

NEW PREPOSITIONS IN MEDIAEVAL JUDAEO-ARABIC*

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As is well known,¹ most Semitic prepositions were originally nouns in construct² in the adverbial (accusative) case. The Semitic languages, including late Arabic, never ceased forming new prepositions from nominal adverbials in construct.³ This refers, of course, to Middle Arabic as well, including mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic. In the main, this mechanism of producing new prepositions created the prepositions of the classical period. One has, however, to take into consideration additional factors:⁴ the older prepositions become semantically blurred, they become polysemic and they become reduced in size.⁵ Wehr and in his wake Procházka⁶ doubted dating the new prepositions of Modern Literary Arabic. This paper intends to solve a part of this problem and discover early attestations of some of these prepositions, as, indeed, Middle Arabic in general and mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic in particular may bridge the gap between classical Arabic and Modern Literary Arabic.⁷ As a rule, when

*In 1987 Aryeh Levin published a penetrating study of prepositions in Arabic (“The views of the Arab grammarians on the classification and syntactic functions of prepositions,” *JSAI* 12: 40–55, reprinted in Aryeh Levin, *Arabic linguistic thought and dialectology* (Jerusalem, 1998). I am therefore contributing a paper on prepositions to the Aryeh Levin Festschrift.

¹See e.g. Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, vol. 1, p. 494 §252a; Procházka, *Präpositionen*, pp. 5–6.

²Brockelmann forgot to mention “construct,” yet in vol. 2, p. 359 §235a he emphasizes the genitive relation.

³See e.g. Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, vol. 1, p. 499 §252c; vol. 2, pp. 419–424, §§259–261.

⁴What J. Malkiel dubbed “multiple causation” or “multilinear development.”

⁵Cf. Funke, *Englische Sprachkunde*, pp. 44–45, who quotes W. Horn’s *Sprachkörper und Sprachfunktion*.

⁶Wehr, “Besonderheiten,” p. 18, Procházka, *Präpositionen*, p. 26.

⁷As they bridge the gap between the emergence of Neo-Arabic and modern Arabic dialects.

the writings from which the passages are taken are not cited, the reader is referred to *Dictionary* s.vv., which serves, in this paper, as the main repository of examples for texts stemming from the first third of the second millennium. The date of later texts is expressly indicated. For texts written in phonetic spelling, which originate in the second half of the first millennium, see the forthcoming grammatical treatise of these texts by J. Blau-S. Hopkins. I am dividing the new prepositions into the following five groups.

2 Nouns used originally as adverbials in construct developed into prepositions

It is not easy to determine the borderline between the still adverbial usage of a noun and its passage to prepositional usage.⁸ *xilāf(a)* “contrary to”; *dubur(a)* “behind”; *mawḍi‘(a)* “instead of”; *lišq(a)* “near, at” (cf. *lāziq(a)* §4); ‘*aqib(a)*, ‘*aqūb(a)*, ‘*aqūbat(a)* “(immediately) after,” cf. Procházka, *Präpositionen*, pp. 211–212; *qibal(a)* “on, incumbent upon”; see *fī qibal(i)* §3; *qibāl(a)* “to, for”; *qubālat(a)* “in contradistinction to,” cf. Procházka, *Präpositionen*, pp. 189–190; *miqdār(a)* “during”; *quddām(a)/min quddām(i)* “in front of; in the possession of,” cf. Procházka, *Präpositionen*, pp. 190–193; *naẓīr(a)* “like, as, according to; in exchange for.”

3 Preposition + noun in construct used as preposition

In this case too it is not easy to determine the borderline between the still nominal usage of the noun and its passage to prepositional usage: *ka-mithl(i)* “just as, similar to” for simple *ka* is well attested already in classical Arabic and is frequent in various branches of Middle Arabic; see

⁸Cf. Procházka, *Präpositionen*, pp. 26–27.

ASP 248 §154.1.⁹ It was used instead of *ka* because of *ka*'s reduced size. Much rarer is *ka-šibh(i)*, so far attested in Early Christian Arabic only, see ASP 245 §148 with additional literature. *Fī ma'nā* "as to, as regards, in the matter of; like, as"; *li-ma'nā* "because of, (intended) for; according to, as; as to, as regards, in the matter of" (cf. *li-ma'nā'an* "because"); *min ma'nā* "from; because of" (cf. *min ma'nā'an* "because"). One of the reasons for this development was the desire to accord the prepositions *fī*, *li*, *min* more "body" by the addition of *ma'nā*, which has become an all-embracing loose word. Similar is the status of *qiṣṣa(t)*; *ṣūra(t)*; *nāḥiya(t)*; *manzila(t)*; *mawḍi'*; *jīha(t)*; *wajh*; *ma'riḍ*; *lafz*; *ḥāl*; *janb*; *ṭaraf*; *ḥukm*; *xuṣūṣ*; *xabar*; *ḥašw*; *šubhat*; *illat*; *qibal*; *quddām*; *qalb* in *fī qiṣṣat(i)* "as to, as regards, in the matter of"; *bi-ṣūrat(i)* "like, as"; *li-nāḥiyat(i)* "to"; *bi-manzilat(i)* "like, as" (but in this case it is sometimes quite difficult to distinguish the prepositional usage from the nominal one, when designating the meaning "having the status of"); *li-mawḍi'(i)* "as to"; *alā jihat(i)* "by way of, by means of," *fī jihat(i)* "as to; to the credit/debit of", *li-jihat(i)* "for", *min jihat(i)* "on the authority of; as to; on behalf of, for; because of, for the sake of; from"; *fī wajh(i)* "(protection) against" (reflecting, it seems, Hebrew influence; attested in *Dictionary* in a late text only); toward, to"; *alā/fī ma'riḍ(i)* "according to, by way of" (beginnings of which are attested already in classical Arabic); *min lafz(i)* "in the matter of, as to"; *fī ḥāl(i)* "as to"; preceding an infinitive or a subordinate clause "as, when"; *li-ḥāl(i)* "because of"; *bi-janb(i)* "for the sake of"; *fī ṭaraf(i)* "with"; *alā ḥukm(i)* "according to"; *bi-ḥukm(i)* "because of"; *bi-xuṣūṣ(i)* "as to"; *fī-xabar(i)* "as to"; *fī ḥašw(i)* "within"; *bi-šubhat(i)* "like, as", attested in *Dictionary* from a late text only; *li-illat(i)* "because of"; *fī qibal(i)* "on, incumbent upon; with", see *qibal(a)* §2; *min qibal(i)* "because of"; *min quddām(i)*, see *quddām(a)* §2; *fī qalb(i)* "inside."

4 An adverbial governing a preposition omits the preposition and becomes itself a preposition

Badal(an) min > *badal(a)* "instead of," see ASP 242:n. 7 with additional literature; Hopkins, *Papyri*, p. 123 §110; *Dictionary*; Procházka, *Präpositionen*, pp. 27, 87–89; *iwad(an) min* > *iwad(a)* "instead of" ASP 242:n. 7 with additional literature; *Dictionary*; *JA Grammar*, p. 117 §160; Procházka, *Präpositionen*, pp. 27, 29, 213; *lāziqan bi* > *lāziq(a)* "near, at" (cf. *lišq* §2); *dāxīl(a)* "inside" and *xārij(a)* "outside", reflect,

⁹Cf. also Hopkins, *Papyri*, p. 129 §129.

on the face of it, the same phenomenon, since their original forms were *dāxil(an) fī* and *xārij(an) min*; yet it stands to reason that they arose in a different way, influenced by the transitive use of *daxal(a)*; see for details and additional literature ASP 242–243:n. 7; further *JA Grammar*, p. 116: §§155–156; Procházka, *Präpositionen*, pp. 217, 227–228. Similar was the emergence of *dā'ir(a)* “around”, triggered by the late transitive use of the verb *dār(a)*, see for it e.g. Dozy, *Supplément*, vol. 1, s.v.; cf. also Procházka, *Präpositionen*, pp. 217–218.

5 Conjunctions governing one-term sentences develop into prepositions

This development took place in two stages. At first, the new preposition governed nouns only, yet not pronominal suffixes. It is in the second phase only that pronominal suffixes were added to the new prepositions. *ka-mā* “just as, similar to” ASP 248–249:n. 34, who also quotes its occurrence in classical Arabic; *JA Grammar*, p. 118 §163; *Dictionary*, where an example preceding a separate personal pronoun (כמא וה) is quoted from Maimonides’ responsa, thus attesting that, in this text at least, it does not govern pronominal suffixes. In modern dialects, on the other hand, it does govern pronominal suffixes, see Procházka, *Präpositionen*, p. 139. It was used instead of *ka* because of *ka*’s reduced size. ^ʿ*Ilā ḥayth(u)* “until”; *bi-ḥayth(u)* “as to, because of”; *min ḥayth(u)* “as to, because of” One of the reasons for this development was the desire to accord the prepositions ^ʿ*ilā*, *bi*, *min* more “body.”

6 Other cases

I have so-far only noted one case of *baynāt* “between” in a very vulgar document quoted *JA Grammar*, p. 115 §152 בינאתהם “between them.” For its distribution in modern dialects, see Procházka, *Präpositionen*, pp. 91–98. who adduces additional literature and offers etymology. In texts spelt phonetically *bayn(a) yaday* “in front of” has been quite frequently

univerbalized becoming **בינדי**. Instead of classical *min jilāl(i)* “because of,” *bi-jilāl(i)* is used, presumably reflecting the influence of Hebrew **בגלל**.

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