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*A ceiling in the Gorresio building (DOST)*

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# Sounds and Words through the Ages: Afroasiatic Studies from Turin

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# Analytical and synthetic genitive constructions in Epigraphic Middle Aramaic

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The article deals with the expression of adnominal possession (“genitive”) in epigraphic Middle Aramaic dialects (Palmyrene, Nabatean, Hatran, Early Syriac, Jewish Palestinian), comparing the frequency and the occurrences of the synthetic construction (“construct state”) and of the analytical one (construction with the attribute marking *zy/dy/d-*), in order to establish the eventuality of differences in their use and distribution. It turns out that the synthetic construction is still dominant, and tends to be more frequent in the Western texts. Moreover, with the exception of Nabatean, it is retained mainly with very few – but very frequent – head nouns. It is worth noting that the majority of these nouns, usually referred to as “inalienable”, shows the same preference for the synthetic construction in several languages of the world.

As is well known, the most ancient strategy for the expression of adnominal possession (genitive) in Aramaic is the construction known in Semitic linguistics as “construct state” (CS), in which the subordination of the modifier to the head is expressed by the morphological shape of the head, and the creation of a prosodic unity between the two nouns. However, in many Aramaic dialects, this construction can be replaced by an analytical construction, formed by inserting the genitive particle <zy> /\**dī*/ and later *dy*, *d-* between the head and the modifier.<sup>1</sup>

\* The present paper is a result of the project *The grammar and use of attribute marking in the history of Aramaic*, directed by Prof. S. Weninger and Dr. M. Waltisberg as part of the project cluster *Konstanz und Wandel in der Sprache: Theorie und Empirie*, held in the University of Marburg on the basis of financial support from the Hessian Ministry for Science and Arts through the LOEWE programme. Many thanks are also due to Prof. O. Gensler, Prof. F.A. Pennacchietti, and Prof. M.-C. Simeone-Senelle for their friendly suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> In Epigraphic Middle Aramaic, all the forms are attested: the old form *zy* occurs in Nabatean, together with *dy*; *dy* and *d-* are both attested in Palmyrene (where the latter is much less common, and not attested in my sample) and Hatran; *d-* is the usual form in

In recent years, several studies have been devoted to the topic of the distribution of these two constructions in Aramaic, e.g. by Folmer (1995, 259-325) on Imperial Aramaic, by Garr (1990) on Biblical Aramaic, by Williams (2001, 7-37) and Joosten (1996) on Classical Syriac (Peshitta 1 Kings; Peshitta versions of Matthew), by Kutty (2007; 2009; 2010, 71-124) on the Targumim (particularly Targum Jonathan to Samuel and Targum Onqelos to Genesis). However, scarce attention has been paid to the Middle Aramaic epigraphic dialects: Palmyrene, Nabatean, Hatran, Jewish Palestinian, Early Syriac. Some remarks have been made by Cantineau in his grammars of Palmyrene and Nabatean,<sup>2</sup> while Caquot wrote very brief but significant observations about Hatran,<sup>3</sup> to which a short paper by Degen (1967), whose focus is however on one specific feature, is also devoted.<sup>4</sup>

The aim of this paper is to investigate the presence of these two different constructions in these dialects. Two constructions will be considered, and not three, although the genitive analytical construction (GAC) with proleptic pronoun is sometimes considered separately from the “bare” genitive analytical construction. However, the occurrences of the proleptic GAC are very few in the *corpus* under consideration, and they have not been separated from the bare GAC in the calculation of the percentage, although several remarks on the frequency and the use of the proleptic pronoun will be made.

1209 genitive constructions/chains have been taken into consideration in the above mentioned dialects,<sup>5</sup> namely 450 in Palmyrene, 254 in Nabatean,

Early Syriac and Jewish Palestinian (where *dy* is attested in one the most ancient texts in my sample).

<sup>2</sup> About Palmyrene, Cantineau (1935, 145-6) states that the construct state and the genitive analytic construction without proleptic pronoun are both frequent, while the analytical construction with proleptic pronoun is quite rare. As regards Nabatean, he observes that the preposition *dy* is rarely attested (1930-1932, I, 62-3 and 110).

<sup>3</sup> Caquot (1960-1963, 89) observes that the analytical construction is frequent, while the construct state is “limité aux noms de parenté ou à des adjectifs”.

<sup>4</sup> Degen (1967) deals mainly with the interpretation of the word *hyʔ* as a plural construct state rather than as a plural noun in the emphatic state. At the end of the article, the three possible genitive constructions (synthetic, analytical with proleptic pronoun, analytical without proleptic pronoun) are listed, without any comment about their frequency and their use.

<sup>5</sup> I have not considered the occurrences of these constructions with pronouns as modifiers, but only the cases in which both the head and the modifier are nouns.

170 in Hatran, 199 in Early Epigraphic Syriac (Osrhoene), 136 in Epigraphic Jewish Palestinian.<sup>6</sup> Of course, that means that the *corpora* have not been considered in their entirety, but texts from every period, and every genre have been chosen, in order to collect a reliable sample. About Palmyrene, it should be added that only dated texts have been studied, in order to evaluate a possible chronological development in the use of the two constructions.<sup>7</sup>

The majority of the inscriptions is dated to the first three centuries AD, but some Palmyrene and Nabatean inscriptions are dated BC, and also Nabatean and Jewish Palestinian Aramaic inscriptions dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century AD have been included.

Of 1209 genitive constructions/chains, 246 contain at least one genitive analytical construction (there are chains in which there are several GACs, or chains with mixed construction, some analytical, some synthetic – I have not considered each element separately). Thus, a GAC is present in 20,3% of the genitive constructions/chains attested in the sample collected from these dialects. If we take a look at the individual dialects, we can immediately notice that the frequency is not always uniform: we have two dialects in which the percentage is slightly above 20%, i.e. Palmyrene (23,7%) and Syriac (24,6%), one in which it is slightly below, Jewish Palestinian (16,9%). However, we have also two dialects in which the frequency of the GAC is far from 20%: it is once above, in Hatran (36,4%), and once dramatically below, in Nabatean (2,3%).

This distribution might suggest a first consideration, i.e. that a geographical factor is possibly playing a role here: the highest occurrence of GACs is in the most Eastern dialect, Hatran, and the percentage decreases towards the West.<sup>8</sup>

A second consideration is that the construct state is still by far more common than the genitive analytical construction, even in dialects which will be later characterized by the opposite tendency, such as Syriac.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The texts have been chosen from the following *corpora*: PAT; Cantineau (1930-1932), II (abbreviated Cantineau); Beyer (1998); Aggoula (1991); MPAT; Naveh (1978); Drijvers and Healey (1999); Healey (2009).

<sup>7</sup> On the Palmyrene dated inscriptions see Taylor (2001).

<sup>8</sup> Also in Imperial Aramaic the Mesopotamian origin of a text is often connected to a rather high number of GACs, while its Western provenance is often (once again, not always) characterized by a relatively low number of GACs (cp. Grassi forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> The use of the construct state in Classical Syriac seems to be usually restricted to terms in tight unit and to cases in which the head is an adjective; otherwise the GAC is predominant (e.g., Nöldeke 1904, 161-2).

The chronological factor, which is visible in Syriac, does not seem to play always a role. It is perhaps significant in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, where the construction is attested just once in the most ancient texts (1<sup>st</sup> BC-2<sup>nd</sup> AD), while it is much more frequent in the late texts from the synagogues and from burial caves and ossuaries. However, in Palmyrene the GAC is attested almost with the same frequency in the oldest and in the latest texts of the sample, and in Nabatean two of the six GACs in the sample are found in two of the oldest texts, one dated to the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, the other to the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Thus, it cannot be assumed – following Kaddary (1969) – that the later the document, the greater is the number of the GACs in it.

A further question is if the genre of the document has relevance in the use of the GAC. Since Kaddari's work, it is often stated that the genitive analytical construction tends to be more frequent in the official texts than in the private ones. The answer is not easy nor entirely clear. It can be safely stated that the GAC is attested in all the genres of the inscriptions, i.e. funerary, honorific, dedicatory, legal, and administrative without significant differences in the frequency. However, in some official texts the number of the GACs is very high. The most significant case is the Tariff of Palmyra. In the Tariff, an official bilingual (Aramaic – Greek) document dated 137 AD, and the longest extant Palmyrene text, the number of the GACs is extremely high. At least one GAC is attested in 40 of the 69 genitive chains of the text (57,9%). This is possibly due to the fact that the text is official in character, since the analytical construction does not seem to be opposed to the synthetic one for functional reasons, and there are parallel expressions, e.g. *ṭṣwn gml* (PAT 0259, II, 30) and *ṭṣwn? dy gml?* (II, 36), “load of camel”. However, another possible explanation will be mentioned later.

To sum up, genre and chronology do not seem to play always a role, even if in some cases an influence can be detected. As regards geography, it may be observed that the construction is more common in the Eastern than in the Western texts.

After these remarks about “external” factors, “internal” factors will be taken into consideration, namely the possibility of a functional opposition between the two constructions, and/or the possibility of an influence of semantic/morphological parameters.

### *Palmyrene*

In the sample the words *br*, “son”, *bt*, “house”, *yrh*, “month” and *šnh*, “year” are always found in the construct state; *yrh* is always followed by the

name of the month, *šnh* by the number. As regards the f. form *brh* (CS *brt* and *bt*), “daughter”, it is almost always attested in the CS in the *corpus*, with one exception: *brth dy tym?*, “the daughter of tym?” (PAT 1417).

Among the less common terms of kinship (attested once), the word *?th*, “wife”, is in the CS (*?tt syšwn?*, “the wife of syšwn?”: PAT 658), while *?b*, “father”, and *?hh*, “sister”, are in the GAC: *?bwhy dy gdršw dnh*, “the (lit. his) father of gdršw” (PAT 1929); *?hth <dy> hłpt?*, “the sister of hłpt?” (PAT 1417). It might be noted that in these two cases, as in the only exception of a GAC with the word *brh* quoted above, there is always a suffix pronoun attached to the head; this is quite significant, because the number of the GACs with proleptic pronoun is very low in Palmyrene (5,6%).

About the word *bt*, it should be noted that it is attested almost exclusively in composite words, such as *bt šlm?*, “house of the eternity” (scil. “tomb”; PAT 0057; PAT 0465; PAT 0482; PAT 055), *bt qbwr?*, “house of burial” (PAT 1787), *bt gb?*, “cistern-house” (lit. “house of cistern”; PAT 1919), *bt nhry?*, “the house of slaughter” (PAT 2766). Another term which is used in composite words, and which seems to show a preference for the CS is *rb*, e.g. *rb šwq*, “head of the market” (PAT 0278), *rb hyl?*, “chief of the army” (PAT 292 and 293), *rb šyn*, “chief of the spring” (PAT 1919); cp. however the (possible) exception [*rb?*] *dy sp?*, “head of the praetorium (?)” (PAT 0278).<sup>10</sup>

Another word which usually (not always) prefers the construct state is *hyyn*, “life”. As regards *yqr*, “honour”, it is attested both in the CS and in the GAC, also in similar expressions: *lyqr bnwhy dy šlm?*, “for the honor of his sons for (lit. of) the eternity” (PAT 0482) and the more elaborated *lbnny bnwhy lyqrhwn dy šlm?*, “for the sons of his sons, in their honor for (lit. of) the eternity” (PAT 1815) and *lbnh bnh lyqrhwn dy šlm?*, “for the sons of her sons, in their honor for (lit. of) the eternity” (PAT 0057). The word is found once more in the CS in *lyqr bt qbwrh*, “for the honor of the burial (lit. house of burial)” (PAT 1787).

Another category of words which shows a preference for the CS is that including partitive terms, e.g. *plgwt [mt]lt? dh*, “half of this portico” (PAT 2766), *plgwt [tšw]n*, “half weight” (PAT 0259, II, 130), *p[l]gwt mnt[?]*, “half portion” (PAT 1791), *mnt kllh*, “the part of the whole” (PAT 1791),

<sup>10</sup> The head noun is missing, and restored on the basis of the Greek text (τοῦ ἐπάρχου τοῦ ἱεροῦ πραιτωρίου), which provides also the likely meaning of the modifier (cp. PAT, 393).

*rbšwt qbr? dnh*, “a quarter of this tomb” (PAT 562); note however *plgh dqbr?*, “half of the tomb” (lit. “its half”; PAT 0562), and, again in PAT 1791, *mnwn tlt dy mšrt? dy dqbwr?* (sic), “the three portions of the cave of the tomb”.<sup>11</sup>

In the CS are also the words, each attested twice, *rbnw*, “term as leader” (*[b]rb-nwt šyn?*, “in the term as curator of the spring”, PAT 1919; *brbnwt šyrt[?]*, “in the term as leader of the caravan”, PAT 0274; note that in both cases the construction is followed by *dy* + the name of the man in charge), *phd*, “tribe” (e.g. *mn phd bny [gdbwl]*, “from the tribe of the *bny [gdybwl]*”, PAT 2779; *mn phd bny myt?*, “from the tribe of the *bny myt?*”, PAT 0465),<sup>12</sup> and *twħy*, “decree” (*twħyt bwl? wdms*, “decree of senate and people”: PAT 305; PAT 1378). As regards the second case, it may be noticed that a similar expression occurs in the GAC: *dgm? dy bwl?*, “decree of the senate” (PAT 0259).<sup>13</sup>

The participle shows perhaps a preference for the CS, even if the occurrences are not many: *dhl? ʔlhy? wrħym? mdythwn*, “worshippers of the gods and lovers of their city” (PAT 0260), *rħymy mdythwn wdħly ʔlhy?*, “lovers of their city and worshippers of the gods” (PAT 0276),<sup>14</sup> *mšly šlymy?*, “importers of slaves” (PAT 0259, II, 2), possibly *[mzbn]y nħty?*, “vendors of garments” (PAT 0259, II, 57). In this respect, the behavior of Palmyrene is close to the Syriac New Testament and Classical Mandaic (Joosten 1996, 54; Macuch 1965, 390-1).

On the opposite side,<sup>15</sup> we find the (not common) words *kmr/ʔpkl*, “priest”, and *ħykl?*, “temple” always in the GAC (cp. *kmry? dy ħrt?*, “the

<sup>11</sup> Note that in the second case the particle is written twice, once absolute (*dy*), once preposed (*d-*).

<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note that the correspondent Aramaic term in Targum Jonathan to Samuel, *šbt?*, “tribe”, shows a preference for the analytical construction (Kuty 2010, 94).

<sup>13</sup> Since the difference does not seem to be semantic, we may perhaps wonder if the choice is determined by the fact that the head noun is Greek: it seems that the Greek terms used as head nouns are more frequently attested in the GAC than in the CS, maybe because they were not perceived as completely suitable for taking the Semitic construct state. In the *corpus* cp. e.g. *grmty? dy ʔlksdrs*, “the secretaryship of Alexander” (PAT 0259, II, I, 2); *grmṭws dy bwl? wdms*, “secretary of the council and people” (ibid.); *ṭksys dy gmħyn ʔrbš?*, “a row of four niches” (PAT 0523). Cp. however the CS *ṭymy*, a loanword from Greek (τιμή), in Jewish Palestinian (see below).

<sup>14</sup> *rħym?* is an adjective, *rħymy* is a participle (Healey 2009, 152-3); PAT, 410. The ending *-ʔ* in PAT 0260 is a variant of *-y*, and not the emphatic state; it probably indicates a pronunciation /ē/ (Healey 2009, 153; Cantineau 1935, 122). The above mentioned article by Degen deals with the same problem in Hatran.

<sup>15</sup> It is worth mentioning the fact that in Palmyrene the particle *l-* is sometimes attest-

priests of *hrt?*”, PAT 2766; *hykl? dy mnwt*, “the temple of *mnwt*”, PAT 1561; *hykl? dy bl*, PAT 1558; *hykl? dy rb?syrl?*, PAT 0259; *?pkl dy ?zyzw*, “priest of *?zyzw*”, PAT 0320; ), while the only occurrence of the word *bt* as “temple” is in the construct state (*bt bl*, PAT 0260). Also the *genitivus materiae* seems to show a preference for the GAC (e.g. *?stw? dy ?yš?*, “the portico of marble” (PAT 1561); *ktl? dy [l]bn?*, “the wall of bricks” (PAT 1919), *zqyn dy ?z*, “skins of goat” (PAT 0259, II, 98), but one exception is (curiously) attested in the Tariff, *?lmy n?šy*, “statues of bronze” (II, 128).<sup>16</sup>

The word *?lm/?lmh*, “statue”, which is very common in the texts, and followed by the name of the man/woman reproduced in it, is attested both in the GAC and in the construct state, with a majority of GACs: e.g. *?lm? dnh dy ?bgr*, “this statue is of *?bgr*” (PAT 2778) and *?lm mrqws ?lpys yr?y* “Statue of Marcus Ulpius *yr?y*” (PAT 1399).

In the GAC the word is always determined and always followed by the demonstrative that means that the CS and the GAC have possibly here a different nuance, and, when in the plural, by the demonstrative and the number of the statues. It might be noted that the alternation between CS and GAC is attested only in masculine singular, since in masculine plural the construction is always analytical (e.g. PAT 1002: *?lmy? ?ln trwyhwn dy tym? wdy ?lpt? brh*, “these are the two statues of *tym?* and of *hlpt?* his son”), and in feminine singular it is always synthetic (e.g. PAT 0293: *?lmt spt? btzby*, “statue of Septimia *btzby*”) – however, a general preference of the plural nouns for the GAC and of the feminine nouns for the CS is not detectable.

As already mentioned, also the word *?šwn*, “load”, frequently recorded in the Tariff, is attested both in the GAC and in the CS, e.g. *?šwn? dy gml?*, “load of camel” (PAT 0259, II, 36), *?šwn gml*, “load of camel” (l.32), *?šwn dhn?*, “load of fat” (l. 29), *?šwn hmr?*, “load of donkey” (l. 37), *?šwn dy mš[?]*, “load of oil” (l. 26).

ed instead of *dy* to express a genitive relation; however, it is extremely rare (cp. Cantineau 1935, 146; PAT, 375), and it is impossible to draw positive conclusions about its relationship with the construction with *dy* and the CS. The only example which occurs in my sample is *?strtg lqlny?*, “general of the colony” (PAT 0278). Cantineau records only one example, with the head noun *?lm*, and another example is mentioned in PAT, again with *?lm* as head noun (page 375; however, the head noun is restored). The (very rare) construction investigated by Hopkins (1997), with proleptic pronoun and *l-* instead of *dy/d-*, is not attested in the sample, nor, as far as I know, in Palmyrene.

<sup>16</sup> The previously reported *zqyn dy ?z* makes clear that this exception is not due to the number (plural) of the head, which in other Aramaic dialects seems to be crucial: both in Targum Jonathan to Samuel and in Targum Onqelos to Genesis the plural head shows a strong preference for the CS (Kuty 2009, 94; 2010, 81).

Also the twice found word *šm*, “name”, is attested in the GAC, in the expression *bryk šmh drhmn?* / *dy rḥmn?*, “blessed be the name of the Merciful One”, with proleptic pronoun (PAT 0364; PAT 0374), and a similar expression occurs in Epigraphic Jewish Palestinian (see below). This is interesting, because the word *šm* shows a preference for the CS in several Targumim.<sup>17</sup>

As regards terms attested just once, it is worth mentioning the fact that the majority of them is attested in the GAC, and not in the CS.

To sum up, the impression is that in Palmyrene the high number of construct states is partially due to the high occurrence of words such as *br*, *šnh*, *yrḥ* etc., and that, without these words, the proportion between the CS and the GAC would be very different. In other words, it seems that in Palmyra the construct state, although still alive and productive, is often used in constructions with head-terms with a preference for the CS, and that outside them it is not more common than the GAC. Thus, we may wonder if the high number of GACs in the Tariff might be simply due to the low occurrence of these words in the inscription.

### *Nabatean*

In Nabatean the situation is quite different. Of course, the occurrence of the nouns *br*, *šnh* and *yrḥ* is extremely high, but the construct state is still by far dominant also in constructions which do not contain these words. As we have seen, the GAC is attested only in the 2% of the genitive constructions/chains of the sample. The suffix pronoun is attested just in one of them, and it is attested in the most ancient Nabatean text of my *corpus*: *ʕl ḥywhy zy ḥrtt*, “for the life of Aretas” (Cantineau, 43-4).<sup>18</sup>

We may notice that the term *ḥyyn*, “life”, is used here in the GAC, while in Palmyrene it shows a strong preference for the construct state. However, the reason for this choice is unpredictable, and the term is found in Nabatean also in the construct state, e.g. *ʕl ḥyy ḥrtt*, “for the life of Aretas” (Cantineau, 5-6).

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Targum Jonathan to Samuel (Kuty 2010, 80), Targum Onqelos (Kuty 2009, 97), and Pseudo-Jonathan (Cook 1986, 212-5).

<sup>18</sup> The archaic form <zy> instead of <dy> is interesting; other archaic features are attested in this inscription (Cantineau 1930-1932, II, 44).

The term *ḥyyṇ* is found once in the CS, and once in the GAC in the following inscription, in which the choice of the GAC seems to be motivated by syntactical and clarity reason (the same head is used for two modifiers, which are moreover not contiguous): *ʕl ḥyy ʕbdt br r{r}bʔl mlk nbṭw dy ʔ[ḥy]y wšyzb ʕmh wdy gmlt [wh]grw ʔḥwth* (Naḥal Ḥever Papyrus 2; 97 AD), “For the life of Obodat, son of Rabbel the king, king of the Nabateans, who has revived and saved his people, and of Gamilat and Hagaru his sisters”.

The GAC is attested three times with the name *šlm* (two masculine, one feminine) as head: *dnh šlmʔ dy ʕbdt ʔlhʔ*, “This is the statue of the god Obodat” (Cantineau, 5-6); *[š]lmʔ zy rbʔl*, “statue of Rabbel” (Cantineau, 1-2); *dʔ šlmtʔ dy šʕyʕw*, “This is the statue of šʕyʕw” (Cantineau, 14-15).

However, the same term is attested also in the CS: *šlm glšw*, “statue of glšw” (Cantineau, 15-16).

The last occurrence of the GAC in the Nabatean *corpus* shows the plural word *gwhyʔ*, “sepulchers” as head noun: *ʔlh try gwhyʔ dy ḥwšbw br npyw wʕlgʔ whbw bnwhy*, “these are the two sepulchers of ḥwšbw son of npyw and (of) ʕlgʔ and ḥbw his sons” (Cantineau, 29-30).

As regards Nabatean, it can be safely said that the construct state is still the predominant construction; the GAC is attested,<sup>19</sup> albeit rarely, but it is not always possible to determine the reason of the choice. Nabatean shows a very archaic and conservative attitude towards the genitive construction, which is moreover attested once with the old form <zy>. Generally speaking, Nabatean is often considered to be a “conservative” language, used as written language by an Arabic-speaking population, in a society thus characterized by bilingual diglossia. The evidence of an Arabic influence on the language is provided by the Arabisms, both lexical and syntactical, which can be found in Nabatean, and, according to Healey, “the conservative elements found in the inscriptions were preserved in scribal environment isolated from the ongoing development of the Aramaic language reflected more fully in other dialects” (Healey 2009, 40). However, the huge amount of graffiti, which are hardly the product of a scribal class, is a strong argument against this idea (e.g., Millar 1993, 400-5; Garbini 2006, 210, n. 2). Of

<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note that Nabatean has another construction with particle *dy* to express possession, namely *dy l-* (Cantineau 1930-1932, I, 63, “qui [est] à”). The construction *dy* + preposition + noun, attested in many Aramaic dialects, is frequently considered a relative clause, but it is possibly an adnominal attribution (Pat-El and Treiger 2008). I have not considered these constructions in this paper.

course, we cannot know if/where/when the Nabateans used Aramaic outside the context of the inscriptions, but a situation of bilingualism is likely. It is possible that the scarce use of the GAC is due to the influence of the early Arabic dialect they spoke, which had only the CS to express the genitive relation (Arabic will develop the GAC much later, and not in all its dialects: see below). In this case, it might be noted that bilingualism is the usual vehicle of syntactic changes, the syntax being in general refractory to historical changes (Hudson 1998, 51). Actually, it should be stressed that “conservatism” alone is hardly responsible for the rarity of the GAC in Nabatean, since Imperial Aramaic, to which Nabatean is usually said to be close for several aspects,<sup>20</sup> shows a much more consistent use of the GAC than Nabatean.<sup>21</sup>

### *Hatran*

The situation of Hatran is, to a certain extent, similar to the one of Palmyrene, even if more radical. The words *br* and *brh* are always attested in the construct state, as the words *yrh* and *šnh*; another word attested only in the construct state is *bgn*, “curse”, in the structure *bgn* DN, e.g. *bgn šhrw*, “the curse of šhrw” (H23).<sup>22</sup> The words *ʔnth*, “wife” (H35: *ʔntt nšrʔqb*, “wife of nšrʔqb”),<sup>23</sup> and, curiously enough, *kmrh*, “priestess” (H34: *kmrt [ʔ]šrbl*,

<sup>20</sup> Healey (1999, 38), Beyer (1986, 27). On the contrary, Garbini (2006, 210) states that Nabatean is more developed than Imperial Aramaic. Actually, the assertion that Nabatean is close (or not) to Imperial Aramaic has never been proved, nor clearly explained. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that the only grammar of Nabatean was written by Jean Cantineau in 1930.

<sup>21</sup> On the GAC in Imperial Aramaic see mainly Folmer (1995, 259-325).

<sup>22</sup> Further remarks on the lexical aspect related to the choice of the CS are made at the end of this paper, together with an overview of other dialects and languages. However, it is interesting to note here that in Jibbāli (Modern South Arabian) the word for “curse” is attested only in the GAC: cp. *edaʔbéh iz-šxórte*, “curses of the old women” (Simeone-Senelle 2011).

<sup>23</sup> The other kinship term attested in the *corpus*, *ʔm*, “mother”, is attested in the GAC: *ʔmʔ dy pʔgrybʔ*, “mother of the crown prince (?)” (H36). If we compare it with the other occurrences of kinship terms in the GAC in the other dialects, we may notice the unusual lack of the proleptic pronoun. Maybe the reason resides in the fact that the modifier is not a proper name, as in the other cases; for the doubtful Iranian term *pʔgryb* (usually spelled *pšgr(y)b*), see e.g. DNWSI, 946; Aggoula (1991, 23-4); Beyer (1998, 182-3). Cp. also *pšgrybʔ* in the Syriac inscriptions (Drijvers and Healey 1999, 47-8).

“priestess of ʔšrb1”) are also recorded (once) in th CS.<sup>24</sup> Also the word *ḥyy* shows a strong preference for the construct state, even if there are exceptions. It is worth noticing that in these exceptions the GAC is the one with the proleptic pronoun (not common in Hatran: 8%): *ʕl ḥyyhy dʕqʔ*, “for the life of ʕqʔ” (H408, l. 3); *ʕl ḥyʔ ʕbsʔ*, “for the life of ʕbsʔ” (H408, l. 4).

The word *byt*, “temple”, is attested both in the CS and in the GAC, but it can be said to show a preference for the CS; e.g. *byt šmš ʔlhʔ*, “the temple of šmš the god” (H272); *bbtʔ dmrn*, “in the temple of mrn” (H232).

Interestingly, outside these words, some of which are very common, the construct state is almost not attested, and the GAC is predominant. For example, the word *šlm*, already studied in Palmyrene and Nabatean, is attested in the sample only in the GAC (e.g. *šlmʔ dy snṯrwq*, “statue of snṯrwq”: H 345; *šlmtʔ dy mrtbw*, “statue of mrtbw”: H34). Thus, as in Palmyrene, and even to a higher degree, it might be suggested that the construct state is still dominant only because of the high occurrence in the texts of words which show a preference – sometimes an exclusive preference – for the synthetic construction.

### *Early Syriac*

Once again, the situation is similar to that of Palmyrene and Hatran: the presence of words such as *br*, *brh*, *šnh*, *yrh* explains the high frequency of the CS.

Other words with a preference for the CS are *byt*, *ywm*, and, once again, *ʔtth* and *ḥyyn*. There are (very few) exceptions for the last two words (*ʔntth dbʕyšw*, “wife of bʕyšw”, P2, 11; *ʕl ḥyy dyly wdʔḥy wdbnyn*, “for my life and (that) of my brother and (that) of the children”: As36), and there is also an exception for the word *br* (*br brh dšrdwnḥʔ*, “son of the son of šrdwnḥʔ”, Bs2). As it may be noticed, here, as in the other exceptions we have observed, the alternative construction to the construct state is usually the GAC with proleptic pronoun.<sup>25</sup> As regards this construction, its frequency is by far higher than in the other dialects (20,4 %). It is interesting to note that all the three occurrences of the word *ʔm*, “mother”, as head noun followed by the name of the son are in the GAC with proleptic pronoun (in one case

<sup>24</sup> The m. terms for “priest”, *kmr* and *ʔpkl*, are in the GAC (H5; H345).

<sup>25</sup> In *ʕl ḥyy dyly wdʔḥy wdbnyn* the choice of the GAC might be simply due to the fact that the CS was here syntactically impossible – as, of course, the proleptic pronoun.

restored: Am3, twice; Am 10).<sup>26</sup> The expressions in which the word *byt*, “house” is attested are similar to the ones found in Palmyra, all meaning “tomb”: e.g. *byt qbwr?*, “house of tomb” (As55; Am9; As16; As20), *byt flm?*, “house of eternity” (Am1; Am3; Am5; Am6; Am7; As9), *byt mškb?*, “house of rest” (Healey 2009, no. 58, l. 2-3), *byt mšry?*, “house of rest” (As5). In other terms, it seems that *byt* occurs in lexicalized expressions, and the same happens with the word *bfl* in *bfl dynh*, “legal adversary” (lit. “lord of the judgment”: cp. Akkadian *bēl dīni*, “opposing party (in court)” (CDA, 42).

Other words in the CS are *mr?* in the divine name *mrlh?* (*mr?* *?lh?*, “lord of gods”: As31; As36), its f. form in the expression *mrt by?*, “lady of my house”, attested once (As55),<sup>27</sup> *ryš gwd?*, “head of the troop” (As10), *ml?*, “word”, in *mly šsr?* *hn?*, “the words of this document” (P1, 15), *zbn*, “sale document” in *zbn m<rqy?> ?<wryly?> mtršt?*, “sale document of Marcia Aurelia mtršt? (P1, I), *mpq*, “end” and *mfl*, “beginning” in the expressions *lmpqy tšry ?hry?*, “at the end of latter tšry” (P2, VII-VII and 13-14) and *lmflly knwn qdm*, “at the beginning of former knwn” (P2, VIII and 14). Two more words are attested in the construct state in Am5, their meaning being not entirely clear: *šbr ?hryt?* *wnrqd qdmyt?*, perhaps “the sorrow of (his) offspring and mourns for his forefathers” (Drijvers and Healey 1999, 174-5; Healey 2009, 241-2).

In Early Syriac the construct state is still productive, and still used, although not frequently, in constructions in which the above-mentioned common words *br*, *brh*, *šnh*, *yrh*, *ywm*, *hyyn*, *byt* are not the head-nouns, and it seems to be in this respect closer to Palmyrene than to Hatran; it is possibly middle way between these two dialects.

### *Jewish Palestinian*

In Jewish Palestinian date seems to play a crucial role. In the most ancient texts, mainly dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD, the GAC is almost not attested, even less than in Nabatean (1,2%). It is actually attested

<sup>26</sup> The word *?m* is once attested as head noun without proleptic pronoun in the expression *?m? dmdynt? klhyn dbyt nhryn*, “mother of all the cities of bt nhryn” (P2, line 5).

<sup>27</sup> Cp. also *mrt byt?*, “mistress of the temple” in Palmyrene (PAT 1929).

only once, in a context in which the CS was probably avoided because of the presence of two head-nouns: *lkswt [wl]m[z]wn d[y] yšwł*, “for clothing and for food of Jesus” (MPAT 62).

The situation changes dramatically in the documents dated from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, a *corpus* formed mainly by funerary inscriptions and dedicatory inscriptions from the early synagogues. Here, the GAC is attested in the 40% of the genitive constructions/chains. The construct state is still more common, but, once again, its high frequency is partially due to the presence of the words *br*, *yrḥ* and *šnh*. It should be noted that, unlike the previously discussed dialects, the word “son” in the plural is attested once in the GAC, with the proleptic pronoun, *bnwh dḥlpy*, “sons of ḥlpy” (MPAT A22; Naveh 1978, insc. 70); inversely, it is attested in the CS, when the meaning is not properly “son”, and it is used in lexicalized expressions, such as *bny q[rth]*, “citizens” (lit. “sons of the city”; MPAT A11) and *bny ḥbwrth qdyšth*, “members of the holy community” (lit. “sons of”; MPAT A13). The word *brh* is attested once in the CS and once in the GAC (resp. MPAT A3, Naveh 1978, insc. 60 and MPAT A51; one more occurrence of the term has a doubtful reading). The expression *mlk šlmh*, “king of the universe” shows a preference for the CS in the synagogue of Hammat Gadara (MPAT A26, A27 and A28, Naveh 1978, inscs. 32, 33, 34), but it is recorded once in the GAC in the synagogue of Jericho (MPAT A34, Naveh 1978, insc. 69). Another expression attested in the CS is *lḥrbn byt mqdšh*, “after the destruction of the temple (lit. “the house of temple”)”, which occurs in Ghor eš-Šafi (ancient Zoora), from three different (and not contemporary) inscriptions (MPAT A50, A51 and A 52, resp. dated 433 AD, 370 ca AD and 504 AD). Once again the words *ywm*, “day” (MPAT A52), *mr*, “lord” (*mry šwmy?*, “lord of heaven”: MPAT A42), *plgw*, “half” (*plgwt [dy]nr*, “half denar”, MPAT A29) are attested in the CS. Moreover, the expression *bryš yrḥ mrḥšwn*, “at the beginning of the month of mrḥšwn” (MPAT A50), is close to Syriac *lmšly knwn qdm* (see above). The words *tymy*, “value”, *tymy psypsh*, “the cost of the mosaic” (MPAT A2, Naveh 1978, insc. 58), and *spr*, “book”, in *bspr ḥyyh*, “in the book of life” (MPAT A34, Naveh 1978, insc. 69) are also recorded in the CS.

The other words occur in the GAC;<sup>28</sup> among them, the expression *lšmh*

<sup>28</sup> The only occurrence of the word *ʔtth*, “wife” in these late texts of my sample (in the earliest is attested in the CS) is ambiguous, but it should perhaps be interpreted as GAC. The text runs *ʔtth pynḥs* (MPAT A2; Naveh 1978, insc. 59), “the wife of Pinḥas”;

*drhmnh*, “in the name of the merciful one” (MPAT A22, Naveh 1978, insc. 70) is very close to Palmyrene *bryk šmh drhmn? / dy rhmn?*, mentioned above. Differently from Palmyrene, the word *yqr* is found only in the GAC, always in the same syntagm, *lyqrh dknyšt*, “in honor of the congregation” (MPAT A12; MPAT A28 (Naveh 1978, insc. 34), twice).

### Conclusions

After this short overview of the use of the genitive constructions, the following conclusions may be suggested:

- The CS is still the most common genitive construction in all the dialects under study;
- The number of the GACs is higher in the Eastern dialects, and it decreases toward the West;
- The predominance of the CS in Palmyrene, Early Syriac, and particularly Hatran is partially due to the high frequency of words which demonstrate a strong preference for the construct state;
- In the Nabatean texts and in the Jewish Aramaic texts dated to the first two centuries AD the construct state is still productive, and the GACs are extremely rare;
- Chronology seems to play an important role in Jewish Palestinian, since the number of the GACs increases dramatically in the course of the centuries.

These considerations suggest on the one hand that the development of the genitive analytical construction in Aramaic is less linear and predictable as it is sometimes assumed. On the other hand, point three above, i.e. the presence of words which show a preference for the CS, deserves some further observations about the nature of these words, as well as a comparison with other Aramaic dialects and other languages.

A correlation between the semantic value of the head noun and the choice of the genitive construction has been suggested, more or less explicitly, in

the head is not in the construct state, but there is no attribute marking between it and the modifier. The editors of MPAT do not provide any comment, while Naveh restores <dy>. However, this construction with proleptic pronoun, but without the genitive particle, is quite well attested in the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic texts from Galilee, and it is considered by some scholars a variant of the GAC, and not an error (Hopkins 1997, 25).

several recent studies on Aramaic. Folmer's (1995) vast and valuable study on Imperial Aramaic suggests, among other interesting aspects,<sup>29</sup> a relationship between the concept of "inalienability" and the choice of the construct state (or, to a lesser extent, of the GAC with proleptic pronoun: see esp. p. 311). In particular, Folmer observes a high frequency of CSs with kinship terms, pointing out that *br* and *brh* are almost always in the CS, while other less frequent terms (*ʔb*, *ʔm*, *ʔh*, *h̄tn*) are in the GAC with proleptic pronoun (283-284). She adds that "there are no zy-phrases in which the noun of the first term refers to a body part", and that the same is true for the words *šm* and *ywm* (311). As regards Syriac, Williams (2001, 16), among other conclusions about the genitive in Peshitta 1 Kings, observes that the words used in the CS are frequently body parts, family relations, personal functions (*br* and *byt* occurring in a very high number of combinations). He concludes that "it seems that the construct is used for a small number of nouns, representing a large spread of meaning". Kutý's (2009, 95; 2010, 79) conclusions on the use of genitive in Targum Onqelos to Genesis and in Targum Jonathan to Samuel are partially similar, and similar also to Imperial Aramaic and to several dialects of our corpus: the CS is preferred with *br*, *bt* and *ʔtʔ* as head nouns, while other kinship terms as *ʔb*, *ʔm*, *ʔh*, *ʔht*, and *ʔhb*, "uncle" show a preference for the GAC with proleptic pronoun. Kutý (2009, 97; 2010, 80) observes also that *byt* and *šm* show a preference for the CS, as, but only to a certain extent, the terms denoting body parts, *yd*, "hand", and *ryš*, "head". As regards Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Cook (1986, 212-5) states that the CS is predominant with kinship terms and with the words *ʔpyn*, "face", *byt*, *h̄yyn*, *yd*, *ywm*, *šm*. It may also be added that in these three Targumim, as in the dialects of our corpus, the GAC with proleptic pronoun is extremely rare, and the CS is still the most common construction.

It should be noted that, on the contrary, Golomb's (1982, 299-301) study on Targum Neofiti shows a different picture: the GAC without proleptic pronoun is the most common construction, and the GAC with proleptic pronoun is found with the words *br*, *brh*, *ʔb*, *ʔm*, *ʔh*, *ʔhh*, *ʔth*, *ʔmh*, "handmaid", *ʔpyn*, *byt*, *h̄yyn*, *yd*, *ym*, *šm*. The conclusion of Golomb is that "The situation with nouns expressing inalienable possession is very clear—Type A (scil. GAC with proleptic pronoun) is overwhelmingly the preferred expression of the genitive". Similarly, in the Syriac New Testament, the GAC with proleptic

<sup>29</sup> Here, as in the following cases, I deal mainly with the peculiarities which can be observed also in the dialects of the *corpus* under study.

pronoun “is regular when the first member is of the class of “inalienable” words: parts of the body, members of the family etc.” (Joosten 1996, 50); however, also the CS is still used “when the first member is of the class of “inalienable” words” (Joosten 1996, 52).

The idea that in Aramaic the GAC with proleptic pronoun is related to inalienability was discussed by Diem (1986), in a pioneering study devoted to the opposition alienability – inalienability in Semitics. However, regarding Aramaic, Diem’s work is not really useful for our discussion. On the one hand, he considers mainly Ṭuroyo (a Neo-Aramaic dialect), which lacks the CS, and it is automatically not comparable with the dialects studied in this paper. On the other hand, dealing with earlier phases of Aramaic (actually only Syriac), he considers only the bare GAC and the GAC with proleptic pronoun as possibly related to alienability and inalienability, without taking into consideration the CS; he adds that he is not able to see this opposition in Syriac, where inalienability seems to be expressed by the GAC with proleptic pronoun, by the CS, and, albeit rarely, by the bare GAC (Diem 1986, 234-8). His conclusion is that “Die Entwicklung, die zum Ṭuroyo führte, ging dahin, daß die markierte Konstruktion 7(c) (scil. the GAC with proleptic pronoun) schließlich ganz auf die inalienable Possession beschränkt worden ist”.

The situation of Middle Aramaic seems to be quite different, and much more complex than the situation described by Diem. Left aside Nabatean, which uses almost only the CS, in all the other dialects it seems that the CS is the construction much more involved with the concept of “inalienability”, or, in Seiler’s possibly better terms, “inherence”<sup>30</sup>. According to Seiler, the opposition is between inherent possession and established possession, and “Inherent POSSESSION means that the possessive relationship is inherently given in one of the two terms involved, viz. the POSSESSUM: The POSSESSUM contains reference to the POSSESSOR. Semantically, this kind of representation implies more intimate POSSESSION: Prototypically, of ‘self’ to his kinsmen, his body parts, etc.” (Seiler 1983, 5). According to other authors, the opposition would not be semantic in character, but there is agreement about the fact that inalienable possession includes mainly kinship terms and/or body parts, and, to a lesser extent, part-whole relations and few culturally significant items<sup>31</sup> (among them often the word for “house”, “dwelling”).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Seiler (1983). This study was used by Diem, who often reaches results which confirm Seiler’s approach (Diem 1986, 284).

<sup>31</sup> E.g., Nichols (1992, 120-2), Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001, 965; 2006, 767). Cp. also

This general tendency in the adnominal possession is partially reflected in several Aramaic dialects: we may mention the CS with the kinship terms *br*, *brh*, *ʔnth* (but not with other kinship terms), with body parts (not in our sample, in which these terms are not recorded), in the relation part-whole, often with the word *byt*, “house”. Also the word *ħyyn*, “life”, quite frequent in Epigraphic Middle Aramaic, is of course eligible as inherent possession.

If we compare this behavior of the CS with its behavior in other Semitic languages, we may find striking similarities. In Eksell Harning’s study on the analytical genitive in Modern Arabic dialects,<sup>33</sup> we may observe, as in the Middle Aramaic dialects discussed above, several different situations: some dialects do not have the GAC, but use only the CS, in others the GAC is used sporadically, in others it is well attested, in others dominant.<sup>34</sup> Once again, the CS is mainly used to express family relationships (and mutual relationships, e.g. friendship), partitive relations, body parts, and, interestingly, quite often periods of time (terms referring to periods of time were in the CS also in some examples of the *corpus* under study). The situation is different in each Arabic dialect, but the tendency to use the CS in these phrases (and in few other cases) is clear. In the Gelet Dialects (Iraq), in the dialects of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, in the dialects of the Arabian peninsula, and in Tunisia and Libya only the CS can be used in syntagms denoting kinship relationships, body parts, mutual relationships (friend, neighbor), relations in which the noun is a pseudoexponent, periods of time, partitive relations (resp. pp. 32-33; 58-59; 76-77; 104-105); in the Qəltu dialects (Turkey, Iraq), the CS is rare, and used to express period of time, family relationship, partitive relations (and when the modifier is an adject-

Seiler (1983, 13). It should also be stressed that, in the hierarchy kin terms/body parts > part-whole and/or spacial relations > culturally basic possessed items, “if an item is inalienable, then all the terms to the left are inalienable” (Koptjevskaja-Tamm, *ibid.*). In any case, kinship terms and body parts are “the very last categories gained by AGCs” (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1996, 258). Cp. also Seiler (1983, 68), who seems however to notice some partial exceptions to this rule.

<sup>32</sup> Among the miscellaneous words, “name” is often attested among the inalienable nouns (Seiler 1983, 13; Nichols 1992, 120); *šm*, “name”, is attested in the CS in some Aramaic dialects, but, as already noted, not in Palmyrene and Early Syriac.

<sup>33</sup> Eksell Harning (1980); her study was mentioned in Diem (1986, 240-1), who correctly observes that she does not refer to the term “inalienability”; however, she states that “The centre of the SG [synthetic genitive] sphere – from which the AG [analytic genitive] is excluded – consists of often intimate, mutual relations (...)” (161).

<sup>34</sup> Eksell Harding divides the classification in six levels: cp. esp. 158-160.

tive; p. 46); in Egypt only the CS is used to express kinship terms, body parts, and periods of time (88-89); in Algeria, only the CS is used in kinship terms, body parts and mutual relations, in periods of time and with the word *bēt*, “house” (and also in other few cases), and it is usually preferred in partitive relations (122-123); in Morocco the CS is used with kinship terms, body parts, mutual relations, periods of time, relations in which the noun is a pseudoexponent, and it can be used in partitive relations (138-139); in Malta, the CS is limited to few categories: kinship, body parts, mutual relations, partitive relations (148-149).

Also in Modern South Arabian and in Dahalik (Ethio-Semitic) the CS is chosen to express “inalienable” possession, i.e. kinship terms and body parts; moreover, as in the Middle Aramaic dialects (and later in Classical Syriac), it is used in compound words.<sup>35</sup>

The use of the CS to express “inalienable” possession is by no means surprising, since the characteristics of the CS are those that one would expect to find in inalienable possession: on the one hand, inalienable possession usually involves head-marking;<sup>36</sup> on the other hand, it is usually expressed by a synthetic construction (opposed to an analytical construction for alienable): the construction expressing inalienability is usually shorter, less explicit and morphologically expressed, while the construction expressing alienability is longer, more complex and syntactically expressed.<sup>37</sup>

It may be suggested that in the epigraphic Middle Aramaic dialects considered in this study (except for Nabatean and the early Jewish Aramaic texts), as in Modern Arabic and Modern South Arabian, an opposition CS/inalienable vs. GAC/alienable is working, at least to a certain extent. The situation of these Aramaic dialects, although not entirely homogeneous, is possibly close to that of Maltese: in Maltese the distinction alienable-inalienable is associated with the introduction of the new analytical genitive

<sup>35</sup> Simeone-Senelle (1997, 412; 2011). In Mahriyyōt (MSA) inalienable possession is usually expressed with the GAC, “unless one of the closed set of annexable nominals is involved” (Watson 2009, 243). The annexable nominals are *baʿl*, “owner”, *bar/bart*, “son/daughter”, *bīl*, “tribe/household; type”, *mant*, “area; type” and *sāʿat*, “hour” (231). It is worth noticing that *bar/bart* cannot be used as head noun in the GAC (232).

<sup>36</sup> Nichols 1992, 116: “inalienable possession almost always involves head marking, and head marking in NP’s almost always entails an alienable/inalienable opposition”. She adds: “no language in my sample with exclusively dependent-marked possession has inalienable possession” (118).

<sup>37</sup> E.g. Seiler (1983, 5-6 and 68), Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001, 965-6; 2006, 767).

construction and the fossilization of the old synthetic one (the CS), the same having probably taken place in several African languages.<sup>38</sup> Actually, the CS seems to be fully productive only in Nabatean, while in the other dialects it seems to have undertaken the way of a progressive fossilization, its use being restricted to few head nouns. This is also characteristic of the construction expressing inalienable possession, since the inalienable nouns tend to form a close set, frequently a small one, while alienable nouns constitute an open set (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1996, 253; 2006, 767).

We may add that this close set contains nouns with a very high frequency, as it is clear for example from the studies by Koptjevskaja-Tamm (1996, 264) and Eksell Harning; in Maltese, the CS is as frequent as the GAC, in spite of the fact that the CS is limited almost exclusively to kinship terms and body parts. Once again, the situation is similar to the one in Middle Aramaic, where the CS is predominant, but occurs with few, but frequent (or extremely frequent) head nouns. The frequency of the terms involved seems to play an important role: as remarked by Koptjevskaja-Tamm (*ibid.*), “a high frequency of linguistic expressions favours the retention of archaic features”, and in this case the CS would be chosen for economy reason. Actually, it has been suggested that the different structures used to express alienable and inalienable possession “may be due to economy rather than iconicity: inalienable nouns are possessed more frequently than alienable nouns” (Croft 2003, 206).

An explanation in terms of frequency, and not only in terms of iconicity or semantic factors, does fit better in the situation of Middle Aramaic, where classical inalienable/inherent terms such as “father” or “mother” are used in the GAC, and alienable terms such as “statue” and “load” are sometimes used in the CS, with a possible alternation with the GAC (Palmyrene). In these cases of alienable possession, we may ask ourselves if the choice of the CS is simply due to their frequency: *šlm* (“statue”) is common in the Palmyrene inscriptions<sup>39</sup> (in Hatran, as we have seen, it is always in the GAC), and *ʔšwn* (“load”) occurs very often in the Tariff. On the opposite,

<sup>38</sup> E.g., Koptjevskaja-Tamm (1996, 261) and (2006, 767): “There is sufficient evidence that alienability splits often arise due to a grammaticalization processes that give rise to an opposition between an archaic, inalienable construction and the innovative, alienable construction”.

<sup>39</sup> Perhaps it is not by chance that the word *šlm* is the only one attested in the Palmyrene sample in the CS as head noun in one case of *genitivus materiae*, normally expressed with the GAC.

the terms *ʔb* (“father”) and *ʔhh* (“sister”) are not common, and this would be the reason for which they do not occur in the CS. What is interesting to note is that they do not enter in the bare GAC either, but only in the GAC with proleptic pronoun, which is quite rare.

In the Palmyrene sample, the words attested as head nouns with proleptic pronoun are *ʔb* (PAT 1929), *brh* (PAT 1417), possibly *ʔhth* (PAT 1417),<sup>40</sup> *šm* (PAT 364 and 374), and *plg* (PAT 562). The first three terms express kinship, the fourth, “name”, often occurs among inalienable terms, and the fifth, “half”, expresses part of a whole (*plgh dqbrʔ*, “half of the tomb”), and it is normally in the CS in Palmyrene. In Nabatean, the word attested with the proleptic pronoun is *hyyyn*, often attested in the CS (the other word recorded in the GAC, *šlm*, has no proleptic pronoun). In Hatran, the words are once again *hyyyn* (H139; H408; the word is commonly attested in the CS), *ym*, “day” (in the expression *ʕl ymth dy mn*, “against the days of anyone”, H23), *gnd*, “fortune” (*bgndhwn d-PNs*, “by the (lit. their) fortune of PNs”; H79), *br* (in the plural; H80); in Early Syriac *br* (Bs2), *ʔm* (Am3), *ʔnth* (P2), *dmyn* (pl.), “value” (P2), *gd*, “power/possession” (P2; P1, twice), *hrwryn* (pl.), “liberation” (P1, 3-4: *bšnt tltyn whdʔ dhrwryh dʔntwnynʔ ʔdsʔ*, “in the year thirty-one of the (lit. its) liberation of Antonina Edessa”).<sup>41</sup>

It seems that this construction is restricted to few head nouns, which fit well in the category of inalienability<sup>42</sup>. This possibly means that the GAC with proleptic pronoun is the new genitive construction used to express inalienability (as the CS, it is head marked); this construction slowly replaces the old CS, no more (Hatran) or barely (Palmyrene) syntactically productive, which is used only with the most frequent nouns (often inalienable) and with fossilized expressions. In other words, once established the dichotomy alienable/inalienable, the progressive fossilization of the CS has possibly favored the choice of another construction to express inalienability, the GAC with proleptic pronoun.

<sup>40</sup> “Possibly” because the particle *dy* is missing (and usually restored): *wʔhth <dy> hlptʔ*, “the sister of hlptʔ”.

<sup>41</sup> I have not included here the Jewish Palestinian inscriptions, because the ending of the emphatic (determinate) state (normally <-ʔ>) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> ms suffix pronoun (normally <h>) are both written <h>, and they are often impossible to distinguish.

<sup>42</sup> When one of these words is attested in another genitive construction, this construction is usually the CS. An exception is constituted by the word *ʔm*, mother, in the examples already mentioned in notes 23 (Hatran) and 26 (Syriac).

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*Abbreviations*

CDA = Jeremy Black, Andrew George, and Nicholas Postgate, *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, 2<sup>nd</sup> (corrected) printing, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000.

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