
<i>mendi</i>	[ˈmɛn.di]	something
<i>qanəjə</i>	[qaˈnɔːjɔ]	smith
<i>mofmenəwə</i>	[mʌf.mɛ.ˈnɔː.nɔ]	Muslims
<i>əmalfenanni</i>	[ə.mal.fɛ.ˈnan.ni]	we will teach him

TABLE 26.3 MANDAIC VOWEL INVENTORY

	FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
Close	<i>i</i>	<i>u</i>	
Mid	<i>e</i>	<i>ə</i>	<i>o</i>
Open	<i>a</i>	<i>ɔ</i>	

The constituent syllables consist of an onset (which is optional in word-initial syllables) and a rime. The rime consists of a nucleus (usually a vowel or a syllabic consonant) with or without a coda. The onset and the coda which frame the nucleus consist of consonants; the onset is mandatory for all word-internal syllables, but the coda is optional in all environments. The syllable patterns V, VC, CV and CVC are the most common.

ɔ	[ɔ]	this (contextual)
aχ	[aχ]	that (contextual)
mu	[mu:]	what
tum	[tum]	then

Considerably less common are syllables containing clusters of consonantal or vocalic segments, such as VCC, CCV, CCVC, CVCC, CVVC and even CVVCC:

ahl	[ahl] or [ahhəl]	family
klɔθɔ	[ˈkɫɔ:.θɔ]	three
sʰtʰɔnje	[ˈstʰɔn.je]	he is a boy
waxt	[væxt]	time
bieθ	[biɛθ]	house (contextual)
fieltχon	[ˈfiɛlt.χon]	I asked you (PL)

These transcriptions reflect the Khorramshahr dialect. The treatment of these syllables varies from dialect to dialect. The Iraqi dialects, in particular, regularly introduce a prothetic *e-* before all initial clusters. In Khorramshahr, this is common only among short words of two syllables (with an underlying CCV pattern), which have been reanalyzed as if they were VC.CV, e.g., *efmɔ* ‘name’, along the lines of triradicals that have lost an initial consonant, such as *esrɔ* ‘10’. When these lose the final augment (see §4.2), such as within the construct chain (§5.3.3), an anaptyctic *ə* is inserted between the first and second consonant, thereby preserving the VC.CV(C) syllable structure, e.g., *effəm* ‘name (of)’. Word-final consonant clusters are common only in words of Arabic origin, such as *ahl* ‘people’.

Word stress typically falls upon a tense vowel within a closed syllable. The placement of the stress is determined from the final syllable. Any final syllable (or ultima) that is closed and contains a tense vowel automatically receives the accent, e.g., *qə=mahrəw-št* IND=destroy.IPFV-2SG ‘you destroy’. If the final is open or contains a lax vowel, the accent will fall upon the penultimate syllable, provided that it is closed or contains a tense vowel, e.g., *kālbɔ* ‘dog’. Otherwise, the stress will fall on the final syllable, e.g., *dəmə* ‘blood’, *bəḡás* ‘he stopped’. In words of three or more syllables, if neither the ultima nor the penultima is closed and contains a tense vowel, then the accent recedes to the antepenultimate syllable, e.g., *gatʰél-nɔ-χon* kill.IPFV-1SG-2MPL ‘I will kill you’. Several morphemes automatically take the accent, such as the negative morpheme *lá*, which causes the stress to shift to the first syllable of the verb.

#### 4 MORPHOLOGY

Like many Aramaic languages, Mandaic is fundamentally a synthetic language, marking distinctions in gender, number, pragmatic status (in nouns) and person, tense, mood, aspect and voice (in verbs) primarily through inflectional morphemes and secondarily through clitics and word order.

## 4.1 Pronouns

Pronouns may be substituted for any noun phrase. There are five types of pronouns: personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, relativizers, indefinite pronouns and interrogative pronouns.

### 4.1.1 Independent and suffixed pronouns

Personal pronouns have both independent and suffixal forms (Table 26.4). The suffixal forms are attached to non-verbal predicates, such as participles, nouns, pronouns and prepositions. The independent personal pronouns are optionally employed to represent the subject of a verb. Whenever the singular forms appear before a verb, their final vowel is apocopated. The enclitic pronominal suffixes are in complementary distribution with them; they may represent the object of a transitive verb, a nominal or verbal complement or adjunct in a prepositional phrase, or indicate possession on the noun. Exclusively on nouns of foreign origin, they are affixed after *-d-* (which superficially resembles the Old Mandaic relative pronoun, see §5.4.2.2, albeit with a different distribution).

On the noun *naff-* ‘self’, the suffixed pronouns also serve to form the reflexive pronouns. Mandaic also has two reciprocal pronouns, *ham* ‘each other’ and *həḏəḏə* ‘one another’.

### 4.1.2 Demonstratives

Mandaic distinguishes between near-deixis and far-deixis in the singular demonstrative pronouns, but not in its plurals. The demonstratives also reflect no distinction in gender. The original far-deictic plural demonstrative pronoun *ahni* ‘those’ (Old Mandaic *hani*) has assumed the function of a general plural demonstrative pronoun. It is also often used in the place of the independent third plural personal pronoun.

The demonstrative pronouns precede the noun they modify. In this position, the final vowel of the singular demonstratives is apocopated (these are the forms listed as ‘contextual’ in Table 26.5). The plural demonstrative does not appear in a contextual form. Singular forms may be used before plural nouns when a plural morpheme is present, indicating plurality on the whole noun phrase, e.g., *ɔ ʃerf-ən-ɔ* this religion-PL-AUG ‘these religions’. Mandaic also has two locative demonstrative pronouns, *hənə/ehnə* ‘here’ and *ekkəχ* ‘there’.

**TABLE 26.4 THE INDEPENDENT PERSONAL PRONOUNS (AND ENCLITIC PRONOMINAL SUFFIXES)**

	MSG		FSG		PL	
1	<i>anɔ</i>	(-e)			<i>ani</i>	(-an)
2	<i>ət</i>		<i>ət</i>	(-eχ)	<i>atton</i>	(-χon)
3	<i>huwi</i>	(-i)	<i>hidə</i>	(-a)	<i>honni</i>	(-u)

**TABLE 26.5 THE DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS**

	NEAR-DEIXIS			FAR-DEIXIS		
Isolated	Contextual	Gloss	Isolated	Contextual	Gloss	
<i>əhə</i>	<i>ɔ</i>	this	<i>əχu</i>	<i>əχ</i>	that	
<i>ahni</i>	-	these	<i>ahni</i>	-	those	

### 4.1.3 Relativizers

Whenever the head noun of the clause is presumed to be identifiable to the audience, Mandaic employs one of two relativizers, which have been borrowed from other languages: *elli* ‘which’ (Arabic) and *ke* ‘that’ (Persian). These two relativizers are indeclinable. The primary distinction between the two lies in the type of relative clauses which they govern. The former, *elli*, is employed to introduce nonrestrictive relative clauses, and the latter, *ke*, introduces restrictive clauses. For this reason, *ke* also serves after verbs of perception and verbs that introduce direct speech. Headless indefinite relative clauses can also be introduced by the indefinite pronouns *kol man* ‘whoever’ and *kol mō* ‘whatever’; see §4.1.4.

### 4.1.4 Interrogative and indefinite pronouns

Mandaic disposes of a wide array of interrogative particles, none of which inflect for gender or number:

<i>man</i>	who
<i>mu</i>	what (contextual form <i>mo-</i> )
<i>eljō</i>	where (contextual form <i>elli</i> )
<i>hemdō</i>	when
<i>qamu</i>	why
<i>kammō</i>	how (contextual form <i>kam</i> )
<i>hem</i>	which
<i>mojur</i>	how; in what way
<i>ʕand</i>	how much
<i>kaθkammō</i>	how much/many (contextual form <i>kaθkam</i> )

Noun substantives and adjectives, modified by the indefinite morpheme *-i*, are likewise employed as pronouns to indicate nonspecific or indefinite referents, e.g., *enʕi* ‘someone, anyone (lit. a person)’, *mendi* ‘something, anything (lit. a thing)’. As these indefinite pronouns cannot be modified by an adjective or govern another word in a construct chain (§5.3.3), they never occur in contextual forms.

In addition to indefinite pronouns formed from nouns and adjectives with the indefinite morpheme, there are compound indefinite pronouns composed of a quantifier or an interrogative preposition and a second nominal or pronominal element, e.g., *kol dokkō* ‘everywhere’, *kol man* ‘whoever’, *kol mō* ‘whatever’. In the compound indefinite pronouns, the original Semitic quantifier *kol* ‘all’ is replaced by the Persian quantifier *hiʕ* ‘no/never’ whenever these pronouns serve as the argument of a negative verb, e.g., *hiʕ waʕt* ‘never’.

## 4.2 Noun substantives and adjectives

Nouns can reflect two genders (masculine and feminine), two numbers (SG and PL) (see §4.2.1), as well as identifiability and referentiality (§4.2.2). The basic lexical form of most nouns is that of the stem and the augment (AUG) *-ō*, the presence or absence of which is determined largely by phonological factors. The morphemes indicating gender and/or number immediately follow the stem, and precede the augment. The indefinite morpheme takes the place of the augment. Non-nativized loan words possess the same structure as other nouns, but dispense with the augment.

#### 4.2.1 Noun patterns

Most Mandaic nouns fall into five basic patterns, CVC-, CVCC-, CVCVC-, CCVC- and CVCCVC-. Note that the glottal stop /ʔ/ (which is not transcribed when it appears in initial position) may also stand for the initial root consonant. Apart from the repetition of the two initial consonants, any permutation of consonants and vowels is theoretically possible, although many of the potential patterns are rare and/or restricted to vocabulary borrowed from other languages, such as CaCCɔC-, which generally denotes professions or occupations. Nearly all of these patterns are lexically restricted, and only a few are productive. These productive patterns are deverbal, such as CɔCeC- and CɔCɔC-, which generate verbal adjectives and verbal nouns, respectively.

In addition to the basic patterns, there are patterns in which affirmatives are affixed to the noun stem. Some affirmatives, such as the derivational morphemes *-ɔj-*, *-i* and *-uθ-/oχt-*, are applied to existing lexemes in such a way as to change their meanings in a consistent and predictable manner. Other affirmatives, such as *m-*, *t-* and *-ɔn-* do not appear to impart any consistent meaning to the lexeme.

#### 4.2.2 Gender and number marking

Mandaic has two basic grammatical genders, masculine and feminine. The gender of a given noun, and its plural form, are unpredictable (see Table 26.6).

While most nouns, masculine and feminine alike, are marked with the plural morpheme *ɔn*, ablaut and suppletive plurals are attested. The feminine plural morpheme <sup>(w/ɣ)</sup>ɔθ- most commonly appears on nouns whose singular form is marked explicitly with the feminine singular morpheme *t*, although it can also be found on the plural forms of many feminine nouns not marked as such in the singular. Most loan words take the plural morpheme *(h)ɔ*, although a few retain the plural forms of their source languages, including suppletive plurals.

#### 4.2.3 Referentiality and identifiability

The appearance of the indefinite and plural morphemes on the noun is determined primarily by its pragmatic status (Table 26.7), such as the referentiality and identifiability of the referent. Referential nouns are explicitly marked when plural as well as when they serve as the object of a verb, in which case they are marked with the enclitic morpheme *əl* and anticipated by a pronominal suffix on the verb. The referent of an unmarked noun such

**TABLE 26.6 GENDER AND NUMBER MARKING**

GENDER	SINGULAR	GLOSS	PL	GLOSS
M	<i>mend-ɔ</i>	thing	<i>mend-ɔn-ɔ</i>	things
F	<i>kəɾɔj-ɔ</i>	leg	<i>kerj-ɔn-ɔ</i>	legs
F	<i>nəfem-t-ɔ</i>	soul	<i>nəf-m-ɔθ-ɔ</i>	souls
F	<i>bieθ-ɔ</i>	house	<i>bieθ-wɔθ-ɔ</i>	houses
M	<i>gawɾ-ɔ</i>	man	<i>gowɾ-ɔ</i>	men
F	<i>eθθ-ɔ</i>	woman	<i>enf-ɔ</i>	women
M	<i>darvif</i>	dervish	<i>darvif-ɔ</i>	dervishes
M	<i>waxt</i>	time	<i>awqət</i>	times

TABLE 26.7 PRAGMATIC STATUS OF THE NOUN

	<i>SPECIFIC</i>	<i>NONSPECIFIC</i>	<i>GENERIC</i>	<i>IDENTIFIABLE</i>	<i>GLOSS</i>
<i>barnəf-ə</i>		-		+	people/the person
<i>barnəf-i</i>			-	-	a person
<i>barnef-ən-ə</i>			-	+	the people
<i>barnef-ən-i</i>			-	-	some (of the) people
<i>əl-barnəf-ə</i>	+			+	the person/the people
<i>əl-barnəf-i</i>	+			-	a (specific) person
<i>əl-barnef-ən-ə</i>	+			+	the (specific) people
<i>əl-barnef-ən-i</i>	+			-	some (specific) people

TABLE 26.8 CARDINAL NUMBERS

<i>TRADITIONAL</i>	<i>MODERN</i>	<i>GLOSS</i>	<i>TRADITIONAL</i>	<i>MODERN</i>	<i>GLOSS</i>
<i>ehdə</i>	<i>jek</i>	one	<i>esrə</i>	<i>dah</i>	ten
<i>tren</i>	<i>do</i>	two	<i>esrin</i>	<i>bis</i>	twenty
<i>kləθə</i>	<i>se</i>	three	<i>kləθin</i>	<i>si</i>	thirty
<i>arbə</i>	<i>ʔahər</i>	four	<i>ərbin</i>	<i>ʔel</i>	forty
<i>hamfə</i>	<i>panj</i>	five	<i>hamfin</i>	<i>panjəh</i>	fifty
<i>ʔettə</i>	<i>ʔeʔ</i>	six	<i>ʔettin</i>	<i>ʔast</i>	sixty
<i>ʔowwə</i>	<i>haft</i>	seven	<i>ʔowwin</i>	<i>haftəd</i>	seventy
<i>təmənə</i>	<i>haft</i>	eight	<i>təmənin</i>	<i>haftəd</i>	eighty
<i>eʔfjə</i>	<i>noh</i>	nine	<i>eʔfin</i>	<i>navəd</i>	ninety

as *barnəfə* can either be specific ('the person') or generic ('people') but not nonspecific ('a person'). By contrast, the indefinite morpheme *-i* indicates that the referent is neither generic nor identifiable, but is ambiguous as to whether the referent is specific ('a particular person') or nonspecific ('some person').

As noted earlier (§4.1.4), nouns and adjectives modified by the indefinite morpheme *-i* can serve as indefinite pronouns to indicate nonspecific or indefinite referents (such as *enfi* 'someone' and *mendi* 'something').

### 4.3 Numerals

#### 4.3.1 Cardinals

The cardinal numbers (Table 26.8) most commonly used in Mandaic are borrowed from colloquial Persian, although the inherited numbers survive alongside them. Regardless of their origin, cardinal numbers appear before the noun, and are invariable; they do not agree in gender with the noun. Likewise, the noun modified by the number always appears in the singular.

The number *esrin* 'twenty' is derived from the number *esrə* 'ten'; the other decades are formed on the basis of the numbers 3–9 with *-in* appended. All numbers apart from the units and the decades are formed from compounds. Numbers 11–19 are formed from the unit in juncture with the contextual form of *esrə* 'ten'. In other compound numbers, the unit and the decade are combined by the conjunction *u* 'and'. The centuries are formed from the units in juncture with the word for one hundred, *emmə*, e.g., *ʔemmə*

‘nine-hundred’. The word for one thousand is *alf*. In counting, centuries always precede decades, and millennia always precede centuries.

#### 4.3.2 Ordinals

As with the cardinals, the inherited ordinals (Table 26.9) are less commonly used than their Persian equivalents. The former generally behave more like attributive adjectives than the other numerals and non-numeral quantifiers, such as *perz* ‘few/little’, *genz* ‘much/many’, *kol* ‘all; every’ and *hiḡ* ‘no/never’ (§4.1.4).

Outside of proper nouns, the Old Mandaic ordinal *qadməj* ‘first’ seldom appears in place of the more common *awwāl*, which is a loan word; the adjectives *horin* and *horet* are more commonly used in the place of *tenjən* ‘second’; *kleθəj* ‘third’ frequently appears instead of *tleθəj*; and the loan word *aḡir* ‘last’ appears more frequently in place of the Old Mandaic *baθrəj* ‘last’. Note that, with the exception of the loan words *awwāl* and *aḡir*, ordinals follow the noun that they modify.

### 4.4 Verbs

The verbal system of Mandaic is relatively conservative in comparison with other living Eastern Aramaic languages. Uniquely within this subgroup, it preserves the West Semitic suffix conjugation (the “perfect”) and the imperative. One of its most salient features is an innovative “participial present tense,” which has supplanted the prefix conjugation in all of its other forms and functions.

#### 4.4.1 Tense/aspect/mood and voice

The morphology of the verb reflects two aspects (perfective and imperfective) and three moods (indicative, subjunctive, and imperative). Perfective verbs are by their nature generally indicative, although they can be used in counterfactual constructions:

*ágar pərcḥ-ə həwə=l=ey turt-i zawn-it*  
 if money-AUG be.PFV.3MSG=to=1SG cow-INDF buy.PFV-1SG  
 ‘If I had had the money, I would have bought a cow.’

TABLE 26.9 CARDINAL NUMBERS

TRADITIONAL	MODERN	GLOSS
<i>qadməj</i>	<i>yekóm</i>	first
<i>tenjən</i>	<i>dovvóm</i>	second
<i>tleθəj</i>	<i>sevvóm</i>	third
<i>arbəj</i>	<i>ʕehəróm</i>	fourth
<i>hamfəj</i>	<i>panjóm</i>	fifth
<i>fetəj</i>	<i>ʕešóm</i>	sixth
<i>fowəj</i>	<i>haftóm</i>	seventh
<i>təmenəj</i>	<i>haštóm</i>	eighth
<i>etfəj</i>	<i>nohóm</i>	ninth
<i>esrəj</i>	<i>dahóm</i>	tenth

When indicative in meaning, imperfective verbs are marked with the morpheme *q(a)-*. Their subjunctive equivalents are built upon a reduced form of the same base, in which the vowel of the initial syllable reduces to /ə/ whenever it is open and in pretonic position (following the regular sound rule introduced in §3), and the 1SG and 1PL personal morphemes introduced in Table 26.10 are dropped.

Each verb which may appear in one or more of six verbal stems: the G stem or basic stem, the D stem or transitivity-denominative verbal stem, the C stem or causative verbal stem, and the mediopassive tG, tD and tC stems, to which a derivational morpheme, *t-*, was historically prefixed before the first consonant of the root. This morpheme has disappeared from all roots save for those possessing a sibilant as their initial radical, such as *es't'əwə ~ es't'əwi (mes't'əwi)* ‘to be/get baptized’ in the G stem or *estallam ~ estallam (meftallam)* ‘to be welcome, get welcomed’ in the C stem, in which the stop and the sibilant are metathesized. A seventh stem, the Q stem, is reserved exclusively for those verbs whose stems contain four consonants in place of the canonical three.

The principal parts upon which all inflected forms of the verb are built are the perfective base (represented by the 3MSG form of the perfective), the imperative base (represented by the MSG form of the imperative), and the imperfective base (represented by the MSG form of the active participle, §4.4.5). In the G stem, the second syllable of the perfective base can have one of three thematic vowels: /a/, /e/ and /o/. Transitive verbs predominantly belong to the first, which is the most common of the three, whereas the latter two typically characterize intransitives and stative verbs. Examples of the principal parts for all seven verbal stems are given in Table 26.10.

Apart from the relatively uncommon mediopassive t stems, a true passive voice can also be rendered by means of passive participles (§4.4.5). Most commonly, the passive is rendered with an impersonal construction, e.g., *nedə əwad-yon* herald do.PFV-3PL ‘it was proclaimed’, lit. ‘they made proclamation’.

#### 4.4.2 Gender, number and person

The inflected forms of the verbs are produced by adding the personal suffixes introduced in Table 26.11 to the principal parts introduced in Table 26.10. The forms given in parentheses are infrequently found and not consistently used. It appears that these feminine forms are in the process of being leveled towards the masculine forms. Before personal

TABLE 26.10 THE PRINCIPAL PARTS OF THE SEVEN STEMS

STEM	PERFECTIVE	IMPERATIVE	IMPERFECTIVE	GLOSS
G Stem (a~o)	<i>gət'al</i>	<i>gət'ol</i>	<i>gət'el</i>	to kill
G Stem (e~o)	<i>dəhel</i>	<i>dəhol</i>	<i>dəhel</i>	to be afraid
G Stem (o~o)	<i>fəχow</i>	<i>fəχow</i>	<i>fəχew</i>	to lie down
tG Stem	<i>epseq</i>	<i>epseq</i>	<i>mepseq</i>	to be cut off
D Stem	<i>kammer</i>	<i>kammer</i>	<i>əmkammer</i>	to (re)turn
tD Stem	<i>kammar</i>	<i>kammar</i>	<i>mekammar</i>	to turn back
C Stem	<i>ahrew</i>	<i>ahrew</i>	<i>mahrew</i>	to destroy
tC Stem	<i>ettar</i>	<i>ettar</i>	<i>mettar</i>	to wake up
Q Stem	<i>baſqer</i>	<i>baſqer</i>	<i>əmbaſqer</i>	to know



**TABLE 26.11 PERSONAL SUFFIXES ON THE VERB BƏDAQ ~ BƏDOQ (BƏDEQ) ‘TO PUT; PLACE’**

	SG			PL		
	PFV	IMP	IPFV	PFV	IMP	IPFV
1	<i>bedq-it</i>		<i>qə-badeq-nə</i>	<i>bədaq-ni</i>		<i>qə-badq-enni</i>
2M	<i>bədaq-t</i>	<i>bədoq-ə</i>	<i>qə-bədq-et</i>	<i>bədaq-ton</i>	<i>bədoq-jon</i>	<i>qə-badq-etton</i>
2F	<i>(bedq-it)</i>	<i>bədoq-ə</i>		<i>(bədaq-ten)</i>	<i>(bədoq-jen)</i>	
3M	<i>bədaq-ə</i>		<i>qə-bədeq-ə</i>	<i>bədaq-jon</i>		<i>qə-bədq-en</i>
3F	<i>bedq-at</i>		<i>qə-bədq-ə</i>	<i>(bədaq-jən)</i>		

morphemes beginning with a vowel, the vowel of the syllable immediately preceding the suffix is deleted and the former coda becomes the onset for the new syllable. The addition of the morpheme may also cause the accent to shift, resulting in the reduction of vowels in pretonic syllables as noted in §3. The enclitic object suffixes, introduced in Table 26.4, also have the same effect upon preceding syllables.

#### 4.4.3 “Weak” and irregular roots

Verbs that begin with a vowel rather than a consonant are called I–weak. Verbs beginning with the approximants *n* and *j*, which were susceptible to assimilation in Old Mandaic, have been reformed on the analogy of the strong verbs. When they appear as the second or third radical of a consonantal root, the liquids *w* and *j* are susceptible to the general collapse of diphthongs described earlier (§3). The verbs that are thus affected are known as II–weak and III–weak verbs. Those roots in which the second and third radical consonants were identical have been reformed on the analogy of the II–weak verbs. Some verbs are “doubly weak,” which is to say that they have two root consonants that are susceptible to deletion; others are completely irregular, either because they are deficient in one or more of their principle parts or make use of suppletive stems.

The verb ‘to come’ (Table 26.12) is doubly weak and is conjugated accordingly, apart from the anomalous prefix *d-* on the imperative. A similar and likely related morpheme, *d(i)*, appears with more regularity on the imperative in Iraqi Arabic.

The verb ‘to want’ (Table 26.13) is conjugated as if it were a doubly weak root (like ‘to come’) from two different suppletive stems. Its perfective stem behaves as if the root were  $\text{'}b-w/\text{'}$  and its imperfective stem behaves as if the root were  $b-\text{'-}w/\text{'}$  in the 3rd person and  $\text{'-}b-w/\text{'}$  in all other persons, save for the 2MSG.

The paradigm of the verb ‘to go’ (Table 26.14) is truly suppletive, in that it is composed of forms from two separate roots:  $z-g-w/\text{'}$  in the perfective and imperative, and a series of unrelated forms in the imperfective, based on the stems  $\text{'}zi$  and  $\text{'}ll-$ , both of which Morgenstern (2010: 520) derives from the Old Mandaic root  $\text{'-}z-l$ .

Two pseudo-verbs,  $\text{'}jd-$  ‘to know’ and  $\text{'}jmb-$  or  $\text{'}jomb-$  ‘to be able’ are conjugated with the enclitic pronominal suffixes introduced in Table 26.4 rather than the usual subject personal suffixes on the verb. They can both take the indicative morpheme *q-* as well, e.g.,  $\text{'}qaj\text{'}odey$  ‘I know’,  $\text{'}q(\text{'}aj)\text{'}ombax$  ‘you are able’.

TABLE 26.12 THE VERB *AΘC* ~ *DOΘI* (CΘI) ‘TO COME’

	SG			PL		
	PFV	IMP	IPFV	PFV	IMP	IPFV
1	<i>aθ-it</i>		<i>q-aθi-nɔ</i>	<i>aθi-ni</i>		<i>q-aθ-enni</i>
2M	<i>aθ-et</i>	<i>d-oθi-ø</i>	<i>q-ɔθ-et</i>	<i>aθi-ton</i>	<i>d-oθ-on</i>	<i>q-aθ-etton</i>
2F	( <i>aθ-it</i> )	<i>d-oθe-ø</i>		( <i>aθi-ten</i> )	( <i>d-oθ-en</i> )	
3M	<i>aθɔ-ø</i>		<i>q-ɔθi-ø</i>	<i>aθ-on</i>		<i>q-ɔθ-en</i>
3F	<i>aθ-at</i>		<i>q-aθj-ɔ</i>	( <i>aθ-ɔn</i> )		

TABLE 26.13 THE VERB *ABC* (BCJI) ‘TO WANT’

	SG			PL		
	PFV	IMP	IPFV	PFV	IMP	IPFV
1	<i>ab-it</i>		<i>q-abi-nɔ</i>	<i>abi-ni</i>		<i>q-ab-enni</i>
2M	<i>ab-et</i>	n/a	<i>qə-bɔ-t</i>	<i>abi-ton</i>	n/a	<i>q-ab-etton</i>
2F	( <i>ab-it</i> )	n/a		( <i>abi-ten</i> )	n/a	
3M	<i>abɔ-ø</i>		<i>qə-bɔji-ø</i>	<i>ab-on</i>		<i>qə-bejj-en</i>
3F	<i>ab-at</i>		<i>qə-bejj-ɔ</i>	( <i>ab-ɔn</i> )		

TABLE 26.14 THE VERB ‘TO GO’

	SG			PL		
	PFV	IMP	IPFV	PFV	IMP	IPFV
1	<i>ezg-it</i>		<i>q-ali-nɔ</i>	<i>ezgi-ni</i>		<i>q-al-enni</i>
2M	<i>ezg-et</i>	<i>ezgi-ø</i>	<i>q-ɔll-et</i>	<i>ezgi-ton</i>	<i>ezg-on</i>	<i>q-al-etton</i>
2F	( <i>ezg-it</i> )	<i>ezge-ø</i>		( <i>ezgi-ten</i> )	( <i>ezg-en</i> )	
3M	<i>ezgɔ-ø</i>		<i>q-ɔzi-ø</i>	<i>ezg-on</i>		<i>q-ɔz-en</i>
3F	<i>ezg-at</i>		<i>q-all-ɔ</i>	( <i>ezg-ɔn</i> )		

#### 4.4.4 Non-finite forms

Each verbal stem is associated with two deverbal adjectives, an active participle and a passive participle. Together with the personal morphemes (§4.4.3), the former also serves as the base of the imperfective (§4.4.2). In addition, each stem also yields a deverbal agent noun, although only the G stem remains productive in Young Mandaic. A few words preserve a relic G stem verbal noun pattern miCCaC, e.g., *mizgɔ* ‘going’ and *miθjɔ* ‘coming’. There is no infinitive (see Table 26.15).

The G stem passive participle assumes the form CəCiC- before vowels, e.g. *gətʿel* ‘killed (MSG)’, FSG *gətʿilɔ* and PL *gətʿilen*.

TABLE 26.15 NON-FINITE FORMS

	G	D	C
PTCP.ACT	gɔt <sup>f</sup> el/gɔt <sup>f</sup> lɔ	əmgat <sup>f</sup> el/əmgat <sup>f</sup> lɔ	magt <sup>f</sup> el/magt <sup>f</sup> ilɔ
PTCP.PASS	gət <sup>f</sup> el/gət <sup>f</sup> ilɔ	əmgat <sup>f</sup> al/əmgat <sup>f</sup> lɔ	magt <sup>f</sup> al/*magt <sup>f</sup> əlɔ
agent noun	gət <sup>f</sup> ɔlɔ/gət <sup>f</sup> altɔ	-	-

#### 4.5 Prepositions, conjunctions and adverbs

Mandaic disposes of a large number of prepositions of diverse origins. They always precede their dependent, whether it is a noun, pronoun, demonstrative or relative clause. Some are enclitic, and can take the suffixed pronouns (§4.1.1) directly; those that have been borrowed from other languages and have not been nativized take the suffix *d-* before the suffixed pronouns.

<i>men</i>	from	<i>ad</i>	until, as far as
<i>nazdik</i>	near (+ <i>d-</i> )	<i>b-</i>	in, with, by
<i>orke</i>	with	<i>baʕad</i>	after
<i>pahli</i>	beside (+ <i>d-</i> )	<i>barɔbar</i>	opposite (+ <i>d-</i> )
<i>qə-</i>	to, for (clitic)	<i>bɔθar</i>	after, behind
<i>qam</i>	to, for (+ <i>d-</i> )	<i>bienɔ</i>	among; <i>bienɔ</i> . . . <i>bienɔ</i> between
<i>qamɔj</i>	before, prior	<i>ewaz</i>	instead of (+ <i>d-</i> )
<i>qɔr</i>	at, before, to, by, with	<i>əl-</i>	to, for (clitic)
<i>qəlɔw</i>	to, for	<i>əlɔw</i>	to, for (independent)
<i>tum</i>	until, for (period of time)	<i>gɔw</i>	in(to); about; through; according to
<i>tut</i>	under	<i>hemke</i>	like

There are considerably fewer conjunctions, most of which have been borrowed from other languages. These include *ágar* ‘if’, *ammɔ* ‘but’, *ke* ‘when; because’, *tum* ‘then’, *u* ‘and’, and *jɔ* ‘or’. There are two correlative conjunctions, *lo* . . . *lo* ‘either . . . or’ and *lu* . . . *lu* ‘neither . . . nor’.

Adverbs do not compose a discrete morphological category within Mandaic independent of the lexicon. Apart from the inherited adverbs such as *eftɔ* ‘now’, *genzɔ* ‘very; much’, *kandi* ‘yet; still’ and *tum* ‘again’, most substantives and adjectives can also serve indiscriminately as adverbs, e.g., *yanq-ɔ mieθ-θ* child-AUG die.PFV-3MSG ‘he died [as] a child’, *honin kəɔɔw-ɔn-i* small book-PL-INDF ‘a few books’.

## 5 SYNTAX

The syntax of Young Mandaic is recognizably similar to Old Mandaic and other related Eastern Aramaic languages, but it has innovated syntactic distinctions not found in the parent language, among which are attributive and equational predicates, relative and absolute comparison, alienable and inalienable possession, and restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses.

## 5.1 Word order

The noun phrase consists of a noun (or pronoun) and any associated modifiers. With the exception of cardinal numbers and most other quantifiers, these modifiers follow the noun. In a nominal sentence, the subject is obligatorily expressed by the copula (§5.2), which follows the predicate. An explicit subject can also optionally appear in apposition before the predicate.

The verb phrase consists of a verb, its auxiliaries, its complements, modifiers such as adverbs and any other adjuncts. Its subject is typically expressed by the personal suffixes on the verb, although it can optionally precede the verb in apposition. The object typically follows the verb, except when the verb is a copular verb (§5.2), or a light verb (§5.4.1), in either which case it precedes.

## 5.2 Predication

There are two primary forms of predication: verbal, for which the predicate is a finite verb, and nominal, for which the predicate is a substantive, adjective, pronoun, adverb or prepositional phrase. In verbal sentences, the subject is generally reflected by the morphology of the verb (§4.4.3). In nominal sentences, the subject generally precedes its predicate, unless it is expressed by the enclitic form of the copula, in which case it follows. The subject may also be expressed before the predicate in apposition.

*q=all-én*      *ekkaχ*    *kol*      *əraft-ɔ*  
 IND=GO.IPFV-1PL    there    every    Friday-AUG  
 ‘We go there every Friday.’

*ahni*    *barra*    *əm=welɔθ=non*  
 they    outside    from=city=3PL  
 ‘They are outside the city.’

Mandaic expresses various types of predication, including equation, attribution, location, existence, and possession, by means of independent and enclitic forms of the copula (in the simple present tense) (Table 26.16) and a copular verb (in all other tenses) (Table 26.17).

The enclitic (or ‘short’) forms of the copula and the independent (or ‘long’) forms of the copula are interchangeable when the predicate consists of a single word. For more complicated predicates, the use of the long copula is obligatory. Its base is ultimately

TABLE 26.16 THE COPULA (ENCLITIC AND INDEPENDENT FORMS)

	<i>SG</i>	<i>GLOSS</i>	<i>PL</i>		<i>GLOSS</i>	
1	<i>ʃəbir-nɔ(n)</i>	<i>ʃəbir eχtey</i>	I am good	-	<i>ʃəbir eχtan</i>	we are good
2M	<i>ʃəbir-jɔt</i>	<i>ʃəbir eχtaχ</i>	you are good	-	<i>ʃəbir eχtaχon</i>	you are good
2F	-	<i>ʃəbir eχteχ</i>	you are good	-	-	
3M	<i>ʃəbir-je</i>	<i>ʃəbir eχti</i>	he is good	<i>ʃəbir-non</i>	<i>ʃəbir eχtu</i>	they are good
3F	<i>ʃəbir-ja</i>	<i>ʃəbir eχta</i>	she is good	-	-	

TABLE 26.17 THE COPULAR VERB *HƏWƏ* ~ *HƏWI* (*HƏWI*)

	SG			PL		
	PFV	IMP	IPFV	PFV	IMP	IPFV
1	<i>həw-it</i>		<i>haw-i-nə</i>	<i>həwi-ni</i>		<i>haw-enni</i>
2M	<i>həw-et</i>	<i>həwi-ə</i>	<i>həw-et</i>	<i>həwi-ton</i>	<i>həw-on</i>	<i>haw-etton</i>
2F	<i>(həw-it)</i>	<i>həwe-ə</i>		<i>(həwi-ten)</i>	<i>(həw-en)</i>	
3M	<i>həwə-ə</i>		<i>həwi-ə</i>	<i>həw-on</i>		<i>həw-en</i>
3F	<i>həw-at</i>		<i>həw-j-ə</i>	<i>(həw-ən)</i>		

derived from the Old Mandaic existential particle *iθ*, but due to several regular sound changes it only appears in two allomorphs, *eχt-* (before a vowel) and *eh-* (before the preposition *l-*). Its original role in existential constructions has been assumed by the demonstrative pronoun *ekkə* ‘there’.

To express possession, Mandaic employs a predicate locative construction, which is built upon the aforementioned form *eh-l-*, and takes the suffixed oblique pronouns (Table 26.4), yielding *ehli*, *ehla* and so forth. For all copular constructions in tenses other than the simple present, the copular verb *həwə* ~ *həwi* (*həwi*) is used in the place of the independent or enclitic forms of the copula.

*lā=həwə-ə=l=u*                      *ganzewr-ə*,    *ammə*    *eftə*    *eh=l=u*  
 NEG=be.PFV-3MSG=to=3PL    priest-AUG    but    now    COP=to=3PL  
 ‘They didn’t used to have a priest, but now they do.’

The copular verb is also used to conjugate pseudo-verbs like *jəd-* ‘to know’ and *jimb-* ‘to be able’ in tenses other than the present.

### 5.3 Noun modification

Within the noun phrase, the noun may be modified by one or more additional elements, including a second noun in an appositive relationship, an attributive, predicate or comparative adjective, a numeral or non-numeral quantifier and a possessor.

#### 5.3.1 Appositive nouns

A noun may also be modified by other nouns in an appositive relationship. This applies particularly to geographic expressions.

*fustar*    *welət*  
 GN            city  
 ‘Shushtar City’.

#### 5.3.2 Adjectives

Adjectives can fulfill three roles within a phrase: attributive, predicative and comparative. The first two can modify indefinite and definite referents, whereas the third can only apply to definite referents.

## 5.3.2.1 Attributive adjectives

Attributive adjectives directly follow the noun which they modify. As the examples here demonstrate, the head noun may be inflected to reflect gender and number; most adjectives do not agree with the head noun in gender and number, although a few do.

*qazγɔn*      *honin-i*  
cauldron      small-INDF  
'A small cooking pot (M)'.

*kəḏɔw*      *Mandəji*  
book      Mandaic  
'A Mandaic book (M)'.

*bieθ-wəθ*      *ba'id*  
house-FPL      distant  
'Far-off houses (F)'.

*barnəf*      *horin-ə*  
person.M      other-AUG  
'Another person (M)'.

*fer*      *horet-t-ə*  
war.F      other-F-AUG  
'Second World War (F)'.

As these examples demonstrate, the nominal augment on the head noun is deleted whenever it is modified by an attributive adjective, as when the head noun is followed by a second noun in construct (§5.3.3). Unlike the construct chain, however, a noun followed by an attributive adjective may be construed as either definite or indefinite; in the latter case, the indefinite morpheme is typically appended at the end of the noun phrase rather than on each of the constituent elements. Optionally, it may be added to all elements for emphasis, e.g., *ya qaramb-i raft-i* a melon-INDF big.F-INDF 'a big melon'.

## 5.3.2.2 Predicative adjectives

Predicative adjectives are always accompanied by the copular verb or the enclitic copula (§5.2).

*ja*      *jeki*      *həwə-ə*      *mariz-i*  
a      someone      be.PFV-3MSG      ill-INDF  
'There once was a man who was ill'.

*həwə-ə*      *ja*      *jeki*      *pahli=d=i*      *jəhem=je*  
be.PFV-3MSG      a      someone      beside=of=3MSG      sit.PASS=COP.3MSG  
'There was someone sitting beside him'.

## 5.3.2.3 Absolute and relative comparison

A noun may be modified by an adjective to express two forms of comparison: relative comparison, in which the noun is explicitly compared with a second noun, or absolute comparison, in which it is compared against all other members of its category. In Mandaic, as in most other Semitic languages, relative comparison is expressed by means of a predicative adjective (describing the property being compared) modified by a complement with the preposition *men* or its enclitic form *əm-*.

*mien-ə*      *beh*      *əm=bira*  
 water-AUG      good      from=beer  
 ‘Water is better than beer’.

Absolute comparison, by contrast, is always expressed with the Persian suffix *-tar*. Adjectives modified by this suffix can be used predicatively or attributively:

*awwāli*    *raf-tar*      *u=χorda=χorda*    *honin-tar*      *qə=həw-en*  
 first      big-COMPAR      and=little=little      small-COMPAR      IND=be.IPFV-3PL  
 ‘The first was bigger, but little by little they became smaller’.

*q=əθ-en*      *gəw*    *mentekər*    *raf-tar-i*  
 IND=come.IPFV-3PL      in      motor.car      big-COMPAR-INDF  
 ‘They came in a larger car’.

They may also be used adverbially.

*fəww-ə*      *fett-ə*      *eftə*      *qamə-tar*  
 seven-AUG      year-AUG      now      before-COMPAR  
 ‘Seven years ago (lit. seven years more before now)’.

The superlative is expressed with the absolute comparative and the word *gef* ‘all’.

*beh-tar*      *əm=gef*  
 good-COMPAR      from=all  
 ‘The best’.

## 5.3.3 The construct chain

The construct chain serves to indicate possession:

POSSESSED      +      POSSESSOR

The possessor can be any noun or noun phrase. The possessed must always appear in its contextual form, but otherwise neither the possessor nor the possessed is morphologically marked to indicate possession.

*ebbər*    *ebr=i*  
 son      son=3MSG  
 ‘His grandson (lit. his son’s son)’.

qazγōn      šəwōw-ō  
 cauldron      neighbor-AUG  
 ‘The neighbor’s cooking pot’.

bōw      ḥammōm  
 father      bathhouse  
 ‘The owner of the bathhouse’.

## 5.4 Analytic/synthetic

As noted in §4, Mandaic is fundamentally a synthetic language, but it does make occasional use of analytic structures to impart nuances of tense/aspect in the verbal system, and for certain possessive constructions in the nominal system.

### 5.4.1 Verbs and analytic constructions

Mandaic uses the copular verb *həwō ~ həwi (hōwi)* to render all copular constructions (§5.2) in tenses other than the simple present, as well as to conjugate pseudo-verbs like *jōd-* ‘to know’ and *jimb-* or *jomb-* ‘to be able’ in tenses other than the present.

Pronominal objects are suffixed (§4.1.1) directly to the verb that governs them, with the exception of the 3rd person imperfective forms, singular and plural, which obligatorily take the enclitic object marker *-l-* before the object suffix. The final consonant of the 3PL personal suffix *-en* regularly assimilates to this enclitic object marker, producing the form *-el(l)-*. Additionally, the second singular and first plural morphemes assume the forms *-ōt-* and *-nan(n)-*, respectively, before object suffixes.

If the non-pronominal object of a verb is intended to be specific and identifiable, it is introduced by the referential object marker *el-* (§4.1.2) and a proleptic pronominal suffix on the verb (which is regularly elided before the referential object marker, whenever the latter directly follows the former).

an      qə=mandi-n=ø      el=dešt-ō  
 1SG      IND=shake.IPFV-1SG=3FSG      REF=ground-AUG  
 ‘I will make the ground shake’.

If, on the other hand, the object is intended to be nonspecific or generic, it may form a single semantic and syntactic unit with the verb, corresponding tho (and in many cases directly calqued upon) Persian compound verbs. The non-verbal element is most often a noun such as *əwōdō* ‘deed’ in the compound *əwōdō əwad ~ əwod (ōwed)* ‘to work or to do something’, lit. ‘to deed-do’, or an adjective such as *həjōnō* ‘alive’ in the compound *həjōnō tammō* ‘to survive’, lit. ‘to alive-stay’, although prepositions such as *qōr* ‘at’, in the compound *qōr tammō* ‘to be born to s.o.’, lit. ‘to at-become’ are attested. As in Persian, the verbal element is often a ‘light’ verb, which serves only to indicate verbal inflections such as person, tense, mood, and aspect. The most common light verbs are *əwad ~ əwod (ōwed)* ‘to do’, *əhaw ~ əhow (ōhew)* ‘to give’, *məhō ~ məhi (mōhi)* ‘to hit’ and *tammō* ‘to become’.



### 5.4.2 Nouns and analytic constructions

Possession may be expressed in five ways: synthetically by means of the pronominal clitics (§4.1.1) and the construct chain (§5.3.3), or analytically via the prepositions *qor* ‘at’ and *əl-* ‘to’, the relative pronoun *d-*, and the noun *məl* ‘property’. The first four constructions may express either alienable or inalienable possession; *məl* is used to indicate alienable possession only.

#### 5.4.2.1 Possession indicated by preposition

The preposition *əl-* is used for general possession, most often with people and other animate beings. It is also employed in situations where the genitive construct chain (§5.3.3) would be inappropriate (for example, when the head noun is indefinite). This same preposition can be applied to the interrogative pronoun *man* ‘who’.

*rifšmm-ə*      *əl=Mandej-ən-ə*  
 rishama-AUG    to=Mandæan-PL-AUG  
 ‘The leader of the Mandæans’.

*ahni*      *əl=man=non*  
 those      to=who=3PL  
 ‘Whose are they?’

The preposition *qor*, by contrast, is employed to specifically indicate that the object possessed is on the possessor’s person or that the possessor otherwise has immediate access to it.

*rəz-ə*      *qor=ey*  
 secret-AUG    at=1SG  
 ‘My secret’.

#### 5.4.2.2 The relative pronoun *d-*

In Old Mandaic, possession is generally expressed by the relative pronoun *d-*, which can either follow the noun with augment or the noun modified by an anticipatory pronominal suffix in agreement with the noun introduced by *d-*. In addition to these frozen expressions, this construction continues to be used in some epithets and in archaizing expressions; note the obligatory appearance of the augment on the Arabic word *ḥəkem* ‘governor’, despite the fact that the augment would not otherwise appear on a non-nativized loan word.

*b=efm-ey=hon*      *ed=Hejj-i*      *Rabb-i*  
 in=name-PL=3PL    of=life-PL      great-PL  
 ‘In the name of the Great Life’.

*ḥəkim-ə*      *d=fuftar*  
 governor-AUG    of=GN  
 ‘The governor of Shushtar’.

### 5.4.2.3 *Məl* construction

The Arabic noun *məl* ‘property,’ also commonly used in some colloquial Iraqi dialects as the usual genitive particle, is used to express alienable possession.

*bieθ məl s'obbi-hó*  
house property Sabian-PL  
‘The Sabians’ houses’.

## 5.5 Subordination

Subordinating conjunctions introduce a relative clause. The type of conjunction employed depends upon the presence or absence of a head noun, and whether the relative clause is referential or non-referential. An indefinite pronoun may be employed to introduce a headless relative clause, and a relativizer is used to introduce a relative clause that refers back to an entire clause or verb phrase rather than a nominal antecedent.

If the relative clause depends upon a head noun, the type of relative pronoun employed is further determined by whether the antecedent is definite or indefinite, and whether the clause is restrictive or nonrestrictive. As mentioned earlier (§4.1.2), nouns may be morphologically marked as indefinite (in opposition to definite nouns, which are unmarked), and syntactically or morphologically marked as nonspecific (as opposed to specific or generic, which are unmarked). If the antecedent additionally serves as an object of the verb of the subordinate clause, its role within that clause must be explicitly marked with a pronoun that refers anaphorically back to it:

*eh=l=ey pəs-i kol dokk-ən q=əmzabn-en əlwəw=u*  
COP=to=1SG PASS-INDF all place-PL IND=sell.IPFV-PL to=3PL  
‘I had a pass, all the places to which we sold’ (lit. ‘the places, we sold to them’).

### 5.5.1 Indefinite antecedents

Relative pronouns are completely absent from relative clauses headed by indefinite antecedents. This indicates that the speaker assumes that his or her audience cannot identify the referent of the head noun; note also that none of the relative pronouns may introduce a headless relative clause, this function being relegated to the indefinite pronouns *kol mə* ‘whatever’ and *kol man* ‘whoever’.

*gəw Aħwəz həwə-θ tarmid-i efm-i fieχ ‘Abdalla*  
in GN be.PFV-3MSG priest-INDF name-3MSG sheikh PN  
‘In Ahvaz, there was a priest, whose name was Sheikh Abdallah’.

### 5.5.2 Definite antecedents

Whenever the head noun of the clause is presumed to be identifiable to the audience, Mandaic employs one of two relative pronouns, *elli* and *ke*, which were introduced in §4.1.3. The former introduces nonrestrictive relative clauses, and the latter restrictive relative clauses.

## 5.5.2.1 Nonrestrictive relative clauses

The relative clause introduced by the relative pronoun *elli* contributes supplemental information about the head noun to which it refers.

*q=abi-n*                      *amer-ø*                      *genz*                      *farwəh*                      *Professər Bokli*  
 IND=want.IPFV-1SG                      say.SBJV-1SG                      many                      thanks                      PN

*elli*    *genz*    *əwəd*    *awd-at*                      *qam*    *Mandəj-ən-ə*  
 REL    much    work    do.PFV-3FSG                      for    Mandæan-PL-AUG  
 ‘I want to say thanks very much to Professor Buckley,  
 who has done so much work for the Mandæans’.

## 5.5.2.2 Restrictive relative clauses

Relative clauses introduced by *ke* contribute information essential to the understanding of the main clause. Note that the antecedent is the object of the verb of the subordinate clause in these two examples, and that the verb or copula takes a resumptive pronoun.

*aθθ-on*                      *barnef-ən-ə*                      *ke*    *fewih-ən-ə*                      *kəwʃ-el=l=u*  
 come.FACT.IMP-PL    person-PL-AUG    REL    demon-PL-AUG                      subdue.IPFV-3PL=OBJ=3PL  
 ‘Bring the people who will subdue the demons!’

The restrictive morpheme *-i*, not to be confused with the indefinite morpheme, imparts a demonstrative meaning upon the antecedent.<sup>2</sup> In this example, a resumptive object pronoun on the verb refers back to the head of the clause.

*dokk-ən-i*                      *ke*    *həz-it=u*                      *awwəl*  
 place-PL-RESTR    REL    see.PFV-1SG=3PL                      before  
 ‘The places which I saw before’.

## 5.6 Negation

Verb phrases (and the independent form of the copula) are negated with the common Semitic particle *lá*, which is prefixed to the word it modifies and takes the primary stress. Before a vowel, the negative particle is elided to *l-*.

*lá-q=əmħaθθ-en*                      *Mandəji*  
 NEG-IND=speak.IPFV-PL                      Mandaic  
 ‘They don’t speak Mandai’.

*fəbir*    *l=ext=ey*  
 good    NEG=COP=1SG  
 ‘I am not well’.

Noun phrases may likewise be negated with *lá-*, but when they serve as the predicate of a copular clause with the enclitic form of the copula, they must be negated with the invariable particle *lu* (\**lɔw*, presumably a contracted form of \**lā-hū*).

*lu=ganzewr-i=je*  
 NEG=priest-INDF=3MSG  
 ‘He is not a priest’.

This same particle negates any nominal to which it is appended:

*lu=mandej-ɔn-ɔ*  
 NEG=Mandæan-PL-AUG  
 ‘Non-Mandæans’.

### 5.7 Interrogative sentences

Mandaic has two different ways of indicating that a given utterance is a request for information rather than a declarative speech act. Requests for a simple yes/no answer are indicated by a rising intonation:

*ɔt q=áll-et?*  
 2SG IND=GO.IPFV-2SG  
 ‘Are you going?’

Questions that expect a more elaborate response employ a number of interrogative pronouns or question words to elicit specific information. The words *man* and *mu* are the only interrogatives that may substitute for either the subject or the object of a verb. They generally appear at the beginning of the clause, regardless of the function they serve within the phrase. In either case, the interrogative pronoun must be followed by a verb.

*man əmal-θ=l=aχ*  
 who say.PFV-3MSG=OBJ=2MSG  
 ‘Who told you?’

*mu əmal-θ=l=aχ*  
 what say.PFV-3MSG=OBJ=2MSG  
 ‘What did he tell you?’

When the interrogative pronoun anticipates the object of the verb rather than the subject, it may be followed by the copula (for which see §5.2). More frequently, however, the copula is omitted in this position.

*mo=jje haw-t=ell=i*  
 what=3MSG give.PFV-2SG=OBJ=3MSG  
 ‘What did you give him?’

The interrogative pronouns may also introduce a dependent clause as a relative pronoun. In this function, they may appear after the verb, particularly when their referent is specific and definite. Otherwise, they will appear at the beginning of the sentence.

*gat<sup>l</sup>-ø=ø*                      *əl=man*              *qə=rahem-ø=l=i*  
 kill.PFV-3MSG=3MSG    REF=who            IND=LOVE.IPFV-3MSG=OBJ=3MSG  
 ‘He killed the one whom he loves’.

*mu*              *q=abɔ-t*                      *ana*              *q=awed-ø*              *qamd=aχ*  
 what            IND=want.IPFV-2SG            1SG            IND=DO.IPFV-3SG            for=2MSG  
 ‘Whatever you want, I’ll do for you’.

The other question words are introduced in §4.1.4. The interrogatives *eljɔ*, *hemdɔ*, *qamu*, *kammɔ* and *mojur* are primarily adverbial. The interrogatives *hem*, *hemdɔ*, *mojur* and *kaθkammɔ* are fused compounds; compounds of question words and prepositions are not uncommon.

*m=elj-ɔ*  
 from=where-AUG              whence  
*m=hem*              *ohhər*  
 with=which            road              whither  
*men*              *mojur*  
 with            what.kind              in comparison with, like

These other question words may not introduce relative clauses, this function having been assumed by the interrogative pronouns *man* and *mu* or relativizers such as *ke* and *elli*.

## 6 LEXICON

Much like other languages spoken in the region, Mandaic has enriched its lexicon with vocabulary from the languages with which it has come into contact. Apart from the parent language, the two largest contributors to its vocabulary have been Arabic and Persian. Given the influence of both languages upon one another, and of Aramaic upon Arabic, the direction of borrowing is not always obvious. For example, the word *welɔt* ‘city’ may be related either to Arabic *bila:d* ‘country’ (ultimately from Greek *palátion*) or *wila:jah* ‘province’ indirectly via some undetermined source, such as Kurdish *wilat* ‘country’. The Mandæan scholar Qays al-Sa’adi (2008) has compiled a dictionary of Mandaic cognates in the vernacular Arabic of Iraq, which includes common Semitic vocabulary as well as borrowings presumably from diverse forms of Aramaic into this vernacular.

Nevertheless, the lexicon preserves the core vocabulary of Old Mandaic to a great degree; in a list of 207 of the most common terms in Mandaic, over 85% were also attested in the classical literature, the remaining 15% deriving primarily from Persian and Arabic (Häberl 2009: 39–44). In his *Comparative Lexical Studies in Neo-Mandaic*, Mutzafi (2014) identifies copious pre-modern Aramaic lexemes that are unattested among the other surviving Aramaic languages or, for that matter, even within the Old Mandaic corpus.

## 7 SAMPLE TEXT

## A Mandaic colophon

Every Mandaic manuscript concludes with a colophon in which the copyist provides details concerning its commission and copying, including his or her name, lineage, those of the sponsor, the sources of the text, the circumstances under which it was copied and the date and location of its completion. The copying of these texts is considered meritorious, not only for the copyist but also the sponsor, and was formerly a major source of income for the priests as well. Consequently, there are many such manuscripts, and many such colophons, but they have been under-utilized as a source for Mandaic.

The following selection is from a manuscript copy of the Mandæan *Book of John* in the collection of Nasser Sobbi of Flushing, New York (Figure 26.1). The copyist, Sheikh Məhattam, son of Yaḥya Behram, informs us that he completed his work on Saturday (*ṣaftō*) on the 22nd day of the 9th month of the year (which he calls *Tifrin*, *Qejnō* ‘Libra’, and *Ḍḡer Gejtō* ‘the last [month] of summer’), in the “Year of Saturday” (so-called because it began on Saturday, August 14, 1909), and in 1328 AH by the Muslim calendar. By our own reckoning, this would be Saturday, April 9, 1910. He also tells us that he completed copying the manuscript at home, in the city of ‘Amārah, which is today in the Maysan Governorate of Iraq, about 50 km from the border with Iran. As a subject of the Ottoman Empire, he composed this colophon in the wake of the Young Turk Revolution, and shares some information concerning the effects of this revolution upon the Mandæans of ‘Amārah.

*tum te-d-un ja ahh-an fehjōn-ō Esʿtʿambul tʿoz eh=l=u*  
 again 2-know.IPFV-PL VOC brother.PL-1PL ruler-AUG GN new COP=to=3PL  
 ‘Now you ought to know, our brethren, they have a new ruler of Istanbul’

*hokom=d=a maḏlis horrija tammō-ø omur aθō-ø*  
 government=of=3MSG parliament free become.PFV-3MSG order.PL come.PFV-3MSG  
 ‘whose government became a Freedom Council. The orders came:’

*Sʿoltʿōn Esʿtʿambul efm-i Moḥammad Raḑōd*  
 sultan GN name-3MSG PN  
 ‘the Sultan of Istanbul’s name is Mehmed V Reṣād’

*u=maḏlis horrija hokom=d=u tammō-ø u=ṣaskar yejr*  
 and=parliament free government=of=3PL become.PFV-3MSG and=soldier other  
 ‘and the Freedom Council has become their government, and the soldiers of other’

*ferf-ō raṣijāt ṣasʿmo=ll=a kol awdonn-u ṣaskar*  
 religion-AUG subjects keep.PFV=OBJ=3MSG all make.PFV-PL soldier  
 ‘religions whom they keep as subjects, they made all of them soldiers.’

*jahud we=nsʿōr-ō u=mandōji ṣaskar tamm-on*  
 Jew.PL and=Christian-AUG and=Mandæan soldier become.PFV-3PL  
 ‘Jews, Christians, and Mandæans became soldiers.’

*albəf-onn=u setr-ɔ pantʕərun u=fezzɔ hatta ebn-i*  
 dress.PFV-3PL=3PL jacket pants and=fez even son.PL=3MSG  
 ‘They dressed them up in jackets, pants, and fezzes.’

*d=tarmid-ɔ albəf-onn=u u=kol jum qɔl=an ork=u*  
 of=priest-AUG dress.PFV-3PL=3PL and=every day voice=1PL with=3PL  
 ‘They even dressed the sons of priests, and every day our voice was with them.’

*taflum q=ɔwd-en Mandɔ d-Hejji fɔri=l=i el=kann-ɔ*  
 teaching IND=DO.IPFV-3PL DN release.3MSG=OBJ=3MSG REF=vessel-AUG  
 ‘teaching. May Manda d’Heyyi release the vessel’

*d=nefm-ɔθ-ɔ men jad janq-ɔ d=Ruhɔ u=Mandʒji*  
 of=soul-PL-AUG from hand child-AUG of=DN and=Mandæan  
 ‘of souls from the hand of the child of Ruha, since the Mandæans’

*kol b=emteħɔn u=diɖʒa tamm-on Mɔrɔ d-Rabuθɔ*  
 all in=test distress become-3PL DN  
 ‘are beset by trials and distress.’<sup>3</sup> May Mara d-Rabutha’

*ənzahar=l=i el=kann-ɔ d=nefm-ɔθ-ɔ men id-ɔ janq-ɔ ?*  
 protect.IPFV=OBJ=3MSG REF=vessel-AUG of=soul-PL-AUG from hand-AUG child-AUG  
 ‘protect the vessel of souls from the hand of the child’

*d=Krun Hejji Qadmɔɔ Hejji Tenjɔnɔ Hejji Tleθɔɔ*  
 of=DN DN DN DN  
 ‘of Krun. May the First Life, the Second Life, and the Third Life’

*ənzahar=l=an men janq-ɔ d=ruhɔ ánin u=ɖʒamiʃ*  
 protect.IPFV=OBJ=1PL from child-AUG of=DN 1PL and=all  
 ‘protect us from the child of Ruha, us and all’

*mandʒji b=tɔ dɔr-ɔ koll-a nəqɔf-ɔ we=rɔɖf-ɔ hɔjeft-ɔ*  
 Mandæan in=this age-AUG all=3MSG beating-AUG and=persecution-AUG frightening-AUG  
 ‘the Mandæans in this age, all of which is beatings and frightful persecution.’

## NOTES

- 1 I have taken the abagadical forms provided from al-Sa‘adi (2012), and as such they reflect the received Iraqi pronunciation rather than that of the Iranian communities.
- 2 Much like the Persian *jɔ-je eʃɔrat* from which it is derived, for which see Windfuhr (1979: 37).
- 3 This is none other than Standard Arabic *diqa* ‘distress’. In the dialects of Maysan, *q* is affricated to *ɖʒ*.

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