Mandaic and the Palestinian Question

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In his 1875 description of the language, Theodor Nöldeke describes Mandaic as among the purest of the Aramaic languages and the furthest from Western Aramaic, particularly with respect to its lexicon. As Mandæans identify their faith with that of John the Baptist and his community of followers, this observation is not without relevance for assessing the veracity of their accounts and reconstructing their history prior to the advent of Islam. Departing from the assumption that these accounts are either inaccurate or willfully dishonest, all recent descriptions of the Mandaic language maintain that it is completely free from any western influences whatsoever, employing a considerably stronger form of Nöldeke's original claim. This article subjects the strong form of this claim to a critical analysis, surveying the evidence for western influence upon the lexicon of the Mandæan scriptural canon, principally the *Canonical Prayerbook*, the *Great Treasure*, and the Mandæan *Book of John*. It finds that these works contain numerous lexemes of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Western Aramaic origin that are otherwise unparalleled within Eastern Aramaic, and concludes that the scholarly consensus must either be revised to account for this evidence or abandoned.

In the scholarly classification of Aramaic, the later phases are represented by two separate yet equally important groups: Eastern Aramaic, which emerged under Iranian rule in Mesopotamia and eastern Syria, and Western Aramaic, which emerged under Hellenistic and Roman rule in the region between Syria in the north and Arabia to the south.[1] This is the story of one of these languages.

Mandaic is an Eastern Aramaic language. Within the context of the philological tradition of the study of the Aramaic languages, as it has evolved over the past two centuries, few such categorical statements are so incontrovertible. No less an authority than Theodor Nöldeke

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In the article I have used the following abbreviations:

Of languages, Akkadian (Akk), Avestan (Av), Galilean (Gal), Christian Palestinian Aramaic (CPA), Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (JBA), Old Persian (OP), Parthian (Par), Pahlavi (Phl), Samaritan (Sam), Sumerian (Sum), and Syriac (Syr), and the Aramaic of the targums (JLAtg and PTA).

Of sources, CP *Canonical Prayerbook*, GL Left *Ginza*, GR Right *Ginza*, JB *Book of John*.

1. In all cases I refer to historical geographic regions, not to modern nation-states with the same names.

has declared it to be the purest example of its category,[2] and subsequent generations of scholars have unanimously upheld his classification. Even so, its purity, and particularly its absolute freedom from any "traces of Western Aramaic influence," has lately become a pervasive concern within recent descriptions of the language and the community that has preserved it. [3]

The question of Western Aramaic and specifically Palestinian influence upon Mandaic does not have merely linguistic and literary relevance, but also historical and even legal significance. Mandæans maintain that John the Baptist was a member of their community, and indeed the foremost of their prophets, and that their community came to the head of the Gulf from Palestine in the decades after his death. Consequently, they have enjoyed the status of a recognized religion within the various medieval and modern Islamic states that have governed the region since the seventh century. While the broader question of Mandæan origins is a vexing and contentious one, according to the consensus among Western scholars that has emerged in recent centuries, Mandæan accounts of their own origins are fantastic, not historically constituted, and likely derivative of other religious traditions. This consensus has in turn severely complicated their relationship with Muslim authorities in their countries of origin, to put it lightly. It has developed based upon several factors, but in the realm of philology no single factor carries greater weight than the question of the Mandaic language.[4] Consequently, there is a strong case for interrogating this claim more aggressively than has historically been the case.

To complicate the picture, we have thus far failed to construct a typology of the various Aramaic languages that enjoys universal approval. This is primarily due to the lack of any consensus over the relationship of Syriac and the language of Targum Onkelos and Jonathan to the other languages belonging to the same phase within the history of Aramaic.[5] Nonetheless, to the extent that we can lump Aramaic languages into conjectural categories based on shared morphological innovations, Mandaic undeniably agrees with the other members of the eastern category in all of its most widely accepted diagnostic features.[6] These include the replacement of the masculine plural emphatic morpheme *-ayyā* with *-ē* (Mandaic **-ia**, never ****-aia**, and pronounced *-i*), the replacement of the third masculine singular personal morpheme of the prefix conjugation *y-* with a *n-* or an *l-*, and the replacement of the third masculine singular possessive pronoun **-awhī* with reflexes of **-ayhī* (Mandaic **-(i)h̲**, pronounced *-i*).

At the outset, I would like to make it clear that it is not my intention to question Mandaic's position within Eastern Aramaic. Rather, I will address the ubiquitous corollary that there are absolutely, positively no traces of Western Aramaic in Mandaic. This corollary dates to the

2. T. Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik* (Halle: Waisenhaus, 1875), xxi.

3. Within the last decade alone, see C. Müller-Kessler, "Mandæans v. Mandaic Language," in *Encyclopædia Iranica* Online, http: //www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ Mandæans-5-language (2009; accessed 2016/06/27); H. Gzella, *A Cultural History of Aramaic: From the Beginnings to the Advent of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 365–66; and K. T. van Bladel, *From Sasanian Mandaeans to Ṣabians of the Marshes* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 82.

4. These are the grounds on which both Gzella (*Cultural History*, 365–66) and van Bladel (*Sasanian Mandaeans*, 82) explicitly reject the historicity of Mandæan self-representations.

5. See, in particular, Daniel Boyarin, "An Inquiry into the Formation of the Middle Aramaic Dialects," in *Bono Homini Donum: Essays in Historical Linguistics in Memory of J. Alexander Kerns*, vol. 2, ed. Y. L. Arbeitman and A. R. Bomhard (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1981), 613–49; and Edward M. Cook, "A New Perspective on the Language of Onqelos and Jonathan," in *The Aramaic Bible: Targums in Their Historical Context*, ed. Derek R. G. Beattie and Martin J. McNamara (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 142–43. For a recent dissenting view, see Renaud J. Kuty, *Studies in the Syntax of Targum Jonathan to Samuel* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), particularly 11–12.

6. See Gzella, *Cultural History*, 266–67.

very first grammatical description of the language, that of Theodor Nöldeke. His typology of these languages is primarily informed by the accident of geography and secondarily by the influence of other languages. In his assessment of the "purity" of the Mandaic language, he specifically cites its freedom from the Greek influence that characterizes Syriac, as well as the Hebrew influence that characterizes seemingly every Aramaic language in the Jewish script.[7] We have uncritically embraced this claim over the past century and a half, without assessing its accuracy, and therefore its relevance to the question of Mandæan origins. If Mandaic is indeed free from any Greek and Hebrew influences not shared among other indisputably Eastern Aramaic languages (of which Jewish Babylonian Aramaic is the only one with a corpus of comparable size), then this claim may stand on its own merits. On the other hand, if it contains Greek and Hebrew influences not found elsewhere in Eastern Aramaic, then this claim must either be modified or abandoned.

In order to address the Greek imprint upon Mandaic, I survey the evidence of sixty-five loan words, restricting myself exclusively to those attested in Mandaic works composed prior to the medieval period and collected by Mark Lidzbarski, Stefana Drower, and Rudolf Macuch.[8] For the purposes of this survey, I am deliberately excluding ten *Wanderwörter* of known and unknown origins, widespread among the languages of the region (including Greek) and almost certainly inherited by Mandaic from an earlier stage of Aramaic or possibly (in the case of **pursma**) from neighboring languages:

bilur	'crystal'	cf. *bḗrullos*
kamuna	'cumin'	cf. *kúminon*
kinara	'lote-tree'	cf. *kónnaros*
hindiba	'endive'	cf. *entúbia*
nard	'(spike)nard'	cf. *nárdos*
pursma	'balsam'	cf. *bálsamon*
runza	'rice'	cf. *óruza*
saqa	'sack(cloth)'	cf. *sákkos*
šaraia	'silk'	cf. *sērikós*
taura	'bull'	cf. *taûros*

I am also excluding fourteen common words of local origin (Semitic, Iranian, or otherwise) that would likely have been borrowed directly from their sources rather than via Greek:

anapqia	'cups'	Par *anapag*	cf. *ámbikos*
ašganda	'messenger'	OP **ažganda*	cf. *askándēs*
kabišia	1/10 of a peck	Phl *kapīč*	cf. *kapíthē*
kisa	'small bag'	Akk *kīsu*	cf. *kísis*
kitun	'tunic'	Akk *kitinna*	cf. *khitôn*
kumra	'priest'	Akk *kumirtu*	cf. *komários*
lugiana	'part of womb'	Akk *liginnu*	cf. *lágēnos*
mana	'mina'	Akk *manû*	cf. *mna*
margna	'staff'	Phl *mārgen*	cf. *máragna*
pardisa	'pleasure garden'	Av *pairidaēza*	cf. *parádeisos*
pilqa	'axe'	Akk *pilaqqu*[9]	cf. *pélekus*

7. Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik*, xxi.

8. E. S. Drower and R. Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963).

9. In a personal communication, David Kiltz notes: "while Greek *pélekus* has an Indo-European cognate in OI *paraśú*-, Mand. *pilqā* and Syr. *pelqā* should probably be connected with Akkadian *pilaqqu* 'axe'. There is a good

qupa	'ape'	Akk *uqûpu*[10]	cf. *kḗbos*
sasa	'moth'	Sum ZIZ	cf. *sḗs*
simad	'fine flour'	Akk *samīdu*	cf. *semídalis*

Within this list, however, it is worth noting two words that have a special development within Mandaic. The word **margna** refers exclusively to a type of whip within Greek and all other Aramaic dialects in which it is attested (Syriac and Targumic, principally).[11] The word **sasa** 'moth' has come to figuratively represent 'decay' in both Mandaic and Syriac,[12] while it refers exclusively and quite literally to moths in other dialects such as CPA, Gal, and JBA.

Additionally, I am excluding sixteen words of Greek (and Latin) origin that are common to both Eastern and Western Aramaic, rendering it difficult to discern the proximate source of each word.[13] In order to illustrate their distribution, I will, however, include their attestations within the Mandæan scriptural canon.[14]

aqra	'citadel'	*ákra*	GL 95: 7, GR 10: 9, JB 27: 5
arkuna	'ruler'	*árkhōn*	GR 279: 5
dmasa	'adamantine'	*adámas*	JB 216: 5, 6, 10
eluaia	'aloe'	*alóē*	GR 216: 15
euṣṭmumia	'(pointed) arms'	*stómōma*	JB 17: 13
kaluza	'voice'	*kḗruks*[15]	CP 160: 1, 464: 6; GR 64: 13, 356: 23; JB 169: 8, 170: 14, 171: 1
kuba	'cup'	*kupḗ*	CP 404: 3
nsisia	'islands'	*nḗsoi*	GR 175: 2

Semitic derivation, Sem. *p-l-q*, *f-l-q* 'to split apart etc.'. There is no good derivation in I.-E. Thomas V. Gamkrelidze and Vjaceslav V. Ivanov, *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995), 2: 620f. argue for an ultimate Semitic origin.

10. Once again, David Kiltz notes: "Here again, instead of positing a Greek origin, cf. rather Hebrew *qôp*, Akkadian *uqûpu* 'monkey'. The ultimate origin might be Egyptian (*gjf*). There is also OI *kapi-*; hence it may be an old 'wanderwort'."

11. Daniel J. Sheffield adds: "Pahlavi *mārgen* (as Skjærvø transcribes) is probably already some kind of whip used in the killing of noxious animals. Cf. Bundahišn 27.27 where it is described as a stick (*dār-ēw*) with a piece of leather (*čarm-ēw*) fastened to the end. In Pahlavi Videvdad 18.2 the term glosses Avestan *xrafstraγnəm* 'xrafstar-killer' and in 18.4 is linked with a whip (*aštar*)."

12. Cf. GR 5: 19, 9: 4 **sasa uhbala** 'rot and decay'.

13. It is entirely possible that some of these were inherited from an earlier stage of Aramaic. Aaron M. Butts (*Language Change in the Wake of Empire: Syriac in Its Greco-Roman Context* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016], 56–60 and Appendix 1, 212–22) lists Greek loan words in Syriac potentially inherited in this manner, including *aḗr*, *árkhōn*, *nómos*, *sándalon*, *táksis*, *taôs*, and *zeugos*, as well as *dēnárion* and *génos*. The last two are not attested in the Mandaic corpus prior to the medieval period, and may have arrived in Mandaic via Arabic *dīnār* 'dinar' and *jins* 'sex; kind or species'. In addition to the latter two, I am also excluding **balda** 'land' (Arabic *balda* < *pálation*), **balgama** 'phlegm' (Arabic *balġam* < *phlégma*), and **qanina** (*kannion*), which likely came to Mandaic via Arabic rather than directly from Greek.

14. The numbers that follow these abbreviations refer to the page and line numbers in the standard editions, E. S. Drower, ed., *The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959); J. H. Petermann, ed., *Thesaurus s. liber magnus vulgo "Liber Adami" appellatus: Opus Mandaeorum summi ponderis* (Leipzig: T.O. Weigel, 1867); and M. Lidzbarski, *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*, vol. 1 (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1922).

15. The Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon (CAL) indicates that this term derives not from Greek but rather from "an old western Asiatic culture word." CAL refers in turn to the *Dictionary of the Northwest Semitic Inscriptions*, which derives it from an unnamed Iranian source. Drower and Macuch (*Mandaic Dictionary*, s.v.) suggest Phl *xrōs* 'rooster', which is confusingly represented by the heterogram DYLKA. D. N. Mackenzie (*A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* [London: RoutledgeCurzon, 1971]) derives this from *dekrā* 'male'.

nargis	'daffodil'	*nárkissos*	GR 107: 1, 346: 20, 22; JB 254: 10ff.
nimusa	'law'	*nómos*	passim
parṣupa	'face; person'	*prósōpon*	CP 54: 15; GR 142: 1, 305: 5, 25, 308: 23 *et passim*
purana	'dowry'	*phernḗ*	JB 55: 3, 114: 6
sandlia	'sandles'	*sándalon*	GL 97: 19; JB 46: 2 ff., 100: 7
sqiria	'sail-yard'	*histokeraía*	GR 273: 15, 22; JB 162: 1, 163: 2
ṭausa	'peacock'	*taôs*	JB 270: 14, 271: 4, 7, 10, 12
zaua	'wife'	*zeûgos*	passim

This leaves us with a much-reduced list of twenty-five loan words. Eight of these words frequently appear in Mandaic, the copious Syriac literature, and manuscripts of western origin in a variety of Aramaic languages, but not elsewhere in Eastern Aramaic.

e(u)ṣṭla	'stola'	*stolḗ*	CP 69: 13; GR 193: 16, 210: 13f
gluṣṭ(u)ma	'case'	*glōssókomon*	GR 143: 19
nsisa	'vexation'	*nósos*	GR 277: 14
parqsa	'tower'	*púrgos*	GL 99: 10; JB 23: 14
qabuta	'coffin'	*kibōtós*	JB 115: 10, 12, 15
qirsa	'moment of time'	*kairós*	CP 39: 3; GL 41: 7, 17, 88: 16, 114: 15, 23; JB 86: 5, 244: 4
qurpida	'type of shoe'	*krēpídion*	JB 164: 3f., 165: 13
sam	'treasure'	*ásēmon*	passim
ṭaksa	'order; rank'	*táksis*	GR 216: 17, 285: 12, 23, 290: 10

A few words about the preceding vocabulary: the word **nsisa** is clearly a *qtīlā* form from the root √*n-s-s*, itself borrowed from Greek *nósos*. While this root appears in other dialects of Aramaic, it serves as a substantive only in Targumic Aramaic and once in the classical Mandæan texts.[16] The word **qabuta**, which appears three times in a debate between John the Baptist and his wife Anhar over the disposition of his remains after his death (JB 115: 10, 12, 15), has a contested etymology that vacillates between Greek and Akkadian; it appears in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic as well, but only with the meaning of 'doorframe'. The loan word **qurpida**, which appears in the *Book of John* as "an iron shoe, which has trampled down the darkness" (JB 164: 3ff., 165: 13) also appears in Galilean, where it appears to mean a type of jar. **sam hiia** is the male counterpart to the figure **simat hiia** 'Treasure-of-Life'.

Intriguingly, **sam** and **qabuta** belong to a very small group of words in Mandaic in which **a** incontrovertibly reflects a bona-fide *mater lectionis*, representing the close-mid front unrounded vowel *ē* in word-internal position, as in Syriac *sēmā* and *qēbūtā*.

haria	'nobles'	cf. Syr *hērē*
kauila	'ark'	cf. Syr *kēwēlā*
mahuna	'water-wheel'	cf. Syr *mēkanē*
makulta	'food'	cf. Syr *mēkūltā*
qaba	'muzzle'	cf. Syr *qēmā*
qabuta	'coffin'	cf. Syr *qēbūtā*
sam	'treasure'	cf. Syr *sēmā*

16. GR 277: 14 **nsisa rabtia** 'great sickness'.

šaraia	‘silk’	cf. Syr *šērāyā*
zaba	‘wolf’	cf. Syr *dēbā*

The orthography of these nine words is inconsistent with that of the rest of the Mandaic lexicon, in which **a** regularly represents an open vowel, either *a* or *ā*. In most other cognates in which Syriac reflects the close-mid front unrounded vowel followed (or formerly followed) by a glottal stop, the reflex of this cluster is represented by **i**, e.g., **giria** ‘arrows’, Syriac *gērē*. The spoken language may provide a clue as to the pronunciation of these terms. Within this group, the one term that has survived in regular usage, **zaba**, is pronounced *dewɔ*. The first two segments indicate that the spelling must have been inherited from another scribal tradition, and indeed a much more conservative one, such as the Official Aramaic *zʾbʾ*, in which neither the merger of PS **ḏ* and **z* nor the deletion of the postvocalic glottal stop is reflected. For the other six words, one can assume that the same is true—namely, the archaicizing spelling of each word does not reflect its actual pronunciation, but rather a scribal convention borrowed (or perhaps inherited) from another tradition.

Of the remaining seventeen words, the following fourteen Greek loan words appear exclusively in Mandaic and Syriac, which could indicate that they derive directly from Greek or arrived via one or the other dialect:

aiar	‘air; space’	*aḗr*	passim
a(u)gia	‘ray’	*augḗ*	CP 342: 6
(e)spira	‘sphere’	*sphaîra*	GR 33: 24; JB 68: 6
eṭak	‘perhaps’	*tákha*	GR 258: 1, 22, 324: 6, 325: 7
mahuna	‘water-wheel’	*mēchanḗ*	GL 26: 4, 107: 4, 12; GR 216: 1; JB 97: 8, 155: 11, 159: 8, 247: 9
qaba	‘muzzle’	*kḗmos*	GR 84: 7
qurpida	‘type of shoe’	*krēpídion*	JB 164: 3ff., 165: 13
rumaiia	a kind of pain	*rheuma*	CP 30: 15, 33: 7, 39: 2; GR 202: 12
sibla	‘token offering’	*sumbolḗ*	GL 101: 7
susambar	*Mentha aquatica*	*sisúmbrion*	CP 239: 7; GR 106: 22, 24
kauila	‘chest; ark’	*khēlós*	GR 265: 10, 380: 9, 18, 20
susṭamia	‘shackles’	*sústēma*	CP 82: 9; GL 80: 17, 81: 14
p(a)langa	‘phalanx’	*phálanks*	GR 103: 15, 172: 6, 382: 7
kutla	‘rudder’	cf. *kanthḗlia*	JB 146: 9, 148: 6

The usual Aramaic equivalent to **aiar** is *ʾawwêrā*, which appears to derive from the Aeolic form *auḗr* rather than Attic *aḗr*, the likely source of Mandaic **aiar** and Syriac *ʾāʾar*. Uniquely within Mandaic, this term is frequently personified, as in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes,[17] referring not only to the realm of the air (**arqa ḏ-aiar**, literally ‘air land’) but also to its ruler (**malka ḏ-aiar**, ‘air king’). Similarly, the Mandaic terms **kaluza** and **parṣupa** often represent the supreme being metonymically (**kaluza ḏ-hiia** ‘the Life’s voice’ and **parṣupa rba ḏ-eqara** ‘the great glorious presence’) in place of the unmarked terms **qala** ‘voice’ and **anpia** ‘face; presence’. In Greek, the former refers to the divine messenger, Hermes,[18] a usage otherwise unattested among the other Aramaic languages, in which supernatural messengers are exclusively *malʾakīn*, reflecting an obvious Hebraism.[19]

17. *Ar. Nu.* 264 ‘O sovereign King, immeasurable Air, who keepest the earth suspended …’.

18. Cf. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 80: “and the Herald of the gods (*theôn kḗruks*) put speech in her.”

19. In Mandaic, the term **malaka** is commonly, though not exclusively, restricted to fallen angels, as in Matt. 25:41 (*l-nūrā da-l-ʿālam hī da-mṭayybā l-ʾākelqarṣē wa-l-malʾakaw* “into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the

The word **qurpida** also appears in Galilean, but only in the sense of a type of jar, and once in the Syriac translation of the Greek *Passion of Saints Sergius and Bacchus*,[20] where it corresponds directly to Greek *krēpídion* in the original text. It seemingly does not otherwise appear in Syriac letters.

The word **kutla** (Syr *kūtlā*) formally corresponds to its Akkadian etymon, *kutallu* 'back', but in meaning it clearly reflects the influence of Greek *kanthḗlia*, which refers to the curved pieces of wood at the back of a ship, perhaps via the process of folk etymology. In all other forms of Aramaic, this word exclusively means 'wall'.

The Mandaic words **susṭ(a)mia** (also **ṣuṣt(a)mia**) and **p(a)langa** are closer in form to their Greek etymons *sústēma* and *phalanks* than the Syriac *sūṭmā* and *plaggā*, making it clear that they arrived directly from Greek rather than via Syriac or some other route. Outside of the Mandaic corpus, the former form appears uniquely in one incantation bowl in the square script.[21] In addition to these two words, the following Greek loan words are apparently unique to Mandaic within Aramaic:

azmi[r]uz	'fragrant'	*osmērós*	CP 178: 16, 17
esqubra	'container; dulcimer'	*skuphárion*	JB 146: 9, 147: 1, 2, 6 (x2)
pisnia	'tunes; songs'	*psalmós*	CP 180: 12; GR 118: 18, 196: 22

A few remarks on the preceding words: the virtual *hapax* **azmiuz** appears in the *Canonical Prayerbook* twice in prayer 155, where it twice modifies **hamra** 'wine'. As Torgny Säve-Söderbergh has demonstrated,[22] this prayer parallels the conclusion of the thirteenth of the Psalms of Thomas from the Coptic Manichaean Psalm-Book (P XIII), in which the Coptic offers 'fragrant' (*stioufe*) in its place. Samuel Zinner first drew my attention to this word in a forthcoming piece entitled "Of Pomegranates, Cumin, Dust, Ashes and Mould: Shedding Light on Mandæan Origins," in which he discerns the origins of P XIII admonitions in Matt. 23, applying the Shem-Tob Hebrew Matthew to elucidate a thorny crux.[23] It appears to be derived from *osmērós*[24] via the following intermediary stages: **a(u)smirus** > **azmirus** > **azmiruz**. At some point in the history of this text, the **r** must have been dropped from what had become an unfamiliar word.

The Greek *skuphárion* 'small container' (literally 'little skyphos', a drinking vessel), is the likely etymon of Mandaic **esqubra**, which appears five times in the *Book of John* in

Eater-of-Morsels [i.e., Satan] and his angels"). Divine messengers are generally styled **malkia** 'kings', such as the Air King, **malka ḏ-aiar**.

20. P. Bedjan, ed., *Acta martyrum et sanctorum*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1892), 311, ln. 3.

21. Christa Müller-Kessler ("SSTM, ŚSTM, ŚSTM or ŠSTM: A Technical Term for Shackling Demons," *Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 37 [2000]: 224–28) derives both from a relic *Š*-stem causative of the (Eastern) Aramaic root √*s-ṭ-m* 'to bind', although several objections might be raised to this proposal. If it were indeed a *Š*-stem deverbal noun belonging to the pattern CuCCaC-, it would be the only member of its class. Within Mandaic, at least, the only regular *Š*-stem deverbal noun pattern is CaCCāCta, which would yield the form ****sasṭamta**. If we were dealing with an infinitive from the same root, we would expect ****sasṭumia** rather than **susṭ(a)mia**. Finally, all other Aramaic nouns beginning with *sūsṭ-* are transparently Greek loan words, such as *sūsṭaṭīqā* (from *sustatikḗ* 'recommendation'), *sūsṭūkīyā* (from *sustoikhía* 'column'), and *sūsṭrā* (from *seĩstron* 'sistra').

22. T. Säve-Söderbergh, *Studies in the Coptic-Manichaean Psalm-Book* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1949), 115–19.

23. A preliminary draft of this paper is now available through academia.edu: https://www.academia.edu/26497591/Of_Pomegranates_Cumin_Dust_Ashes_and_Mould_Shedding_Light_on_Mandaean_Origins._Essay_Rough_Draft (accessed 2016/06/27).

24. An etymology from *osmirós* was first mooted by Alfred Adam, *Die Psalmen des Thomas und das Perlenlied als Zeugnisse vorchristlicher Gnosis* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1959), 40; ref. provided by Samuel Zinner, pers. comm. 6/25/2016.

reference to a particular musical instrument, therein described as hollow and held together with pitch. This same word appears in its original sense in a later work, the *Thousand and Twelve Questions*, as a metaphor for the material world.[25] While no image of the **esqubra** survives, its description and the name 'small container' suggest a string instrument like the Iraqi *sanṭūr*, or something like the Mesopotamian lyre (cf. Latin *cistella*).

With regard to the other two words, Macuch derives **pisnia** from 'psalm', via the stages ***psalm-** > ***psanm-** > ***psann-** > ***psan-** > **pisnia**, on the model of other Aramaic CCaC-forms such as **bsar** / **bisra** 'flesh'. Elsewhere in Aramaic, 'psalm' is consistently rendered by the Hebrew loan word *mizmōr*, which is unattested in Mandaic. Finally, both of these Greek words are closely associated with religious rituals and belong to the earliest stratum of Mandaic literature as represented within the *Canonical Prayerbook*.

In fact, most of the preceding forty-two loan words tend to cluster within a small number of texts, which I have organized here according to the order of their history of redaction:[26]

- Thirteen prayers from the *Canonical Prayerbook* (CP 23, 24, 28, 36, 50, 69, 75, 128, 155, 159, 226, 310, 374, and 380), especially 28, a sealing prayer for the baptism, and 155, one of the three *rahmi* ('devotional') prayers for Saturday;
- Seven of the sixty-two prayers comprising the third chapter of the Left *Ginza*, namely, 3.5, 3.6, and 3.19. These deal with the destiny of the soul. The first (GL 3.5) reproduces much of the material from CP 69, "Bliss and peace there will be / On the road which Adam attained";
- The third and largest book of the Right *Ginza*, an account of the creation of the world entitled "The Book of the Living, First Teachings" (GR 84: 7, 106: 22, and 118: 18). Alone among the tractates of the Right *Ginza*, this account employs the archaic demonstrative **dḫ** in the formula **dḫ udḫ** 'this and that', suggesting a relative antiquity for its contents;
- Two of the five sections of Book Five of the Right *Ginza*, including the first, which deals with the journey of the savior spirit Splendid Hibil to the underworld (GR 172: 6), and the last, entitled "The Book of Shilmai, Lord of the House";
- Book Eleven, "The Mystery and the Book of the Great Ennosh," relates a sort of titanomachy between the Evil Spirit, Christ, and the old Mesopotamian divinities (represented by the seven planets and twelve signs of the Zodiac) on the one hand, and the forces of Light on the other (GR 258: 1, 22, 265: 10). Uniquely within Mandæan letters, this composition is distinguished by the use of numerous grammatical features, such as the archaic demonstrative **elin** 'these' in place of the usual **hania**, the archaic preposition **em** in place of the usual **mn**, and the archaic Causative prefix *h-* in the verb **hanpiqḫ** 'he brought him out', regularly **apqḫ**. These features convinced the pioneer translator of the text, Mark Lidzbarski, that the redactors of the *Ginza* must have translated it from some unknown and presumably lost source;[27]
- One of four acrostic poems within Book Twelve of the Right *Ginza*, 12.5 (GR 277: 14);

25. **uesqubra ṭmira hua alma ḏ-baba litlḫ** "and the container became buried, until it had no entrance," Book I, pt. 2, no. 264, in E. S. Drower, *The Thousand and Twelve Questions* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960), 54; transl. 183.

26. Following J. J. Buckley, *The Great Stem of Souls: Reconstructing Mandæan History* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2010).

27. M. Lidzbarski, *Ginza: Der Schatz oder das Grosse Buch der Mandäer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1925), 250.

- Two of the twenty poems that compose Book Fifteen of the Right *Ginza*, 15.9 (GR 324: 6), in which the soul is sent into the world, and 15.10 (GR 325: 7), concerning the Great First Mana;
- Book Eighteen, an apocalyptic history spanning the entire 480,000-year history of the world, from its creation to the end of the Sasanian empire (GR 380: 9, 18, 20, 382: 7). Although it must have been redacted after the Arab Conquest, it comprises materials from multiple earlier sources, including many episodes from the Hebrew Bible, an Iranian king list, and a chronology of the last years of the Lakhmid kingdom at al-Ḥīra;
- Chapters 3, 7, 66, 69, and 75 of the Mandæan *Book of John*, concerning various supernatural beings in the lightworld, especially the Second Life, Yushamin;
- Chapters 28 and 31 of the Mandæan *Book of John*, concerning the life of John the Baptist;
- Chapters 36–39 of the Mandæan *Book of John*, which Lidzbarski named "the Soul-fisher" (JB 146: 9, 148: 6). These chapters represent an extended allegory similar to that of the Good Shepherd, albeit translated to the marshes of southern Mesopotamia, wherein the Fisher takes the place of the Shepherd, the fish his flock, and other fishers and various birds of prey take the place of their predators;
- Chapters 40 and 41 of the Mandæan *Book of John*, short poems in which the savior spirit Splendid Hibil rebukes the Evil Spirit;
- Finally, chapters 44 and 45, which contain the admonitions of Life's Voice (**kaluza ḏ-hiia**).

Whether by tradition (reflected by the colophons that close each discrete composition), content (and the other traditions to which they can be related), or grammar (representing an earlier stage of the Mandaic language), the context of these loan words attests that they do indeed belong to some of the earliest strata of Mandæan literature.

A WESTERN ARAMAIC SUBSTRATE

What emerges from the evidence collected above is that there are a number of important Greek loan words that appear in the earliest stratum of Mandaic texts and cannot be directly attributed to the influence of any other Aramaic language. Furthermore, these loan words generally do not appear in the compositions deemed "late" (due to grammatical cues such as colloquial Mandaic features as well as contextual cues such as references to Islam), but seem to cluster within the earliest strata of Mandaic literature. This represents a significant challenge to the scholarly consensus concerning the evidence for western influence in Mandaic. On these grounds, it might be instructive to revisit some of the other evidence that has been adduced for literary substrates in Mandaic.

Lidzbarski was one of the first scholars to take up the challenge of reconciling Mandæan claims of western origins with their evidently Eastern Aramaic language.[28] As this is primarily a linguistic question, his approach to this challenge was therefore linguistic, and primarily concerned the phonology of the language. According to the best practices of historical linguistics, Lidzbarski sought exceptions to the otherwise regular sound rules characterizing Mandaic and other languages within Eastern Aramaic. Among other features (such as the phenomenon of prenasalization),[29] he observes,

28. M. Lidzbarski, *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*, vol. 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1915), xvii.
29. C. G. Häberl, "Writing in a Sacred Tongue: Inter-Aramaic Alloglottography," *WORD* 65.3 (2019): 164–78.

> The form of the word **kušṭa** is Western Aramaic. It is a common tendency throughout Aramaic not to permit two *ʿayins*; the first is weakened to *ʾaleph*; but already quite early in Western Aramaic when two emphatics are found in a word, a tendency is shown for the first to lose the emphasis. Previously known examples demonstrate this especially with *kaph* […]. The baptismal formula of the Marcosians has *chousta* (Irenaeus 1, 21, 3), and [the name] *choustiēl* is found on an Abraxas gem; see Roscher's *Lexikon* II, 1, 1633. Both words presuppose *qšt*, but *kšt* is otherwise found only in the West.[30]

Greek *chi* regularly reflects an underlying *kaph*, rather than a *qoph*, which is consistently represented by Greek *kappa*. Thus, the readings *chousta* and *choustiēl* support Lidzbarski's argument. While the dissimilation of intervocalic voiced geminates is attested throughout Aramaic and is therefore of limited value for identifying Western Aramaic loans, the dissimilation of *q* > *k* before another "emphatic" consonant[31] is characteristic of Western Aramaic, not regularly attested in the eastern languages, where we find for example JBA *qûšṭā*.[32] Within Mandaic, a similar rule operates, whereby **q** regularly dissimilates to **g** before an emphatic consonant,[33] e.g., **gṭal** 'he killed' (<**qṭal*), **lgaṭ** 'he grasped' (< **lqaṭ*), and **gaiṭa** 'summer' (<**qayṭā*), but this rule would produce the unattested form ****gušṭa**. Consequently, this quintessentially Mandaic word is actually irregular within Mandaic, one of a handful of roots in which **q* dissimilates to *k*,[34] all of which likely reflect borrowing from another dialect in which this sound change was regular.

In an important 1991 article,[35] Jan Joosten assembled a number of Western Aramaic elements that were characteristic of the Old Syriac and Peshitta Gospels, but not of other Classical Syriac texts or indeed other Eastern Aramaic dialects. Some of these had already been adduced by other scholars (C. C. Torrey, M. Black) to reflect a Palestinian source or tradition underlying the Old Syriac.[36] Intriguingly, most of these same elements are also characteristic of the classical scriptures, particularly the *Great Treasure* and the Mandæan *Book of John*:

1. The use of the term *brā bhīrā* in the Peshitta to render the Greek *ho huiós mou ho eklelegménos* 'my chosen son' (Luke 9:35) is one such Western Aramaic element.[37] The regular, unmarked word meaning 'selected' or 'chosen' in Syriac is *gabyā*. By contrast, *bhīrā* / **bhira** properly means 'tried' or 'approved' in Syriac and Mandaic, but no other textual tradition supports the translation 'my approved son' or (in the case of *hos eklektoí*) 'the approved'. In this specific context, and only in this context,

30. Lidzbarski, *Johannesbuch*, xviii.

31. I.e., those with a secondary articulation, either pharyngealization (as in Arabic) or glottalization (as in Ethio-Semitic).

32. Gzella, *Cultural History*, 633–34.

33. Macuch, *Handbook*, 74.

34. Nöldeke (*Mandäische Grammatik*, 39) produces a few other exceptions to the rule. These include **kṣira** 'sick' (< **qṣīrā*), **kaṣara** 'fuller' (< **qaṣṣārā*), √*k-r-ṣ* 'to wink' (< √*q-r-ṣ*), **kiṣat** 'part (of)' (< **qṣāt*) alongside the expected form **giṣat**, and *√*k-m-ṣ* 'to shrink' (< *√*q-p-ṣ*).

35. J. Joosten, "West Aramaic Elements in the Old Syriac and Peshitta Gospels," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 (1991): 271–89.

36. It must be admitted here that many Syriacists, who do not view Syriac as an Eastern Aramaic language, remain unconvinced by Joosten's arguments; Aaron M. Butts, pers. comm. 4/18/2017. For a dissenting view, see L. Van Rompay, "Some Preliminary Remarks on the Origins of Classical Syriac as a Standard Language: The Syriac Version of Eusebius of Caesarea's Ecclesiastical History," in *Semitic and Cushitic Studies*, ed. G. Goldenberg and Sh. Raz (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 70–89. Regardless of whether Syriac shares these features with Western Aramaic (against Eastern Aramaic) or they are evidence of a Western Aramaic substrate, as Joosten claims, the question remains: what are they doing in Mandaic?

37. Joosten, "West Aramaic," 274–75.

does *bhīrā* mean 'chosen' or 'elect'. Notably, **gibia** is used with reference to 'the elect' in Mandaic, but only those of Christ and the evil spirit (e.g., GR 225: 3, 19). Its connotations are therefore negative in contrast to those of **bhiria**.

2. The use of the Causative stem of the root √*n-q-š* with the meaning 'to strike; knock' is another purely western element.[38] It appears only in Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Galilean, Samaritan, and in the Peshitta of Luke 11:10 and 13:25 according to Codex Sinaiticus. This root does not appear in this stem elsewhere in Classical Syriac, and in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic the same root in the causative stem means 'to compare'. By contrast, this root appears in the *C*-stem in the Mandæan *Book of John* (JB 113: 14): **kma manqišatlḫ lkulḫ qumtai** "how you strike at my entire body!"[39]
3. The use of the verbal root √*š-l-ḥ* and its Mandaic cognates √*š-l-h*, √*š-h-l*, and √*š-l-*$^{w}/_{y}$ with the meaning 'to send (someone)', and most particularly the passive participle *šlīḥā* / **šliha** in the sense of 'messenger; apostle', are yet even more western elements. The usual verb with the meaning 'to send (someone)' is √*š-d-r*, with √*š-l-ḥ* being reserved primarily for sending messages and other things, but in Western Aramaic the latter root has assumed all the meanings of the former.[40]
4. In a second article,[41] Joosten notes that Syriac has two synonymous terms for 'the Cross', *zqīpā* and *ṣlībā*, and two verbs 'to crucify', namely √*z-q-p* and √*ṣ-l-b*. The latter root appears nowhere in Old Syriac, in which the former is exclusively employed. In the Peshitta to John 19, the two terms appear repeatedly and nearly side by side, but across a sociolinguistic divide: *zūqpaw* 'crucify (pl.) him!' is used exclusively by Pontius Pilate, and *ṣlūbaw* 'crucify (sg.) him!' by the Jews. On this basis Joosten concludes,[42] "We may rather suppose this points to a certain consciousness that *ṣ-l-b* though used in Syriac, was in fact the Jewish Palestinian term for 'to crucify'." In Mandaic, *only* the pair **ṣaliba** and √*ṣ-l-b* are attested with the meaning 'the Cross' and 'to crucify'; ***zqipa** is completely unattested, and the root √*z-q-p* exclusively means 'to raise'.

While **zqipa** may be completely absent from Mandaic, there is yet another synonym for **ṣaliba**. Chapter 30 of the Mandæan *Book of John* introduces a series of Christian ritual objects (the baptismal font, the Eucharist, and the crozier), playing upon the names of each and identifying each of them with their Mandaean prototypes, which is described as the **paulis** (Latin *follis* 'coin; unstruck blank') of their Christian equivalents. The chapter concludes with the cross:

> Beware for me, my brothers, the Romans, / who are like offshoots of the cross (**ṣaliba**)
> they fix to the walls, / and start worshiping the **quruqsa**. (JB 109: 2–4)

The word **quruqsa** here clearly parallels **ṣaliba**. Lidzbarski translates it as a *Klotz* 'block'; cf. JBA *qûrqsā*, perhaps from **qûr qaysā* 'heart of the wood' (cf. Riddley Walker's *hart of the wud*). The contextual word play, the poetic parallelism with **ṣaliba**, the reference to the Romans, and the Latin loan word *follis* all warrant reading this word as none other than Latin *crux* 'cross'.

38. Joosten, "West Aramaic," 277.
39. Note the absence of any indication of the assimilation of the *n*, indicating a morphographemic spelling.
40. Joosten, "West Aramaic," 277–79.
41. J. Joosten, "Two West Aramaic Elements in the Old Syriac and Peshitta Gospels," *Biblische Notizen* 61 (1992): 17–21.
42. "Two West Aramaic Elements," 19.

HEBREW INFLUENCE

In a panel on the Septuagint at the 2014 annual meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature over which he presided, Joosten contributed another western feature underlying Syriac translations. He noted that the Peshitta occasionally renders Hebrew *ʾimrâ* or Greek *lógos* 'word' with the deverbal noun *mēmrā*, particularly with reference to divine commandments.[43] One would normally expect the common noun *melltā* in this context rather than a noun of action.[44] A similar phenomenon obtains in Mandaic literature, in which similar contexts employ **mimra** rather than **minilta**, e.g., **ašmuia ktabia umimria utušbihta ḏ-ehablkun maraikun** "make them hear the writings, the words, and the praise that your lord gave you" (GR 15: 4–5) and **mimra ana br mimra** "I am a word, a son of the word" (GR 299: 7). In the latter context, it cannot but recall the targumic periphrasis *mêmrâ d-YYY* for the divine name.

Such examples could reflect the influence of Hebrew, in which the cognate form *maʾămār* is not a noun of action, but simply means 'command' or 'word'. Such Hebraisms might or might not imply western influence, particularly when other forms of Eastern Aramaic as such do not share them. When the Peshitta renders Hebrew *ʾimrâ* with Syriac *mēmrā*, one may presume that a desire to employ a word cognate to that in the original text motivated the translator; with Mandaic texts, the motivations are not so transparent. Perhaps more critically for our purposes, there are a few Hebraisms that Mandaic does not share with any other form of Eastern Aramaic, including Jewish Babylonian Aramaic. In Chapter 33 of the Mandæan *Book of John*, for example, there is a passage dealing with the fate of the soul when Ṣauriel comes to collect it, describing its progression up the body, slipping from the feet to the knees, from the knees to the hip, and finally

haizak bhadia napla / **kabša ulmarḫ mitgamla**
Then, she falls to the breasts / and presses […]

The soul apparently exits the body from the breasts, because the next two lines graphically describe what happens to the corpse after the soul reluctantly abandons it. The last two words of this line, which presumably describe the extraction of the soul from the body, perplexed Lidzbarski, who left them untranslated and remarked in the footnotes that they are probably corrupt. I would like to suggest here that **lmar-** stands for the graphically similar (but regrettably unattested) form ***lmad-** 'until she' (in place of the expected **alma ḏ-he**) and **mitgamla** for **mitgimla** 'she is weaned', this being the most obvious way to remove something from a breast, especially something that is unwilling to leave it, as the soul is portrayed in this text. In Syriac and other forms of Aramaic, the usual root for weaning is √*ḥ-s-l*. The root √*g-m-l* with the meaning 'to wean' does not appear anywhere else in Eastern Aramaic, but does appear with the meaning 'to be weaned' in the *Gt*-stem exclusively in Western Aramaic, e.g., the Samaritan Targum J to Gen. 21:8.

Chapter 62 of the same work, an account of the creation of the earth, employs the enigmatic term **iaunaita** to describe the latter. Nöldeke derives the enigmatic term **iaunaita** and its adverbial equivalent **iaunaiit** from Greek *iōnía* 'Ionia', comparing cognates in other Aramaic languages.[45] In Mandaic, these two terms apply exclusively to the earth, such as **arqa iaunaita** 'the **iaunaita** earth' in line 20 and the phrase **arqa iaunaiit nitqiria** 'the earth is created **iaunaiit**' from p. 87 l. 13 of Petermann's edition of the Right *Genzā*. On this

43. E.g., Psalm 12: 7, 18: 31; 105: 19; 119: 50, 67, 82, 123, 158, 162, 172; 138: 2, 4; Hosea 6: 5.
44. E.g., Psalm 33: 6 *b-mellteh d-māryā* 'by the word of the Lord'.
45. Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik*, 201.

basis, Nöldeke suggests that the earth was created 'in the Greek manner', and by extension, 'skillfully'. The context does not warrant such an assumption, as the Mandaic scriptures consistently speak of the creation of the material world in deprecating terms—including this chapter, using this very word to describe it.

The later medieval texts offer an alternative etymology,[46] in the form of an epithet for the earth, **arqa rabtia pt iauna**, 'the great Earth, daughter of **iauna**'. While neither Greek nor Aramaic furnishes any clues for earthy equivalents to **iauna**, Hebrew does, in the form of *yāwēn* 'mire'. This term appears twice in the Psalms, in appropriately negative contexts, Ps. 40:3 "He brought me up also out of the tumultuous pit, out of the miry clay," and 69:3 "Save me, O God; […] I am sunk in deep mire, where there is no standing." Even though no reflex of the Hebrew etymon appears in any other form of Aramaic, the context undeniably warrants a derivation from the Hebrew etymon rather than the Greek.

A third evident Hebraism appears in Chapter 66 of the same work:

klilai qarnia ḏ-ziua / man brišai nitriṣlia
My wreath of splendid beams—who will set it upon my head?

The **klila** is the myrtle wreath worn primarily by priests on their heads, as they execute most of their functions. This particular wreath is a 'wreath of **qarnia** of splendor' or 'radiance'. Lidzbarski translates it as "Krone, die Stirnlocken des Glanzes," and Drower and Macuch render the word **qarna** as 'horn' or 'angle', but neither of these is appropriate in this context.[47]

The word **qarna ḏ-ziua** can only mean 'beams of light' here, precisely as in Hebrew, but apparently not in any other Aramaic language. In the targums to the passages in which this Hebrew word appears, as well as in the Peshitta, the Hebrew word *qāran* or *qarnáyim* is either ignored (e.g., Exod. 34:29 *ʾəray səgi zīw yəqārā d-appohi*, *ezdahar meškā d-appaw*, etc.) or rendered with a different word entirely (Hab. 3:4 *wa-ḥwā bə-qārītā d-īdaw*). Only the Samaritan for Exod. 34:29 preserves *qāran*. It is hard to escape the conclusion that Mandaic uniquely preserves the word in this meaning, at least within Eastern Aramaic.

CONCLUSION

Much as Christians perceive their own communities reflected in that of Jesus Christ and the apostles, and Muslims see theirs in the community of Muḥammad and his companions, Mandæans recognize themselves in the community of John the Baptist and his disciples. Most scholars are content to acknowledge the useful work that the terms "Christian" and "Muslim" do for us when identifying such figures, as well as the communities that claim them, despite the blatantly anachronistic nature of such claims, which collapse vast spans of time and space into a single chronotope of "Christian" or "Islamic" history. Such claims are plainly valid only in retrospect, but only the most sectarian or contrarian of scholars would object to them on historical or legal grounds, precisely because they are ultimately unprovable and therefore irrelevant for the purposes of history or the law. This is a paradox, but in the end a necessary one, if only because "human social interaction could not be apprehended as 'continuous' in the complete absence of such retrospective mechanisms."[48] In this regard,

46. E.g., Drower Collection 37, *The Exorcism of the Great Overthrower*, and DC 43, *The Poor Priest's Treasury*.

47. Jerome's similar mistranslation of this exact word in Exod. 34:29 is responsible for the belief, formerly widespread in Europe, that Jews have horns, as famously reflected by Michelangelo's statue of Moses.

48. S. Palmié, *The Cooking of History: How Not to Study Afro-Cuban Religion* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2013), 36 n. 3.

Mandæan claims upon John the Baptist are no different from Christian or Muslim claims upon the same figure. Unfortunately, scholars have long denied Mandæans this continuity, ultimately because of the competing claims of these other communities upon the figure of John the Baptist, regardless of whether such scholars pertain to these communities or not.

Although it would be well beyond the scope of this article to address the broader question of Mandæan origins and its relationship to these other traditions, the literature on the Mandaic language has provided us with an opportunity to interrogate one specific claim concerning it, and determine the extent to which it is historically and philologically constituted rather than motivated by sectarian concerns. While Mandaic is recognizably an "Eastern Aramaic" language according to all philologically meaningful criteria, a closer analysis of its literature reveals considerable influences from Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, which have thus far been unappreciated and even denied. Since the degree to which the Mandaic lexicon reflects such influences remains low relative to other forms of Aramaic, particularly "Western Aramaic," the claim that these influences are completely absent, frequently deployed against Mandæan self-representations, cannot be justified on philological grounds.

The evidence therefore raises the obvious question of how these "western" influences came to enter Mandaic and its literature. This question is complicated by the fact that several of these terms are unparalleled elsewhere within Eastern Aramaic, which undermines one of the fundamental premises underlying the present scholarly consensus regarding Mandæan origins, namely, that Mandæism as we understand it could only have emerged within a Babylonian milieu due to the alleged absence of these influences. If we must posit that the "western" (i.e., non-Babylonian) features that it demonstrably shares with Judaism and Christianity are borrowed from those authentically "western" traditions rather than inherited from a common source, and are therefore extraneous to Mandæism and derivative of those other traditions, how then do we explain those features not shared by either of our putative source traditions?

Scholars can, and occasionally have, posited a hypothetical third-party source for those aspects of Mandæism and Mandaic that they cannot attribute to their putative Babylonian origins, including various "Jewish Christian" sects sometimes described as Nazoreans.[49] Since the texts that are the subject of our inquiry employ this same term as a self-designation, we cannot completely exclude this possibility, and such a source could theoretically explain the linguistic evidence as well. Even so, the question then becomes one of whether these aspects of their language and religion are authentically theirs, or somehow derived from another group that also happens to bear the same name. In short, this explanation multiplies entities unnecessarily, and this is the least of its deficiencies. Furthermore, any response to this question can only remain purely hypothetical, as it can be neither proven nor disproven. For these reasons, there are seemingly no scholarly advantages to denying the "western" influences upon Mandæism, unmediated by other traditions, absent sectarian aims.

49. See, for example, F. de Blois, "Naṣrānī (Ναζωραῖος) and ḥanīf (ἐθνικός): Studies on the Religious Vocabulary of Christianity and of Islam," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 65.1 (2002): 4.