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D- Base Pronominal System in Qatabanic

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1. Introductory remarks

Despite renewed interest on the part of scholars in ancient South Arabia in recent years,¹ we still know very little about the Qatabanic language and civilization. As a result, the specific peculiarities that set Qatabanic apart from the other ancient South Arabian (hereafter ASA) languages have remained practically unknown,² and this has led to frequent misinterpretations and prejudices among both specialists and non-specialists. One typical example is the paradoxical evaluation of two well-known morphological features peculiar to Qatabanic. The morpheme *s'* occurring in Qatabanic for the derived verb form of the causative and for the third person of the personal and far deixis pronoun seems to be an indication of the archaic typology of this language, while the preformative pattern *b-* with the prefixed verbs, recalling a parallel phenomenon attested in some modern Arabic dialects, seems to show instead that Qatabanic was innovative within ASA.

While it is true that examining isolated morphemes is an incorrect methodology in linguistic investigation, the fact that these two morphological features coexist in the same language is striking. Undoubtedly a far-reaching reconstruction of Qatabanic would contribute to settling many unanswered questions and this, in turn, could contribute to a better understanding of the linguistic history of ASA as a whole.

This is particularly true since Qatabanic documentation is also itself a highly significant source for historical research, its legal documentation in particular; noteworthy is the penal law (CSAI I, 204=R 3878), or the market regulation (CSAI I, 205A,B,C=R4337A,B,C) just to cite two texts highlighting aspects crucial to the

¹ The tremendous increase of written material is also due to the significant contribution made by the archaeological investigations which have completely changed the historical picture of ancient South Arabia; see in general Robin (2001); Mazzini (2005a); Stein (2005).

² Ricks's Qatabanic dictionary of 1989 is currently considered fundamental for the study of the language. However, it can be used as a mere repertoire since it contains most of the Qatabanic lexical material although the interpretations are those given by other scholars over the years. Furthermore, this work needs to be updated, since it lacks the documentation of the last twenty-odd years.

history of any legal system, but which unfortunately are almost completely devoid of parallels in the rest of the legal sources of ancient South Arabia.³

The recent comprehensive publication of Qatabanic documentation by A. Avanzini (2004a) has done much to fill this gap, and has stimulated a detailed inquiry into the major linguistic features of Qatabanic. As already pointed out, these features had been gathered and described up to now⁴ in a way that was partial and unsystematic, which essentially led to their being underestimated. By contrast, the comprehensive edition of the whole of the Qatabanic texts available today enables us to reconstruct its linguistic system in detail and, specifically, single out the peculiarities that distinguish Qatabanic from the other ASA languages. This work is still in its early stages but it is already producing results of great interest; in this regard, noteworthy is the recent reconstruction of the verb system (Avanzini 2004b, 2005) which had previously been analysed in a very generic manner and substantially misunderstood. Comprehending how it functions and identifying its basic morphological structures are crucial to a better understanding of some very difficult Qatabanic texts, while recognizing its principal features has contributed towards shedding new light on the history of the formative phases of the ASA languages (Mazzini 2005c).

In this article we shall focus on the *d* base pronouns, another crucial area of the grammar of any Semitic language.

The *d* base for pronouns is a morphological feature which in Qatabanic and in the rest of ASA languages designates the syntactic category of both near demonstrative and relative.⁵ Here, we attempt to outline a coherent system with its principal morphological elements, and examine it essentially in comparison with the other ASA languages. Some striking features of these pronouns will be discussed and may also be of some interest in a comparative perspective.

It is hoped that Professor Pennacchietti, who has made a significant contribution to the study of Semitic pronouns, will appreciate these new data on the pronominal system of a Semitic language which has hitherto remained almost completely unknown.

³ Such historically significant documents show how essential was the role played by the kingdom of Qataban during the second half of the first millennium B.C., indeed it was a foremost political entity in ancient South Arabia. However, detailed studies, mainly on the Qatabanic legal corpus, go back to Rhodokanakis' researches of the first decades of last century which then found their way into the handbook of ASA studies by Grohmann (1963).

⁴ Beeston (1962: 47-52; 1984: 66); Korotayev-Kogan (1997: 220-241); Lipiński (1997: 320-323); Nebes-Stein (2004: 471).

⁵ This trait is shared with a significant number of West Semitic languages and should be further investigated. Note that Ugaritic (*hnd / d*) and Hebrew (*ze / aššer*) seem to morphologically reinforce the distinction between the two categories; Ugaritic has the preformative *hn-* while Hebrew uses another base for the relative (Israel 2003).

2. Demonstrative pronouns

This type of pronoun specifically designates the syntactical category of near deixis, clearly distinct from the far deixis which instead uses the base *s'* (or, alternatively the base *h-* under certain circumstances).

Adjectival use

dn M singular // *dt* F singular

dtn plural

Pronominal use

dn singular (2 cases)

The adjectival use is prevalent in Qatabanic documentation probably because of its textual typology. The accompanying substantive always follows the demonstrative and shows the mark of the determinate status (nunation) according to the following pattern: *dn slmn* (masc. sing., this statue), *dt shfn* (fem. sing. this document),⁶ *dtn ʔsʔbn* (pl. these tribes). An independent use of the near demonstrative is also attested, though very sporadically.⁷

It is significant that the singular forms *dn* and *dt* are common to all ASA languages;⁸ by contrast even for relatives (see below *dtw* and *dtn*) the plural form *dtn* is based on the pattern *dt-* whereas the other ASA languages have the pattern *ʔ-*.⁹ This morphological feature is peculiar to Qatabanic and could be the result of an analogical process by which the pattern *ʔ-*, only sporadically attested in Qatabanic, was discarded.¹⁰

⁶ See the example (CSAI I, 16=MuB 522, 7) in which the demonstrative follows its substantive noun probably for stylistic reasons, as pointed out by Avanzini *et al.* (1994: 31) and another parallel case proposed by Avanzini (2004a: 63) in the inscription TT1 788, see the re-edition in the web-site csai-humnet.unipi.it (see also Jamme 1979: 56-67). Note also the puzzling expression attested in CSAI I, 202=R 3854, 5, 7, 9/10: *b-hg dn q-mhnm* "according to the present decree" (similarly in CSAI I, 212=R 4325, 6 and CSAI I, 207=CIAS 47.82/j 1, 8); the use of the base *q-* occurring between the demonstrative adjective *dn* and the substantive remains obscure.

⁷ Indeed only two examples can be identified: CSAI I, 196=Ja 2361, 1 *dn qf ʔdqm* "this is the boundary of the territory" (Avanzini 2004a: 268); CSAI I, 203=R 3858, 5 *w-dn ʔbyt w-ʔdtn* "then, these are the houses and the lands" (Avanzini 2004a: 280).

⁸ As already pointed out by Beeston (1962: 48).

⁹ One inconsistency in the use of *dtn* as plural should be noted here. In CSAI I, 208=R 3566, 23 can be read: *s'dm ʔlmw dtn fthn* "those people who validated this order". It is clear that the plural form of the pronoun *dtn* is referred to a noun in the singular *fthn*. In fact Rodokanakis (1915: 39) and Korotayev (1997: 143) edited *dn fthn* without any comment, but according to my personal inspection of the original (as reported in the edition of CSAI) the form *dtn* is certain. In my opinion this was a mistake which suggests two alternatives: *dtn ʔfthn* and *dn fthn*.

¹⁰ Two apparent examples of the pattern *ʔ-* in the form *ʔw/w* (CSAI I, 205B=R 4337B, 6) and *ʔ-dy* (CSAI I, 198=R 3689, 10 discussed in Mazzini 2005b) can be identified. A possible coexistence of an older (residual) form (based on the pattern *ʔ-*) with the new one (based on the pattern *dt-*) can be paralleled with a similar situation occurring in many Modern South Arabian languages.

Furthermore, it is also very important to note that this phenomenon peculiar to Qatabanic fits well with Stein's reconstruction.¹¹ According to him, the Radmanite region (originally part of the Qatabanian kingdom) can be identified as a specific dialectal area within Middle Sabaic and most of the peculiarities emerging from this dialectal subgroup of Sabaic can be easily traced back to Qatabanic (the form *ḏtn* mentioned is one among them).

3. Relative pronouns

The extant part of the *ḏ* base pronouns can be collected within the large category of "relatives", following the tradition of ASA studies since Beeston's Grammar works, and also recently accepted by Stein.¹² Within this large syntactical category we must distinguish specific syntactical functions, which are also marked by particular morphological features.

- The *ḏ* pronoun lacking in the relative clause and in the periphrastic genitive

Recently, Nebes¹³ has pointed out that the relative clause in Qatabanic can be expressed through an asyndetic phrase the antecedent of which is a mimated substantive such as the example of CSAI I, 197=R 3688, 2: *kbrm b-ykbr* "the official who acts as the official". If we carefully examine the whole Qatabanic corpus we note that the relative clause in Qatabanic normally has a mimated antecedent noun without the use of the *ḏ* base pronoun.¹⁴ Furthermore, from the many contexts in which

ages and in Classical Arabic. See also the observations below. The form *ḏl*, apparently a mixture of both bases, occurring in the Minaic text as-Sawdā' 40=R 3318, 1, should be correct as *ḏ* according to Avanzini (1995: 155).

¹¹ According to Stein (2003: 140) the form *ḏtn* is a "spezifische Dialektform des südlichen sabäischen Sprachraumes zu betrachten und möglicherweise – analog dem qatabanischen Befund – als Plural... zu interpretieren"; see also more in general Stein (2004). On the other hand a systematic investigation of this question is still lacking and it might be risky to automatically consider each trait of Sabaic of this area as being of Qatabanic influence. Furthermore the identification of a dialectal type of Qatabanic (which Avanzini 2004a calls Marginal Qatabanic) characteristic of the Southern High Plateau shows that the principle of "Qatabanic influence" needs more historical study.

¹² Stein (2003: 145), who notes: "das Relativpronomen dient in erster Linie der Umschreibung einer Status-constructus-Verbindung, steht also entweder vor einem Nomen im Genitiv oder vor einem Relativsatz. Eine weitere Verwendungsmöglichkeit ist diejenige als Determinativpronomen ('der (Besitzer/Herr) von...')". This basic syntactical principle has been underlined recently also on a more theoretical level see Kapeliuk (2003a); Gai (2001; 2002); Retsö (2004). This category may be also called both "Determinative-Relative" (Lipiński 1997: 324) and "determinative" (Pennacchiotti 1968).

¹³ Nebes (1997: 127). This is also hinted at by Lipiński (1997: 523).

¹⁴ One exceptional case might be the passage attested in CSAI I, 195=Ja 2360, 1-2: *b-sʿl² sʿl¹ Yd^{cʿb} Ygl* where on the basis of this rule one would expect the form *b-sʿlm* (further evidence is that this paranomastic expression seems to be a legal pattern and where it is attested the *-m*

this type of construction occurs, it is clear that the antecedent does not designate an indeterminate concept as the mimation would seem to imply according to a common morphological feature in ASA (mimation = not determined VS nunation = determined). It therefore emerges that the asyndetic construction cannot be explained by the presence of an indeterminate antecedent,¹⁵ but instead that a particular type of mimation is used in Qatabanic as a relative marker.

In this regard it should also be noted that the *ḡ* base pronoun within the syntactical construction of the periphrastic genitive,¹⁶ which is also widely attested in Sabaic and Minaic (and in the archaic Semitic languages as well), is completely absent in Qatabanic. Considering the parallel functions of genitival and relative construction in Semitic syntax, it could be that the absence of the *ḡ* base pronoun in the periphrastic genitive is a phenomenon parallel to that occurring for the relative clause.¹⁷

relative marker occurs, see CSAI I, 208=R 3566, 2: *b- s²lm s²*). In my view, however, this is an epigraphic issue. Indeed the very end of line 1 is slightly damaged and the reading uncertain, hence Jamme (1972: 22) edited a vertical stroke in that spot which he considered the word-divisor. On the other hand it could well be the extant part of the sign for *m* (note that the word-divisor never occurs in this inscription at the end of line, the only case proposed by Jamme, 1972, 22 in line 13 is illegible, for this spot is damaged). If it is true, the end of line 1 should be read *b-s²l (m)*, hence perfectly in line with the rule above. Note the striking passage CSAI I, 94=Atlat, 3: [... .. *Hw)km ʔmrm w-ms²lm ḡ-s²lw w-ḡdm bā[... ..]* in which the *ḡ* base pronoun is used as a relative, being however preceded by two antecedents mimated. A parallel case could be that attested in CIAS I, 177=MuB 550+555, 3, but the context is fragmentary.

¹⁵ This is actually the rule governing the use of the relative pronoun in Classical Arabic; this principle can also be partially found in Sabaic, even though the *ḡ* base pronoun can introduce a relative clause with a mimated antecedent, see Beeton (1984: 42-43); Nebes-Stein (2004: 479-481). One noteworthy example is CSAI I 208=R 3566, 10: *b-smyt mḡmnyhn ḡn kwn ʔd s²hr* in which the pronoun *ḡn* could be considered a relative. Considering that the antecedent is determined (dual *-nyhn*), one might suppose that the form *ḡn* be a dual relative similarly to Sabaic. If it holds, this could be considered an inner development of Qatabanic of the re-creation of a type of relative clause introduced by the *ḡ* base pronoun. Note that the inscription CSAI I 208=R 3566 is to be dated to a later stage of Qatabanic (Period C according to Avanzini's chronology). However, the passage remains quite obscure and requires further investigation (the use of the far deixis pronoun *b-smyt* and the suffix *-n* attached to the base *ḡ* are striking features). On the whole question see also some recent observations by Pennacchietti (2005).

¹⁶ We use the definition "periphrastic genitive" according to Beeton (1984: 44) and recently Nebes-Stein (2004: 463).

¹⁷ Cf. the interesting syntactical pattern in Ja 348, 3: *ʔslmm ḡhbm* "the statues of bronze" in which the nomen regens (*ʔslmm*, broken plural from *slm* "statue") is marked with the suffix *-m*; this could be a residual use of the correlative *-m* suffix, see the observation in the final section of the article. However, this parallel should be rather interpreted as a general tendency (and not a rule). Note that the *ḡ* base pronoun is used in Ḥaḍramitic as a relative pronoun while the periphrastic genitive is practically lacking (excepting one case in CT 4, 10). The remarkable form *ḡ²m* occurring in the sentence *w-ḡsm ḡ²m wymm* in CSAI I, 206, 9 should be recalled here. If one accepts Avanzini's interpretation in the Corpus: "and the enclosure land of a vineyard", one could think of one case of periphrastic genitive preserved in marginal region on the High Plateau. Hence the form *ḡ²m* would be a relative pronoun, showing the mimation used apparently as the Qatabanic correlative mark (see also the observation by Avanzini 2004a: 291).

- The correlative

The correlative is a type of relative pronoun that introduces a relative clause in which the antecedent is absent,¹⁸ hence it is the equivalent of an expression such as: “the one who, that which...”; in most of the available examples, correlatives are introduced by coordination¹⁹ and it appears to be a stylistic effect put into action in order to emphasize the sentence concerned. The correlative is characterized by the enlargement of a *-m* suffix attached to the base *d* and *dt* respectively for the masculine and possibly the feminine singular²⁰ and *dtm* for the plural. It is noteworthy that the singular form *dm* can be used for both objects and persons²¹ and that if the verb in the relative clause is an imperfective, the choice falls on the type of imperfective with the *b-* prefix (as in the example quoted above).²²

dm M singular // *dtm* F singular
dtm plural

Note the following examples:

CSAI I, 205B=R 4337B, 31: *w-dm b-yts^{3c}* “and he who shall enlarge”,

CSAI I =R 3688, 4-5: *w-l yqny w-t^d dm b-yhrg dn shf⁵n* “and (the deity) let possess and get as an allotment that which will authorize this written document”.

Up to now, this category of pronouns has been underestimated by scholarly debate and Nebes was the first to identify it (Nebes 1998: esp. 127; 1991: esp. 140-

¹⁸ For this definition see Kapeliuk (2003a: spec. 178-179; 2003b). The correlative pronoun can be also defined as one introducing an “independent” relative clause, see Nebes-Stein (2004: 479).

¹⁹ See the few examples in which the antecedent is expressed CSAI I, 59=R 4329, 2 *dn mhfdn Yhdr dm b-s^{hd} gn²* “this tower *Yhdr* that which lies in front of the wall”; CSAI I, 195=Ja 2360, 6 *w-stm dtm wsm w-s^{tr} b-*h*l^{bsm}* “and the inscriptions that which were drawn and written in *h*l^{bsm}”; CSAI I, 196=Ja 2361, 8-9 *bn *l*w s^{nh}tm s^{nt} Brm⁹ s^m hrwf dtm b-sⁿ mtan Yd^{cb} w-Q^{ibn}* “on decrees which *Brm* decreed⁹ for many years, that which *Yd^{cb}* and Qataban have consented by grace”; CSAI I, 202=R 3854, 6-7 *l-tt tt⁷ ywmm dtm b-ydr* “for each⁷ day that in which he will oppose”. The correlative seems to be used here as a specific stylistic means to enforce the meaning of the antecedent. The example in CSAI I, 202=R 3854, 6-7 should also be added but its interpretation is problematic, see the next footnote.

²⁰ Only attested once in the example CSAI I, 202=R 3854, 6-7 *l-tt tt⁷ ywmm dtm b-ydr* “for each⁷ day that in which he will oppose” as it appears from the feminine form of the numeral one *tt*. The term *ywm* is feminine because it designates a specific date.

²¹ As in the following examples respectively, CSAI I, 130=Hoqat, 6: *w-bkl-s^m w-dm qnyw* “and his people and what they possess”; CSAI I, 208=R 3566, 3: *w-dm kwn kwn-s^m bn *z*^{cb}bn* “and the one who has their status among the tribes”.

²² On the *b-*preformative verbal form of Qatabanic see Avanzini (2004b, 2005); Mazzini (2005c). Perhaps the choice of this verb form depends simply on the typology of the available texts, because one case is also attested in which the imperfective pattern *yqtl* (without the *b-* prefix) is used (see CSAI I, 204=R 3878, 3: *w-kl *z*^{cb}bm ymlk Yd^{cb}b*). However, it cannot be excluded that this feature reflects a process of lexicalization, according to which the *b-*preformative verb form has a tendency to be systematically required within that particular syntactical context.

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143). According to him, Qatabanic correlatives came from a specific process of lexicalization of the suffix *-m* (Nebes 1991: 148) connected to a broad tendency, peculiar to Qatabanic, which used the suff. *-m* even within the syntactical contexts where it would not be expected in the other ASA languages. This interpretation appears to be substantially correct, even though this particular *-m* suffix must rather be considered as a specific marker for the syntactical relative context noted above. Accordingly, the patterns *dm*, *dtm* could be the result of an original *d* pronominal base enlarged (or enforced) through the relative marker *-m*.²³

This type of correlative is a morpho-syntactic feature peculiar to Qatabanic, although there is a possible parallel in Minaic.²⁴ Indeed, Nebes suggested that the pronominal form *dm* attested in the Minaic inscription Darb *as-Sabī* 1, 15, could play a syntactical role similar to that of the Qatabanic correlative.²⁵

- The determinative

The definition of determinative is applied in ASA specifically for pronouns which introduce particular categories of nouns; the latter jointly with the determinative appear to play a syntactical role, such as establishing a formulaic pattern. Usually three major categories can be identified: 1) personal names (he, the one of + family name); 2) nouns indicating special categories of individuals (the one or those belonging to the people of) and 3) specific features characterizing objects or individuals, essentially the epithets.

*d*M singular // *dt*F singular
dw (*dw*y 3 cases) M dual
dtw (*dt*y 2 cases) plural

Determinatives in Qatabanic in particular are broadly attested in the onomastic formula that introduces the family (tribal) name and in epithets; furthermore certain

²³ Note the use of the subordinating conjunction *k-dm* and *l-b-dtm* largely attested in Qatabanic; apparently the correlative has been lexicalized within the specific syntactical contexts in which a verbal clause is subordinated and hence it becomes a subordinating conjunction.

²⁴ Cf. the exceptions of the use of *dn* instead of *dm* in CSAI I, 126=CIAS 47.11/p 8 n. 1, 9 and the use of *d* instead of *dm* in CSAI I, 172=CIAS 95.11/w 5 n. 1, 6. Note that in the market regulation CSAI I 205 C=R 4337C, 1-2, 6-7 are to be found respectively the following expressions: *kl dw b-[y]²gzf*; *kl⁷ dw b-ys²t* in which the syntactical position of *dw* would require the correlative *dm*. Such peculiarities of this text remain unclear.

²⁵ Ryckmans-Robin (1988: 101). Although this passage of the text is quite difficult, the rendering given by Robin-Ryckmans "*cela même que*" seems in line with the syntactical function in Qatabanic. In this regard noteworthy is the expression: *b-wrḥ d-Hwbs⁴ dm dn ḥrḥn* occurring in an unpublished Minaic text YM 11726 from the Archaeological Museum of Šan^a, where the form *dm* seems to convey a syntactical value parallel to a correlative ("in the month of *Hwbs⁴* that of this year"). The form *dm* occurring in Ma^cin 73, 13 is not considered here because the edition of this text is unreliable (see Bron 1998: 84).

categories of individuals (^ʿ*mnt*; ^ʿ*dt*) are also introduced by determinatives, though much less frequently.²⁶

This type of pronoun is characterized by the specific marker *-w* for dual and plural. The morphological marker of the dual *-w* is a linguistic feature peculiar to Qatabanic which corresponds to the marker *-y* in Sabaic and Minaic and partially in Ḥaḍramitic.²⁷ This dual morpheme is distinguished by the Qatabanic use of *-w* as a morphological marker of the plural form which is comparable with the ending *-w* of the Sabaic plural relative ^ʿ*w*.²⁸ As already pointed out above, the plural marker *-w* is attached to the pattern *ḍt*.²⁹ Noteworthy is the variant *ḍwy* for the dual³⁰ which can be paralleled with an identical example in Ḥaḍramitic.³¹

A few cases of *ḍw* forms are attested in contexts where the dual is unlikely. This inconsistency should be taken as evidence of some graphic variant for the singular (scriptio plena vs. scriptio defectiva), as also noted by Frantsouzoff (2004: 44-45) for parallel phenomena in Ḥaḍramitic.³²

In the inscription CSAI I, 208=R 3566, 6, 20-21³³ the determinative *ḍtw* is used in a syntactical context where we would expect to find the near deixis demonstrative *ḍtn*. It is possible that we are dealing here with a mistake or an oscillation in a later phase of the Qatabanic language.³⁴ It is also significant that the plural determinative

²⁶ See resp. in the following examples: CSAI I, 163=Ja 340, 1: *Ysrʿm w-Ḡwtʿl ḍw-ḥlm*, (determinative introducing family name); CSAI I, 37=MQ-HK 7, 2: *ʿlsʿrh (...)w-Zydʿl (...) 2 ḍw ʿmnt mbʿl ʿm ḍ-Rymtm (ḍw ʿmnt* a determinative introducing a category of individuals and *ʿm ḍ-Rymtm* a determinative introducing a divine epithet). Note the partitive use of the pattern *ḍ-bn* "some among", similar to Sabaic (see CSAI I, 208=R 3566, 3, 6, 8).

²⁷ In Ḥaḍramitic one example of the *ḍy* dual determinative was recently identified in the inscription Issam al-Ani 1, see Gajda (2000: 102), beside the *ḍhy* dual form already known occurring in CIAS 47.82/o6, 3. By contrast the form *ḍw* (occurring in Rb I/89 n. 197 a-e, 3; Rb I/84 n. 198 a-f, 2; Rb I/84 n. 198 a-f, 5) is a rare variant of *ḍ*-, possibly used as the Arabic *mā al-maḥdariyya* and not as a dual determinative; the Ḥaḍramitic form *ḍtw* is a variant of *ḍt* and is used in the prepositional expression *b-ʿbr ḍ(w)* introducing a dependent clause; a dual morpheme *-w* occurs in Ḥaḍramitic but as a dual ending of the perfective verb (see Frantsouzoff 2004: 44-45).

²⁸ On the question concerning the phoneme concealed behind the Qatabanic writing *-w* contrasting that of Sabaic (and Minaic) *-y*, see the discussion in my review on Stein (2003) (Mazzini 2006).

²⁹ Note the variant *ḍty* occurring in CSAI I, 17=MuB 659, 6-10; CSAI I, 206=Thah, 7.

³⁰ This form is attested in CSAI I, 132=Ja 121, 1; CSAI I, 206=Thah, 7; CSAI I, 20=Pi Ḥuwaydar 2, 5; TT I 687, 3 fragmentary.

³¹ This form is attested in Wādī Durāʿ 2, 1.

³² The two cases CSAI I, 205C=R 4337 C, 1-2, 6-7 have been discussed in footnote 24. The use of *ḍw* in CSAI I, 211=R 3879, 3-4 and CSAI I, 213=R 4931, 3 is problematic because the contexts too remain doubtful.

³³ See the following contexts: CSAI I, 208=R 3566, 6 *w-gtzm b-ḍtw gzwmm* and CSAI I, 208=R 3566, 20-21 *sʿmt 21 ḍtw gzwmm*.

³⁴ The inscription is dated by Avanzini to the C period at the very end of the I millennium, see in general on the chronology of the kingdom of Qataban Avanzini (2004a: 30-32).

dtw can be found in a recently published Middle Sabaic text from wādī Bahā³⁵ (in the Southern High Plateau);³⁵ the editors³⁶ remark that this form is evidence of a Qatabanic linguistic influence in line with the examples in Sabaic where the demonstrative *dtm* discussed above is used.

Furthermore it should not be forgotten that the determinatives are used irrespective of the absence of the relative pronouns. Such a phenomenon is unique within ASA in which the relative pronouns and the determinatives are usually treated as one category, hence morphologically overlapping. This might be evidence of the disappearance of the relative pronouns which probably were still in use at an earlier linguistic stage of the history of Qatabanic.

4. Some general conclusions

Summing up, the linguistic data presented above have enabled us to reconstruct the Qatabanic *d* base pronominal system which has the following characteristics:

- 1) near deixis demonstrative (masc. sing. marked by nunation, always preceding the noun);
- 2) plural pattern *dt* for the whole system, residual attestation of the pattern *ʔ*;
- 3) use of the *-m* suffix as a relative marker, (replacing the *d* base relative pronoun);
- 4) relative clause asyndetic, absence of the periphrastic genitive;
- 5) use of the correlative, marked by mimation, introducing the independent relative clause;
- 6) use of the determinatives irrespective of the absence of the relatives (masc. sing. showing the base root *d*).

If we compare this system with that attested in the other ASA languages it becomes clear that features 2, 3, 4 and 5 above may be considered as developments resulting from an inner linguistic re-elaboration process that Qatabanic underwent.³⁷ Indeed, the broad use of determinatives as well as the particular function of correlatives point to a linguistic phase in which the *d* base was still functioning as an actual relative pronoun introducing the relative clause as well as the periphrastic genitive. Analogously, the residual presence of the *ʔ* pattern as a plural seems to point to a previously generalized use of it. Accordingly, it could be suggested that this process of development began from a "proto-system" attested at an earlier, unknown linguistic stage.

³⁵ Gajda *et al.* (1998); the inscription has been labelled as Bahā² 1 (the form concerned occurs in line 2).

³⁶ Gajda *et al.* (1998: 107). This case is not discussed by Stein (2003; 2004) but it confirms his view mentioned above.

³⁷ Note that the asyndetic relative clause is quite sporadic in the other Semitic languages too, see the excursus on this aspect outlined by Healey (2002: esp. 86-88).

In other words the features peculiar to Qatabanic should be interpreted as divergences from a proto-system which originally would have had a basic structure parallel to that of the other ASA languages, the basic features of which are as follows: 1) use of the *ḏ* base pronoun for the two syntactical categories of near deixis demonstrative and relative; 2) overlapping of the relative and determinative function; 3) introduction of the relative clause and the periphrastic genitive; 4) adjectival demonstrative always preceding the noun; 5) nunation as a marker of the masc. sing. of the demonstrative as against the simple *ḏ* base of the relative and 6) the alternative pattern *ʔ* for the plural.

While a proto-system of Qatabanic can be reconstructed, the origin of these divergences is rather intriguing and deserves further study, in particular the use of the *-m* suffix and the plural pattern *ḏt*.

In my opinion, an essential clue to clarifying this issue is that these morphological traits seem to have (partial) parallels in some residual uses occurring in the other ASA languages. Note (in addition to the Minaic parallel mentioned) a particular type of relative clause attested in Sabaic with a mimated antecedent without the *ḏ* base pronoun introducing the clause, as well as the many uses of the pronoun *ḏt* generally designating objects in non-feminine contexts, both to be taken as plurals.³⁸ These are linguistic traits which, in turn, also seem to be part of an old Semitic heritage.³⁹ Accordingly, a linguistic stratum common to every ASA language seems plausible from which particular features were selected to become the "distinctive" part of the *ḏ* base pronominal system of Qatabanic. A similar linguistic process also seems to have occurred in other sectors of this language such as the verb system (Mazzini 2005c) or lexicography (Mazzini 2002), in which ancient features were incorporated into a new system.

³⁸ Stein (2003: 71) holds that this specific feature might designate "einen eigenen genusindifferenten bzw. neutrischen Charakter".

³⁹ The suffix *-m* occurs, though sporadically or marginally, in connection with the syntactical context of the genitival construction within most ancient Semitic languages, see Von Soden (1960: esp. 170) and Tropper (2000: 827-828). Further evidence could be the use of the preposition *m* within the adverbial sentences of identity attested in Egyptian (see in general Allen 2000: 112-113). Note also that the suffix *-m* of Qatabanic has retained the old correlative connotation which may be for use as subordinating conjunctions such as *ḥg-km*, *'d-km*, *bn-km*, *k-ḏm* (already mentioned, see above) and *kn-m* which introduce verbal clauses; morphologically these conjunctions are characterized by the enlargement of the suffix *-m*. Note that a similar phenomenon is also partially attested in the other ASA languages, see the most striking example of the subordinating conjunction *b-ḏtm* common to all ASA languages. The question is particularly problematic, for it is closely linked to the evaluation of the historical origin of the *-m* and *-n* nominal morphemes peculiar to the nominal system of all ASA languages. Undoubtedly the idea of the use of a *-m* suffix as a relative marker could shed new light on this thorny issue, see in general Voigt (1997); Koloughi (2000). As for the *-t* marker in the pattern *ḏt* for plural, it can be attached directly to the same root of the singular *ḏ*, as is the case with Akkadian (*anniu / anniūt; ullū / ullūtu; šu / šūt*) and Ugaritic (*ḏt*).

In my opinion, this tendency of Qatabanic to re-create a different linguistic reality from a common ASA proto-system cannot be considered a diagnostic datum; as already pointed out in the introductory remarks, several peculiarities of Qatabanic could be taken as archaic or innovative. The case of the Qatabanic divergences in the *d* base pronominal system (suffix *-m* / plural pattern *dḥ*) is a further example. On the one hand they are features of an old stage of Semitic, and on the other they re-emerge clearly in many modern languages (as in Amharic or Modern South Arabian).⁴⁰

The reconstruction of the Qatabanic *d* base pronominal system contributes rather to a better understanding of the origin and formation of ASA. Indeed, behind this system there is a lengthy, articulated linguistic process from which the following seem to emerge: 1) a common linguistic phase (Proto-Ancient South Arabian) preceding the rise and establishment of the historical kingdoms at the very beginning of the 1st millennium and 2) the consequent formation of the ASA languages the main characters of which emerged by "random" selection, re-elaboration and re-use of peculiar linguistic traits which came from the previous common stratum.⁴¹

In this perspective it is not surprising that archaic features are re-used as innovative traits, ultimately a phenomenon which accompanies the development of the Semitic languages since the 3rd millennium.⁴²

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⁴⁰ See the use of the *-m* suffix as a relative marker in Amharic (Hetzron 1973) as well as the Arabic correlative pronoun *mā*; see the plural forms of the near deixis pronoun in Jibbali and Tigrinya.

⁴¹ On this essential point see the discussion in Avanzini (1991); Mazzini (2004; 2005a); Avanzini (2006).

⁴² A well-known example is that of parallel lines of evolution in Semitic languages which do not share any particular historical relationship, see Morag (1989) and Kapeliuk (1989).

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