

DIFFERENTIAL OBJECT MARKING IN NEO-ARAMAIC

Many dialects of North-eastern Neo-Aramaic have differential object marking (DOM). In most cases this involves agreement with the object on the verb:

- (1) (a) *kəm-māxe-lə*                      *brona*. (Alqosh dialect)  
PST-hit.3MS-OBJ.3MS              boy  
'He hit the boy.'

- (b) *kəm-māxe-lə*  
PST-hit.3MS-OBJ.3MS  
'He hit him.'

In some dialects it also involves tagging with a preposition otherwise used for the indirect object (in the following dialect, *ta*):

- (2) *kəm-māxe-lə*                      *ta bronw*. (Telkepe dialect)  
PST-hit.3MS-OBJ.3MS              to boy  
'He hit the boy.'

This paper will focus on the Telkepe dialect but make some comparisons to other dialects. In Telkepe all types of objects in monotransitive and ditransitive constructions (patient, theme and recipient) may trigger object agreement, but only the patient and the recipient may be tagged with *ta*. Definiteness is the main factor behind object agreement and tagging.<sup>1</sup> Animacy does not seem to play a role: human, animal and inanimate objects may all be marked in this way. However, not all semantically definite objects are marked as such, so I shall look at other factors behind the use of DOM.

Earlier dialects of Aramaic, such as Syriac, also had DOM, with both agreement and tagging with a dative preposition (Nöldeke 1904: 227-234). They used different materials, however, as the verbal system was different and the dative preposition was *l-* rather than the newer prepositions found in today's dialects. Some Arabic dialects of the areas where Aramaic was historically spoken (Syria and Iraq) also have differential object marking of this type (cf. e.g. Cowell 1964: 434-5, Johnstone 1975: 107).

REFERENCES

---

<sup>1</sup> Although one example has been found with an indefinite object.

- COWELL, M.W., 1964, *Reference grammar of Syrian Arabic : based on the dialect of Damascus*,  
Richard Slade Harrell Arabic Series no. 6., Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- JOHNSTONE, T.M., 1975, 'The Spoken Arabic of Tikrit', *Annual of Leeds University Oriental Society*  
7, Leiden: Brill, pp. 89-109.
- NÖLDEKE, T., 1904, *Compendious Syriac Grammar: Translated from the second German edition by*  
*James A. Crichton*, London: Williams and Norgate, reprinted 2001 by Eisenbrauns.