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FROM A NON-ARGUMENT-DATIVE TO AN ARGUMENT-DATIVE: THE CHARACTER AND ORIGIN OF THE QṬĪL LĪ CONSTRUCTION IN SYRIAC AND JEWISH BABYLONIAN ARAMAIC*

Abstract. This paper aims at tracing the origin of the emergence of a new tense in the history of Eastern Aramaic, the bases of which are the historical passive participle (*qṭīl*) with a conjugation that originated from a cliticization of a datival pronominal expression (*lī*). In many of the Eastern Neo Aramaic dialects the descendants of these forms exhibit features of an ergative system, in expressing the past tense. Studies often focus on the final stage of this process when the tense is established. The current paper, however, focuses on the previous stages of this diachronic process. Thus, it is about the origin of the use of the dative with the passive participle (the *qṭīl lī* construction) with a special interest in Syriac and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (=JBA).

In the past scholars repeatedly argued that the use of the dative indicates that originally this was a “possessive-perfects”. In this paper I make the case that the *qṭīl lī* construction is definitely not a possessive one. Instead, I will argue, that this is a regular passive construction. Accordingly, the passive participle has the function of expressing the tense-aspect while the datival expression denotes the agent. In light of this, I propose that the use of the dative to denote the agent developed from its ability to mark a non argument experiencer. With certain verbs, particularly in passive constructions, it was analyzed as an argument-dative denoting the agent (in the sense of the subject of the active sentence). In this case we are dealing with a shift from a Non-Argument-Dative to an Argument-Dative. At the next stage, the requirement of anticipatory pronouns to agree with all definite arguments, laid the foundation for the new inflection in the Neo Eastern Aramaic dialects.

Previous studies argued that the Aramaic development was a result of contact with Iranian languages. I point to a new parallelism between the development that occurred in the history of the Eastern Aramaic dialects and the development in some of the Iranian languages. I claim, however, that we are dealing with a case of “convergence” in the limited sense of the term, since languages in the same area, show similar developments through internal and external factors.

The various discussions throughout the paper are of significance beyond the scope of the Aramaic construction for the following issues: 1) the cross-linguistic distribution of possessive-perfect constructions; 2) the origin of an ergative system; 3) the existence of a formal distinction between argument and adjunct; and 4) a presentation of a case of “convergence”.

* This paper is a development of Bar-Asher (2008). I am grateful to Ariel Gutman for his translation of the original Hebrew into English. I dedicate this paper to the memory of Wolfhart Heinrichs, a great teacher and a wonderful person, with whom I discussed many parts of this paper.

Keywords: passive; ergative; possessive constructions; possessive perfect; argument vs. adjunct; dative; non argument dative; convergence; reanalysis; Jewish Babylonian Aramaic; Syriac; Iranian Languages; Old Persians

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper aims at tracing the origin of the emergence of a new tense in the history of Eastern Aramaic, the bases of which are the historical passive participle (*qtīl*) with a conjugation that originated from a cliticization of a dative pronominal expression (*lī*). In many of the Eastern Neo Aramaic dialects the descendants of these forms exhibit features of an ergative system, in expressing the past tense. Studies often focus on the final stage of this process when the tense is established. The current paper, however, focuses on the previous stages of this diachronic process. Thus, it is about the origin of the use of the dative with the passive participle (the *qtīl lī* construction) with a special interest in Syriac and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (=JBA).

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The structure of the paper is as follows: in the rest of the introduction I will present the history of the literature, and the synchronic and diachronic questions that this paper aims to answer. Section 2 begins with a theoretical discussion concerning the notion of “possessive construction” in the context of the possessive-perfect constructions. This is also the context where the Old Persian equivalent construction is introduced. Section 3 analyzes the structure of

the relevant construction in Aramaic in a compositional manner. Consequently, Section 4 deals with the origin of the use of the dative as the agent of the relevant passive constructions. Section 5 deals with the emergence of the new conjugation as a result of a requirement of anticipatory pronouns to agree with all definite arguments. For this purposes a formal distinction between argument and adjunct in JBA is presented. This section introduces several distinctions between Syriac and JBA and examines the historical relations between them. Section 6 examines anew the relationship between the history of the Eastern Aramaic dialects and the Iranian dialects, proposing new parallel developments. Section 7 concludes.

1.2. In his article, “Two ‘Passive’ Constructions in Aramaic in the Light of Persian,”¹ E.Y. Kutscher deals mainly with the following construction: a passive participle and the preposition *l-* with a pronominal suffix (henceforth *qtīl lī*) in different Aramaic dialects. In this article Kutscher presents two interrelated claims: one synchronic concerning the usage of the construction, and the other diachronic concerning its origins. When speaking synchronically, Kutscher claims that the construction is used to express the perfect, and that it should be seen as a possessive construction, not a passive one. This second part of his synchronic analysis, i.e., the claim that it is a possessive construction, was influenced to a certain extent from the morphological and functional parallelism with a construction found in Old Persian; this Old Persian construction consists of a passive participle and a pronoun in the genitive-dative case, which, as analyzed by Benveniste (1952), is thought to express the perfect as a possessive, and not passive, construction. The functional and morphological parallelism, the distribution of the construction in certain Aramaic dialects,² and the period and the context in which it first appeared (cf. Folmer 1995: 376-396) led Kutscher to the diachronic conclusion, that the appearance of this construction in the eastern dialects of Aramaic was not due to internal development in these dialects, but was rather a product of Persian influence on Aramaic, reflecting a time when these two languages were in contact.

A question of grammatical influence between languages is intrinsically difficult, and one cannot always determine the direction of the relationship when faced with both internal development and external influence. Such a claim is naturally linked to considerations of likelihood, as well as to the quality of the alternative explanation of internal development. For these reasons I wish to address the question of the Persian influence indirectly and concentrate on

¹ Kutscher (1965).

² One piece of evidence, which Kutscher uses to prove that this construction has a Persian origin, relies on the fact that it is found only in eastern dialects. He then suggests (n. 29) that in the few places where one can find this construction in the western Jewish sources, one should therefore suspect the influence of Babylonian Aramaic on the scribes. For a further discussion of this point, see Bar-Asher (2008: 360, n.3); for more on the Neo Western Aramaic dialect of the Ma'lūla area, see Kutcher's note (1965: 76, n. 29), and cf. Correl (1978: 75-77).

a synchronic analysis. Consequently I will examine the origin of this construction by considering the degree of parallelism it exhibits with its Persian counterpart, a construction which is presumed to be its source (below §6).

This paper concentrates on two of the Late Aramaic dialects:³ Syriac and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (=JBA).⁴ However, since the *qṭīl lī* construction is of special interest for the history of the Eastern Aramaic dialects, I will elaborate on the origin of a development that took place in the Neo-Aramaic dialects: the loss of the classical Semitic prefix- and suffix-conjugations, and the emergence of new tenses, the bases of which are the historical active and passive participles. The inflection based on the passive participle, in most dialects, has its origin in the *qṭīl lī* construction, resulting in a cliticization of the element consisting of the *l+* *pronominal suffix*. These are, for example, the preterite forms of the verb *grš* “pull” in the dialect of Challa (Fassberg 2010: 95):

1 c.s. *grešli* ‘I pulled (him)’; 2 m.s. *grešlox*; 2 f.s. *grešlax*; 3 m.s. *grešle*; 3 f.s. *grešla*
1 c.pl. *gréšlan(a)*, *gréšleni*; 2 c.pl. *gréšlexun*; 3 c.pl. *gréšlu*

As will become clear (§5), understanding the origin of this construction in the Late Aramaic period sheds some light on the later development in the Neo-Aramaic period.

1.3. Kutscher’s synchronic analysis consists of two claims:

1. The construction *qṭīl lī* should be analyzed as a possessive construction, and not as a passive one.⁵

2. This construction is used to express the perfect.

His second claim has two major implications:

a. From reading Kutscher’s work, one gets the impression that expressing the perfect is the only meaning of this construction (Kutscher 1965: 72 and Rubin 2005: 30-31). It is very likely that this analysis was influenced by the fact that this construction became the standard form to express the past tense in the eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects.

³ Kutscher refers also to Mandaic in his article. The current paper, however, does not shed new light on this dialect.

⁴ Kutscher (1965) hesitates throughout his article regarding the data from JBA, see p. 73 and p. 82-83.

⁵ Kutscher (1965: 81-82) himself wavered as to whether this construction is indeed correctly conceived in the Aramaic dialects discussed as a possessive construction. Since this construction is used in Aramaic both for intransitive and transitive verbs, he grew suspect that the construction was not conceived of as a possessive construction. However, the assertion that this is a possessive construction was widely accepted in scholarly literature. See, for example, Polotsky (1979: 208) for a comprehensive treatment of this topic; a thorough discussion of this subject can also be found in Cohen (1984: 513-517), who follows explicitly Benveniste’s discussion of Persian and implements it for Eastern Aramaic. See also Restö (1989: 4, n. 12) and Hoberman (1989: 119).

b. The perfect meaning emerges from the construction in its entirety. Accordingly, the various elements (the passive participle *qtīl* and the prepositional phrase consisting of the preposition *l-* and the pronominal suffix: *lī*) form a construction, a possessive one, and the function of this construction is to denote the perfect. This parallels the case in languages in which the perfect is not expressed by a special verbal form, but rather in a periphrastic construction. In fact, in various languages such periphrastic constructions contain an element which in other contexts expresses possession.⁶ For example, in the English or German verbal phrases *she has eaten*, *sie hat gegessen*, the past participle (*eaten*, *gegessen*) by itself does not carry this function.⁷

This discussion has ramifications beyond the scope of the current discussion, as it is essential for the discussion concerning the genesis of the so-called “possessive perfects” cross-linguistically.⁸

Bar-Asher Siegal (2011a) has already dealt with the first part of the second claim regarding the usage of the construction and have demonstrated a few other functions of this construction. In this paper I will examine the correctness of the two other interrelated claims. Exploring the meaning of the theoretical term “possessive construction” in our context (§2), relies on the assumption that the construction as such expresses the perfect. I will examine whether the *qtīl lī* construction has a function as a complete construction, or whether it should be analyzed in a compositional way and each element has its own independent function (§3). This paper thus aims at answering the following synchronic and diachronic questions concerning the *qtīl lī* construction:

Beginning with the synchronic aspect:

1) When expressing the perfect, does the verbal form (*qtīl*) deliver this function or the construction in its entirety (*qtīl lī*)? (§3)

After having the accurate synchronic analysis, the following historical questions will be of interest:

2) How did this construction develop? (§4)

3) Which further developments took place in the history of Aramaic? (§5)

⁶ See Veloudis (2003) for attempts to rationalize this phenomenon.

⁷ I emphasize that these forms by themselves do not carry the perfect meaning, even though, both in English and German, they do imply a resultative aspect which is semantically related to the perfect when they appear without an auxiliary, i.e. as an adjective. As forms, however, they do not constitute a tense in the tense system when appearing in a predicate position.

⁸ It has been claimed that this type of constructions is restricted to the European continent (Dahl 1996: 365) and therefore that there is no universal motivations for the development from possessive constructions to perfect (Ramat 1998: 232-233). Therefore, if the Late Aramaic construction is indeed of the same nature, it is extremely important to determine whether its existence is a result of contact with another Indo-European language or whether it was independently developed at this period in Aramaic. For a summary of the literature on this type of constructions, see Heine and Kuteva (2006: 140-182).

4) What is the relationship between the *qīl lī* construction and the relevant construction in Persian? (§6)

2. What does “possessive construction” mean in the given context?

It is necessary to establish first a common ground regarding the meaning of the claim that various elements form a possessive construction. When reviewing the literature, it is possible to identify different formulations involving the notion of possession in our context. While *prima facie* they seem similar, they in fact differ significantly with respect to a few crucial points:

The limited sense -- the formal linkage: Grammatical descriptions occasionally mention the fact the same grammatical elements constituting possessive constructions (denoting possession) appear in other contexts in the same languages. Such descriptions are merely formal and are not part of any hypothesis or explanation. This is the case whenever one mentions that the periphrastic construction used to express some tense contains the verb expressing possession in other contexts in the same language. Another example can be found in surveys of strategies of encoding the agent in passive constructions. In various languages this encoding is the same strategy used to mark the possessor in possessive constructions (for example, Keenan 1985: 263-264). Such formal descriptions, however, are hardly theoretically informative, so I shall concentrate on the “broad sense”.

The broad sense -- the semantic linkage: This category includes claims for the existence of a parallelism -- one to one -- between elements of a given construction to elements of either a predicative or adnominal possessive constructions in a language; and, as a result, the further claim that both constructions embody possessive constructions is also made. *In extremis*, some even make a semantic claim that the agent of the parallel construction is a real possessor.⁹

For our purposes this discussion can serve also as an introduction to the *manā krtam* construction, the allegedly parallel construction in Old Persian. The perfect of transitive verbs in Old Persian is expressed with the *manā krtam* construction, consisting of two elements: the passive participle (*krtam*), and a pronoun in genitive-dative case (1sg. *manā*). Until Benveniste (1952) this

⁹ See, for instance, Polotsky (1979: 208): “and its ‘logical’ actor is the Dative, expressing the actor as possessor of the accomplished action and its result.” A similar idea with respect to ancient Greek was expressed by Smyth (1920: 343-344, §1489). See also Goldenberg (1992: 116), who distinguishes between transitive verbs, in which “the agent is expressed as the possessor of the-patient-having-undergone-the-accomplished-action with the resulting state”, and intransitive verbs, in which “the agent is accordingly expressed as the possessor of the accomplished action and its result”. See, in addition, Lazard (2004: 113-116), who sees this as a possibility for synchronic analysis. (I am grateful to Olga Kapeliuk who drew my attention to this article.)

Old Persian construction was analyzed repeatedly as a passive construction (see Benveniste 1952: 53-56, for the literature), with a passive verbal form, the agent of which is expressed with the genitive-dative case. (“Agent” in the current discussion simply indicates the subject of the active sentence.) Benveniste, however, argues that this is a possessive construction, relying on the fact that a combination of a nominal expression with a pronoun in the genitive-dative case can be understood as an adnominal possessive expression, as in *manā pitā* “my father”. Since the passive participle is an adjective in the *manā krtam* construction, this construction can be considered as part of a possessive construction.

The parallelism between this construction and the way possession is expressed is not enough to reject the claim that this is a passive construction. Therefore Benveniste argues that there is a difference between the standard way in which an agent is presented in a passive clause and the way it is presented in this supposed possessive construction. While in other passive constructions the agent is presented after the preposition *hačā* in the ablative case, in the *manā krtam* construction the agent appears in the genitive-dative case without the preposition *hačā*. This point allows Benveniste to exclude the possibility of a passive construction and to maintain that if the construction contains all elements of a possessive construction one should classify it as such.¹⁰

Benveniste presents a mutually exclusive picture: the construction is either passive or possessive. The opposition between the two possibilities and their presentation as complementary is surprising, since passiveness is a property of a construction while possession is a function expressed by a certain construction. A clause is understood to be passive by opposing it to an active clause, while possession is a meaning expressed by different constructions in a language. Therefore there is no reason to present these possibilities as necessarily exclusive from each other.¹¹

If determining the presence of a passive clause is relatively clear, let us now turn to the murkier picture of a possessive construction: for what are the criteria

¹⁰ The fact that the agent of the perfect tense is presented differently than in other tenses is not peculiar to Persian. This is the case also in Greek; see below §3.3.

¹¹ Scholarship on Persian has criticized Benveniste’s methodology from numerous directions. Cardona (1970) has criticized Benveniste from the perspective of comparative and historical linguistics, claiming that the development of this construction suggests rather clearly that it is passive. Lazard (1984: 242-243) also argues that it is incorrect to present possession and passivity as opposing phenomena, as a passive clause may exist in a possessive construction. (Cf. Goldenberg 1990: 170 in the context of Aramaic.) Skjærvø (1985: 218) claims that the formal identity between the way of expressing possession and the indication of the passive voice is synchronically insignificant, and is only external. Indeed, Benveniste himself was aware of this, and therefore he first introduced his claim regarding the way the agent is presented (see Skjærvø’s critique below regarding this part of the claim). Since the publication of Bar-Asher (2008), Haig (2008) has also published a detailed review of Benveniste’s analysis, the literature concerning it, and further criticism of its assumptions and claims (esp. pp. 26-55).

for recognizing a possessive construction? When discussing Persian, Benveniste provides a necessary condition, a condition that is not, however, sufficient: the formal usage of all the elements of a possessive construction. This use of the term possession remains on a formal level. Lazard seems to take a step further and into the world of semantics while referring to this question in the broader context of the encoding of the agent in passive clauses. He notes that Indo-European languages do not have a special case or a preposition to express the agent, but rather the complementation strategy used is shared with other functions in the language, as seen, for example, in the French instrumental preposition *par*, or the French ablative preposition *de*. Among the different strategies in various languages, there are also elements expressing target and possession (as the dative in Latin). In such cases, he claims, the *semantic* distinction is very fine, and depends much on the verbal element:

Si celle-ci a un sens potentiel, l'agent est un destinataire... Si la forme verbale exprime l'action accomplie, particulièrement au parfait, l'agent est un possesseur. C'est le cas dans le tour vieux-perse *manā krtam*. L'expression *A(h)uramazdā-šām ayadiya*, où le verbe est à l'imparfait, semble occuper une position intermédiaire, mais plus proche du rapport de destination... (1984: 242)¹²

While Benveniste's approach sees the morphological parallelism as the essential factor, Lazard gives some meaning to the use of the term possession in the context of passive constructions.¹³ The usage of the term *possession*, however, in this context is rather obscure. One should naturally ask, "What is one possessing and what does this possessive relationship express?" Furthermore, whether this is an adnominal or a predicative possessive construction ought to be defined explicitly; how the semantic parallelism operates exactly also needs to be examined. In addition different usages of the same case in the context of the passive will be analyzed differently -- according to different uses of the corresponding preposition, and according to the verb they accompany -- instead of simply asserting that this is the way of presenting the agent in that language without detailed argumentation.

Benveniste's methodology is clearer. For a construction to be labeled *possessive* it must express possession elsewhere in the same language. We must, however, have in mind the possibility raised by Skjærvø (1985), i.e., that a construction can have

¹² Lazard (2004) seems to be closer to Benveniste's methodology.

¹³ Lazard himself struggles with how a certain use of a case or a preposition should be analyzed when used in a given language for other non-possessive meanings; what is the proper classification of the usage of the preposition in the passive constructions? Since he is aware that in such cases the analysis will be "*plus subtil et variable*", Lazard claims that much of the analysis depends on whether the described action is "potential" or "perfect". When both options are denied, he is less conclusive.

different functions. Therefore, the direction of research should be reversed: it is incumbent upon us first to examine the different ways to present the agent, and then to check their meanings without considering any other usages of the corresponding cases or prepositions.¹⁴ When operating in this direction, it seems more difficult to understand what meaning possession has in this context.¹⁵

One way or the other, even if we would follow Benveniste, it appears that the treatment of a construction as a possessive construction is founded upon parallelism with regular possessive constructions in the language; therefore, in Persian, a verbal adjective is required, and in our case we would need the Aramaic passive participle. This elaboration leads us back to the discussion whether the Eastern Aramaic *qṭīl lī* construction is indeed possessive.

3. The structure of the Aramaic Construction

3.1 For now let us leave aside Persian and return to Aramaic. According to Kutscher the parallelism between Persian and Aramaic stems from the morphological accord between the elements of the constructions in the two languages:¹⁶

Table 1: the parallelism between the Persian and the Aramaic constructions

	1st common singular dative pronoun, used also to express possession	passive participle
Old Persian (the direction: =>)	<i>manā</i>	<i>krtam</i>
Late Eastern Aramaic (the direction: <=)	<i>lī</i>	<i>qṭīl</i>

¹⁴ See Taube (1996), for Modern Hebrew; Cf. Reppen (1995), whose research direction is the opposite.

¹⁵ One can consider the matter from a diachronic perspective, and claim that at least initially the construction was conceived as a possessive construction, since this was the only use of the construction (even if we exclude any synchronic implications). But in this context it is important to remember that some scholars claimed that the usage of the genitive case in Indo-European languages to express the agent is the result of mixing nominal and verbal constructions, which later were perceived as identical. See for instance Jamison (1979, esp. pp. 138-139 regarding Persian).

¹⁶ Kutscher (1965: 73). As noted, Benveniste relied on the fact that the agent in Persian is presented with the participle in a different way than it is presented in other tenses. Kutscher did not mention this in the Aramaic context, but Hoberman (1989: 119) claims this is the case in Aramaic. The agent of the participle appears after the preposition *l-*, while in other tenses it appears after the preposition *mi(n)/men*. Below (§3.3) we shall discuss the correctness of this claim.

Kutscher's proposal assumes that the *qīl lī* construction is possessive with the *l-* marking of the genitive relationship. It is likely that this analysis relies on the fact that one of the main predicative possessive constructions in the history of Aramaic is the dative-construction (Bar-Asher 2009: 361-369. cf., Stassen 2009: 48-54),¹⁷ expressed in Aramaic with the datival preposition *l-*, as found in the standard expression for expressing possession:

- (1) *hālāq ba-'ābar nahār-ā lā 'ītay l-āk*
 portion in-across.of river.DEF NEG exist to-2.M.SG
 “You will be left with nothing in Trans-Euphrates,” (lit., “you will not have a portion in the other side of the river”) (*Ez.* 4, 16)
- (2) *qadmāy-tā kē-'aryē, wē-gapp-īn dī nēšar l-ah*
 first-DEF.F.SG as-lion and-wing-PL of eagle to-3.F.SG
 “The first was like a lion, and it has the wings of an eagle” (*Dn.* 7, 4)

Bar-Asher (2009) and Bar-Asher Siegal (2011b) argued, however, that this possessive construction is essentially an existential construction, with the *possessee* as the only argument. The various strategies to encode the possessor in the different predicative possessive constructions, including the datival preposition, either encode the possessor as the location in which the existential predication should be evaluated, or as a function that reinterprets the meaning of the existence. Accordingly, to exist from the perspective of some NP means to be possessed by it. Thus it is not the case that the datival expression by itself denotes possession, it rather only modifies the main existential predication. In addition, in JBA, but not in Syriac, the existential particle *'ī* in such constructions must appear, hence the lack of parallelism between the *qīl lī* construction and the possessive one.¹⁸

Some have argued that in the history of Aramaic the dative is used on adnominal predicative constructions (*inter alia* Rosenthal 1995: 29),¹⁹ as is seen in the following case:

- (3) *u-melek lē-yiśrā'el rab bēnā-hī wē-šaklēl-ēh*
 And-king to-Israel big uild.PST.3.M.SG-3.M.SG and-finish.PST.3.M.SG-3.M.SG
 “A great king of Israel built it and finished it.”

¹⁷ See also Lyons (1968) or Heine (1997: 83-108, regarding Hebrew see pp. 100-101). See also Fillmore (1968: 47) for a similar approach in a different context.

¹⁸ See Bar-Asher (2013 §4.6.2.1). Cf. Segert (1975: 35, § 6.5.2.3.4) and Sokoloff (2002: 611).

¹⁹ For references to a similar phenomenon in other Semitic languages, see, for example, Wright (1962 vol 2: 95-96); Brockelmann (1913: 381 §242e); Bravmann (1977: 370-371); and Rubin (2005: 59).

However, as argued in Bar-Asher (2009: 398-400), it is better to understand these rare examples as asyndetic relative clauses; it should therefore be translated as follows:

“A king, whom Israel had, is great; he built it and finished it.”

Already from this observation it becomes clear that the dative in Aramaic should not necessarily be regarded as an element denoting possession. Furthermore, when we return to Kutscher’s analysis, we can now see that he has made a twofold claim: 1) the construction *qṭīl lī* should be analyzed as a possessive construction, and not as a passive one; 2) this construction is used to express the perfect. The data, both in Syriac and in JBA, give, however, another impression. The exact way to present this construction, I would claim, is the classical way in which it has been portrayed: this is a passive clause with the agent introduced as a complement by the preposition *l-*; it is therefore not a possessive construction. To support my claim it is important to note two related facts concerning to the construction under discussion:²⁰

a. The perfect is expressed not by the construction in its entirety, i.e., by the combination of the two elements of *qṭīl lī*, but rather by the usage of the passive participle alone. The passive participle without an agent expresses an impersonal action in the perfect (§3.2).

b. The introduction of the agent in passive clauses by the preposition *l-* is found in other tenses as well; therefore it is not peculiar to cases in which the passive particle is used (§3.3).

These two facts are obviously related. While the “possessive” analysis for the *qṭīl lī* construction analyzes it as a construction with a function, denoting the perfect, the current analysis takes this construction in a compositional way: the passive participle (*qṭīl*) has the function of expressing the tense-aspect while the datival expression (*lī*) denotes the agent. This construction, therefore, appears with other verbal forms. The following sections provide support for these two suggestions.

3.2. Using the passive participle alone to express the perfect

As Nöldeke (2001: 218 §247a) and Duval (1881: 314-316, §331) have already noted for Syriac, and subsequently Margolis (1910: 82, §i-j 58) for Babylonian Aramaic,²¹ the passive participle is used to denote an action completed in the past that is to express the perfect.²² I shall bring their examples for discussion

²⁰ Cf. Goldenberg (1992: 117-119) for the Syriac system.

²¹ For Mandaic, see Macuch (1965: 433, §287).

²² This point is reinforced by external evidence. Scholars of Middle Persian, who support the idea that Aramaic hetrograms marking Persian forms present a systematic parallelism between the Aramaic verbal forms and the Persian verbal forms, believe that the Persian past tense

and also add some of my own. Admittedly, sometimes it is inconclusive whether sentences contain an adjectival predicative usage or a verbal perfect usage. (In the following examples, when text in Syriac is the translation of an original Greek, the relevant Greek form is quoted.)

- Syriac:
- (4) *w-b-āh* *ʿeštkaḥ* *dmā* *da-nbīy-ē* *w-qaddīš-ē*
 and-in-3.F.S find.PASS.PST.3.M.SG blood of-prophet-M.PL and-holly.man-M.
 PL
da-qṭl-īn *ʿal* *ʿar ʿā*
 REL.kill.PASS.PTCP-M.PL on land
 “And in her was found the blood of the prophets and of the saints who were slain (ἐσφαμένων) upon the earth.” (Revelation 18:24)²³
- (5) *gabrā šbīq-īn* *l-āk* *ḥtā-ha(y)-k*
 man forgive.PASS.PTCP-M.PL to-2.M.SG sinn-PL-2M.SG
 “Man, thy sins have been forgiven (ἀφέωνται) thee.” (Luke 5:20)
- (6) *ʿelā ʿat* *medem* *da-pqīd* *l-āk* *ʿbed* *ʿāmar*
 but you anything REL-command.PASS.PTCP.M to-2.M.SG do.IMP.2.M.SG say.
 PTCP.M.SG
l-eh *marzbānā: d-enā* *hākanā ʿetpaqdet*
 to-3.M.SG marzbān REL-I thus command.PASS.PST.1.SG
 “But do whatever you were ordered, the *marzbān* told him: ‘I was ordered the following’...”²⁴ (Acta Martyrum p. 177)
- (7) *w-hā* *ktīb-īn* *b-taš ʿit-eh* *d-sābā* *mar ʿawgen*
 and-thus write.PASS.PTCP-M.PL in-story-3.M.SG of-old.man Mar Eugen
 “Thus has been written in the story of the old man Mar Eugen...” (Mar Eulog p. 220b)

This is also the case when the verb *HWY* “to be”, is added in the past tense after the passive participle, a combination normally understood as expressing a pluperfect:²⁵

is marked by Aramaic past tense forms and passive participles. For more on this point see Skjærvø (1995: 301).

²³ In this and the next example the Syriac verbal forms are translations of passive perfect forms of Greek origin.

²⁴ In this example, as in the previous one, *l-āk* (to-2.M.SG) is not referring to the agent.

²⁵ Thus Nödelke (2001: 219); however, the denotation is not always that of a pluperfect, and sometimes it seems as though there is no difference between clauses with *l-āk* and those without it. For more on this in a similar context, see Muraoka (1987: 45, §70).

- (8) *hšil-īn*=waw
form.PASS.PTCP.M.PL=be.3.M.PL
“had been readied” (S. Ephraemi Syri, p. 177)
- (9) *wa-sī-en*=waw *lwāt-eh* *kul-hun*
and-incline.PASS.PTCP-M.PL=be.3.M.PL toward-3.M.SG all-3.M.PL
“They all had given heed (*προσεῖχον*).” (Acts 8, p. 10)
- (10) *wa-prīs-ā*=wāt *hāy* *šošepā*
and.spread.PASS.PTCP-F.SG-be.3.F.SG DEM.SG.F veil
“ And the veil that has been spread...” (Mar-Jacobi, p. 286)
- JBA:
- (11) *psīq-ā* *milt-ayhu*
contract.PASS.PTCP-F.SG matter-3.M.PL
“Their price has been fixed.” (*Me il* 21b)
- (12) *lā psīq-ā* *miltā* *l-karet*
NEG contract.PASS.PTCP-F.SG matter to-*karet*
“His case has not been decided for *karet* (=a type of punishment).” (*Mak.* 14a)
- (13) *šqīl-ī* *nib-e-h*
remove.PASS.PTCP-M.PL canine.teeth-PL-3.M.SG
“Its canine tooth has been removed.” (*Šabb.* 63b)
- (14) *’bīd* *’itrā* *qālā* *’it* *l-hu*
make.PASS.PTCP.M.SG document voice exist to-3.M.PL
“(If) a document is made, it is publicly known.” (*B. Meši* ‘a 39b)

3.3. Introduction of the agent in a passive clause by the preposition

This category includes only sentences with a passive verbal form with the agent introduced by the preposition *l-*. It includes only verbs with the same sense in the corresponding stem formations that are not passive, so as to guarantee that these are indeed passive sentences.

While grammar books have described the usage of the passive participle with the preposition *l-* introducing the agent (Nöldeke 2001: 219-220, §279, Duval 1881: 316, §331d; Margolis 1910, *ibid.*, j), they have hardly noted that this preposition introduces the agent also together with other passive forms.²⁶ Nöldeke, for instance, was aware of this phenomenon, but did not elaborate on its consequences.²⁷ In order to demonstrate that this phenomenon appears in all

²⁶ As for Syriac see a discussion in Gluskina (1965), who has made it clear this is the way to introduce the logical subject with all passive forms. She also claims (p. 20), that this is the ordinary way to present the logical subject; although she hardly mentions any examples without the participle. I am grateful to Alexei Berg, who translated for me the article from Russian.

²⁷ Nöldeke (2001: 192, §247, and see also the appendix, p. 355). According to Nöldeke, while there is a similarity to cases in which the agent appears together with the passive participle

tenses in Syriac,²⁸ I shall begin with one root inflected in different tenses, with the agent introduced by the preposition *l-*. Subsequently I shall add some more examples for each tense:

- (15) a. *w-aykanā etīda[˘] l-hon kad qsā laḥmā*
 and-how know.PASS.PST.3.M.SG to-3.M.PL as break.PST.3.M.SG bread
 “and how they recognized him (ἐγνώσθη αὐτοῖς) [lit. he was known by them] in breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:35)²⁹
- b. *hāde teṯīda[˘] l-kon*
 DEM.F.SG know.PASS.FUT.3.F.SG to-2.M.PL
 “Be this known unto you (ὁμῖν γνωστὸν ἔστω).” (Acts 2:14)
- c. *ʿaynā d-men qaddīm ṯdī[˘]=wā l-eh*
 which.M.SG REL-from first know.PASS.PTCP.M.SG=be.3.M.SG to-3.M.SG
 “which he foreknew (lit., was known to him) (προέγνω)” (To the Romans 11:2)³⁰

when it appears with other passive forms, the phenomenon should be understood differently. He writes, “in reality ∞ [=l, EBAS] signifies in that case a direction, or a dative relation.” Nöldeke relates these cases to the Hebrew expression *nir’e l-* and its equivalent Aramaic expression *’ethzī l-* “it appeared to...” which are attested also in clearly western dialects, as Samaritan (see, for instance, *Tebat Marqe*, p. 41, l. 20) or in the Palestinian Talmud:

roqā d-mithzī la-nā
 spittle REL-appear.PTCP.M.SG to-1.PL

“A spittle that appears to us.” (Sanhedrin 1, 3 [19a, p. 1270])

In fact, already in the Onqelos translation the Hebrew expression *nir’ā l-* is always translated to *’ethzī l-*. However, these examples are somewhat different since in Hebrew *nir’ā l-* “appear to” is interchangeable with *nir’ā ’el* “appear toward”; and in Syriac *’ethzī l-* “appear to” is interchangeable with *’ethzī qdam*, or “appear toward”. This attests that indeed the complement indicates the direction of the action. However, in the cases we are considering, such a substitution is not possible. At the end of this article we shall consider the possibility that the two phenomena are linked. However, for the time being, as Goldenberg (1992, n. 17) has already argued, we must consider the other cases as passive clauses, since they have active counterparts. Therefore that which is presented after the preposition *l-* is the agent, since it is the grammatical subject in the active clause.

²⁸ Regarding a similar phenomenon in Mandaic, see Nöldeke (1875: 355-356 §218), in the context of the uses of the prepositions *l’al* “to/toward”. Note that Macuch (1965, §276, pp. 418-420) noted this usage only with the passive participle and not with other tenses.

²⁹ The fact that also the in the Greek original the agent appears in the dative case does not change the analysis of the Syriac sentence as a passive construction. This analysis relies on the fact that there is a parallel active clause in which the grammatical subject is what marked by a dative case in the passive clause. (Regarding the Greek phenomenon, albeit it is not presented in this way, see Smyth [1920: 341, §1477]). In any event not all the examples from Syriac translations of Greek sources have a morphological parallelism between the Syriac translation and the Greek source as can be seen in some of the examples below.

³⁰ In this and the following examples the Syriac translation has transformed an active construction to a passive one.

- d. *w-metyad* 'ā *l-kul=nāš* *d-medem* *d-etemar*
 and=know.PASS.PTCP-F.SG to-every=man REL-something REL-say.PASS.
 PST.3.M.SG
'lay-k *dagāl=u*
 on-2.M.SG false=COP.3.M.SG
 “And all may know (γνώσονται) that those things, whereof they were informed
 concerning you, are nothing.” (Acts 21:24)
- (16) a. *šmī* ' *l-an* *d-nāšīn* *men-an* *nraq(u)*
 hear.PASS.PTCP.M.SG to-1.PL REL-people from-1.PL leave.PST.3.M.PL
 “We have heard [lit: it was heard by us] (ἠχούσαμεν) that certain people which
 went out from us...” (Acts 15:24)
- b. *'eštam* 'at *l-kiliyarkā* *d-espīr* *d-kul-āh* *mdūtā* 'ettzī 'at *l-āh*
 hear.PASS.PST.3.F.SG to-captain of=band REL-all-3.F.SG city be.agitated.
 PST.3.F.SG to-3.F.SG
 “The chief captain of the band had heard (lit., “it was heard by the chief captain),
 that the city was in uproar.” (In the Greek original appears the expression ἀνέβη
 φάσος τῷ χιλιάρῳ) (Acts 21:31)
- c. *w-eštam* 'at=wāt *la-šlīh-e* *wa-l-aḥ-e* *d-b-īhud...*
 and-hear.PASS.PST.3.F.SG=be.3.F.SG to-apostle-PL and-to-brother-PL REL-
 in-Judah
 “The apostles and brethren that were in Judah heard (ἴχουσαν) that the Gentiles
 had also received the word of God.” (Acts 11:1)
- d. *'aykanā meštam* 'ā *l-āk* *meltā*
 how hear.PASS.PTCP-F.SG to-2.M.SG matter
 “How did you hear this matter?” (Aphraates, p. 209)

More examples in suffix-conjugation:

- (17) *'assī=wa* *l-'amā* *d-etnkat* *l-ḥarmānā*³¹
 hael.PST.3.M.SG to-nation REL-bite.PASS.PST.3.M.SG to-ḥarmānā
 “He healed the people who were bitten by Harmana [=a kind of snake].” (Balai p. 37)

³¹ This is of course the agent, as we can see through the reference to the same event in Mar-Jacob's homilies:

kul d-etnkat *men ḥarmānā*
 all REL-bite.PASS.PST.3.M.SG from ḥarmānā
 “Everyone who was bitten by Harmana...” (p. 196).

More examples in prefix-conjugation:

- (18) *hākwāt nethašbān l-āk*
 thus reckon.PASS.FUT.3.F.PL to.2.M.SG
 “May they thus be esteemed by you.” (Meliton, p. 26)
- (19) *d-lā testbar l-āk*³²
 REL-NEG consider.PASS.FUT.3.M.F to-2.M.SG
 “that it may not seem to you” (Jos. St. p.34) (Chronicle of Joshua, p. 34)
- (20) *netlīṭ l-marlahā*³³
 cures.PASS.FUT.3.M.SG to-Marlahā
 “May he be cursed by Marlahā.” (Pognon p. 80)

More examples with a participle:³⁴

Passive participle of the Pe-stem:

- (21) *saggī-’īn ’enen ’aylen da-s ’īr-ān l-an*
 many-PL.M COP.3.M.PL which.M.PL REL-do.PTCP.PASS-F.PL to-1.PL
 “Many are the things that we have done.” (Acts of Thomas, p. 207)
- (22) *’aynā da-bne=wa l-ṭubānā*
 which REL-build.PASS.PTCP.M.SG=be.3.M.SG to-blessed.one
 “which was built by the blessed one” (*ibid.*, p. 180)

Participle of the T-stems:

- (23) *w-metragšā dmutā dīlhon ’āf la-sm-ayyā*
 and-perceive.PASS.PST image POSS.3.M.PL even to-blind-PL
 “And their image is perceived even by the blind.” (Chronicle of Joshua, p. 66)

³² An English translation of this sentence would be “that it may not seem to you.” This fact should not deter us from considering it a passive construction, since syntactically it is the passive of the intensive stem formation *sabbar*, whose meaning is “to consider” (see Payne-Smith 1902, p. 359, who also gives an example with the participle).

³³ This sentence is taken from a curse which appears on the tomb of a girl. For literature on this inscription, see the appendices of Nöldeke (2001: 355). It is unclear whether this sentence should be included as an example of the phenomenon under discussion. Nöldeke himself hesitated how to translate this sentence; compare the translation which appears in the main text (p. 193) to that which appears in the appendix (*ibid.*). Following my claims below (§4-5), it is possible that the difference between the two possibilities is insignificant.

³⁴ For more examples, see Muraoka (1987: 44-45).

JBA:³⁵

Here too I shall start with two roots which inflect in different tenses: the root *B'Y* “to ask” appears in the *Itpe-* stem hundreds of times in the Talmud, with the agent (the one who asks the question) appearing after the preposition *l-*. All the examples below are from the same context (*Zebaḥ* 120a):

- (24) a. *'ibba 'yā l-hu*³⁶
ask.PASS.PST.3.F.SG to-3.M.PL
“It was asked by them.” (*Roš. Haš. 31a*)
- b. *ma=y tibba 'e l-eh l-'abbā*
what=3.F.SG ask.PASS.FUT.3.F.SG to-3.M.SG to-Abba
“What would be asked by Abba?” (*B. Bat. 53a*)
- c. *mibba 'y-ā l-eh l-rabbi yanay d-bā'e rabbi yanay*
ask.PASS.PTCP-3.F.SG to-3.M.SG to- rabbi yanay REL-ask.PTCP.3.M.SG
rabbi yanay

“It is asked by R. Yanay (PN), that (indeed) R. Yanay asks...” (*Zebaḥ* 120a)

It is important to emphasize that in many places in the Babylonian Talmud this combination appears before posing a question. For example:

- (25) *ki 'ibba 'yā l-an hake hu d-'ibba 'yā l-an*
when ask.PASS.PST.3.F.SG to-1.PL thus COP.3.M.SG REL-ask.PASS.
PST.3.F.SG to-1.PL
“When we asked (lit., it is asked by us), we asked the following...” (*B. Qam 52b*)

- (26) a. *d-ki mityadda' l-hu l-be dīnā hādr-ī b-hu*
REL-when know.PASS.PTCP.M.SG to-3.M.PL to-house.of law return.
PTCP-3.M.PL in-3.M.PL
“When the court realizes, they will retract.” (*Hor. 2a*)

³⁵ Sokoloff (2002: 612), under the entry $\text{ל} [=l]$ was aware of the existence of the construction *'iqqēṭī/al lē*, and collected 14 verbs which appear in this construction. They all have in common that while the verb has a passive form, they are translated by an active clause. Similarly, under the entries for each root he gives a separate sense to the passive form accompanied by the preposition *l-* and translated it to English with an active sense. As for the meaning, a translation with an active sense is correct, since, as explained below, when the agent appears in the passive sentence, there is a great similarity to the meaning of the parallel active sentence. This is not, however, an explanation for this phenomenon. According to the approach advanced in this paper, there is no essential difference between this construction and the *qēṭīl lē* construction, which appears under the same entry. Sokoloff, moreover, does not give examples of using *l-* with the prefix-conjugation.

³⁶ It is clear that the pronoun is not referring to the addressee of the question, because in that case the preposition would be *mi(n)* “from”. For a discussion of how one should translate sentences in this construction with the root *YD* “to know”, see Luzzatto (1873: 81).

- b. *'ad d-mityadda' l-eh l-kul-eh 'ālmā*
 until REL-know.PASS.PTCP.M.SG to-3.M.SG to-all-3.M.SG world
 “Until it becomes known to everyone...” (*Pesaḥ* 81b)
- c. *'i d-'ityadda' l-eh betok melot*
 COND REL-know.PASS.PST.3.M.SG to-3.M.SG within MELOT
 “If he became aware within the period of fulfilling the Nazirite vows...” (*Naz.* 63a)
- d. *meda' yəḏī' l-eh l-rabbi Yehuda*
 know.INF know.PASS.PTCP.M.SG to-3.M.SG to-rabbi Yehuda
 “Rabbi Yehuda surely knew...” (*Pesaḥ* 12b)

Other suffix-conjugation examples:

- (27) *rabbim be-rabbi 'iḥallap l-ī*
 many in-rabbi exchange.PASS.PST.3.M.SG to-1.SG
 “I have confused ‘many’ [=pronounced *rabbim*] with rabbi.” (*'Erub.* 75b)
- (28) (a) *hā miltā 'ibballā 'ā l-ī be midrašā d-rab himnuna*³⁷
 DEM.F.SG matter swallow.PASS.PST to-1.SG house.of study of.rabbi Himnuna
 “This matter was swallowed by me in R. Himnuna’s (PN) school [=I absorbed this matter...].” (*Ber.* 24b)
- (b) *w- 'itnqitu bney yehuda 'e l-amguš-e*
 and-take.PASS.PST.3.PL son.of.PL Jew-PL to-Magian.preiset-PL
 “And the children of the Jews were taken by the Magian preiset” (ISGS 97: 8;2)
- (29) *haštā de-rišonim lā 'ippšit l-hu*
 now REL-first.ones NEG clarify.PASS.PST.3.M.SG to-3.M.PL
 “Now, whatever was not clarified by the first (generations) [=they didn’t answer it]...” (*Ber.* 51a)

Other prefix-conjugation examples:

- (30) *mide d-hštb l-hu l-'enāse d-lā*
 something REL-consider.PASS.PTCP.M.SG to-3.M.PL to-people REL-NEG
*lištakkaḥ l-hu*³⁸
 find.PASS.FUT.3.M.SG to-3.M.PL
 “A valued thing is not found by them.” (*Šabb.* 82a).

³⁷ See below §6.2 regarding the problem in this example.

³⁸ This is the reading in Oxford 366 manuscript. Another variant appears in the Vatican 108 manuscript appears, according to which the pronoun refers to the grammatical subject *mide* “something” and not to the agent *'enāse* “people”.

- (31) *ki heki de-nitgeru l-eh po 'al-im*³⁹
 so REL-PASS.FUT.3.M.PL to-3.M.SG laborer.PL
 “So that laborers will be hired by him...” (*B. Meši 'a* 112b)

More examples with the participle:

- (32) *rešā psīq-ā l-eh sepā lā psīq-ā l-eh*
 head cut.PASS.PTCP-F.SG to-3.M.SG end NEG cut.PASS.PTCP-F.SG to-3.M.SG
 “He was decided (lit. “cut by him”) about the beginning of the text but not about the end.” (*Me 'il*. 11a)

- (33) *mebarkā ḥbīt-ā l-eh*
 ditch strike.PASS.PTCP.3.F.SG to-3.M.SG
 “He has struck the ditch.” (*Ketub*. 10a)

- (34) *w-lā miqqaddāš-ā l-ku*⁴⁰
 and-NEG sanctify.PASS.PTCP-3.F.SG to-2.M.PL
 “And the sanctification of the day may not be done by you.” (*Pesaḥ* 101a)

To conclude my discussion I would like to note that there is a tendency to present these clauses as active clauses in passive constructions.⁴¹ Such claims are surprising, since there is no meaning for the grammatical category active if it is not opposed to the *passive* category.⁴² Indeed, when the number of actants in the active and passive clause are identical (i.e., when an agent appears in the passive clause), the sense of the two clauses is almost identical.⁴³ Nonetheless, this does not justify an analysis that considers a passive clause to be active.⁴⁴ This misguided approach also relies on the problematic assumption that passive

³⁹ Below (§6) I shall discuss the question, whether this example belongs to the construction under discussion.

⁴⁰ This reading is preserved in the MS JTS (EMC 271) 1623, and in Colombia manuscript X893-T141; although other manuscripts have different forms of this verb, these variations are irrelevant for the current linguistic discussion. In the Sason-Lunzer manuscript, however, this phrase does not appear at all.

⁴¹ See Gluskina (1965: 21); see also above, n. 34, regarding Sokoloff’s (2002) method. This is also the assumption present in Gutman’s work (2008).

⁴² One should distinguish this discussion from places where the passive clause loses its passive properties, such as cases in which the forms appear with direct objects.

⁴³ Of course, it is desirable to see whether there is a functional difference between the two constructions.

⁴⁴ It is important not to confuse the phenomenon which I discuss here with another well known phenomenon in Semitic languages, in which the active and the passive forms are used with the same sense, and syntactically in similar ways. See, Nöldeke (2001: 220-221 §280); Margolis (1910: 82, §58k); Schlesinger (1928: 46, §30); and Blau (1953).

sentences are essentially the marked or less frequent construction (*inter alia* Haspelmath 1990); see Bar-Asher (2011a) for an explanation of some of the difficulties encountered with this assumption.

Finally, there seems to be two differences between Syriac and JBA with regard to the data mentioned in these sections:

I. In Syriac most of the examples of the agent in passive sentences marked with the preposition *l-* which are with inflected forms (i.e., not passive participle) are found with perception verbs such as “to hear” and “to know” (15-16); to be sure, there are instances of agents in passive constructions used with other kinds of verbs (17, 21), a fact which in no way decreases the validity of the general pattern. Otherwise, with all inflected tenses the agent is introduced with the preposition *mēn*. In JBA, the cognate preposition *mi(n)* appears in this function mostly in the late Geonic literature, with its dialect being influenced by Classical dialects, similar in fact to Syriac (Bar-Asher Siegal, 2013 §9.6). Similar to Syriac most of the finite forms in JBA are with perception verbs (with some exceptions such as the sentences in [28] esp. [28b]).

Table 2: The preposition introducing the agent in passive sentences with finite verbs

	Perception verbs	Other verbs
Syriac	<i>l-</i>	<i>men-</i>
JBA	<i>l-</i>	(rare)

II. The distribution of these constructions can be articulated with the following breakdown: in Syriac the construction with the passive participle is much more widespread,⁴⁵ and its distribution is large in a wide variety of semantic fields. The situation in JBA, however, stands in some contrast to this; as Schlesinger (1928, § 30 p. 45) has already noted, this construction, even with the passive participle, is almost restricted to perception verbs (*SBR* “think”, *ḤZY* “see” and *ŠM* “hear”), even though there are also examples of this construction with verbs of action (33).

Below (§4), these two observations will play a significant role in explaining the origin of this construction.

⁴⁵ We should, of course, take into consideration the fact that we have only limited sources of Babylonian Aramaic, which are almost entirely from one literary genre.

If indeed this is the case, adding to the common assumption in the literature that the construction expresses the perfect, then some parallelism of Syriac to Greek appears. In Greek, in all tenses, the agent in passive clauses appears usually after the preposition *ὄπιό* and in the genitive case, while in the perfect it appears without a preposition in the dative case.⁴⁶ Even if the use of the preposition *-l-* in Syriac is not due to contact between the languages, we could still link the distribution (i.e., the frequent use of the preposition in the perfect tense) with the contact of Syriac with Greek. This may also explain the difference between Syriac and JBA, as the former came into contact with Greek while the latter did not (for a recent review of the literature on this topic, see Butts forthcoming).

3.4. In light of the two preceding sections it is possible to re-evaluate Kutscher’s claims regarding the construction under discussion

Section 3.2 demonstrated that the perfect is expressed with the passive participle as a predicate of the clause, and there is no need for a *l̄* complementation. Even if we assume that whenever the *l̄* appears it indicates possession, there is no parallelism between the way in which the perfect is expressed in these Aramaic dialects, and the way in which it is created by periphrastic constructions in some Indo-European languages. In the latter the perfect is expressed by a possessive construction (whether the possession is construed by an auxiliary verb, as English *have*, or by a construction using a pronoun in a genitive-dative case). Take, for instance, the above sentence (11):

- (11) *ps̄īq-ā* *milt-ayhu*
contract.PASS.PTCP-F.SG matter-3.M.SG
“Their price has been fixed.” (*Me ‘il* 21b)

The English translation cannot express the perfect without the auxiliary verb “has”. The picture in Aramaic is contrastive, for whenever the agent is impersonal there is no need to introduce it, as is also the case in any other passive clauses.

Moreover, according to section 3.3 the agent is introduced by the preposition *-l-* in passive clauses in all tenses, and therefore we are no longer left with any reason to consider this construction a possessive one. Even if we accept Beneveniste’s hypothesis (§2), since he argues that for a construction to be considered a possessive construction a nominal form of the verb is needed, this requirement is not fulfilled in Aramaic, since, as noted, this condition is validated only when the passive form is a participle, and not in the inflected forms of the

⁴⁶ Smyth (1920: 343-344, §§1488-1494).

verb. Similarly, as Lazard notes, the possessive meaning is necessarily linked to the perfect meaning, and is not present in all examples in both Aramaic dialects, since the preposition *l-* is used with all tenses.

Therefore, just as the agent of inflected verbal forms is not presented as a possessor, there is no reason to consider it as a possessor when it appears together with the participle, since this is the way to introduce the agent with all verbal forms. Therefore, a reasonable conclusion is that the *qṭīl lī* construction is not possessive.⁴⁷

Having rejected Kutscher's analysis at the synchronic level while also providing an alternative structural analysis, I would like to turn now to the historical aspects of this paper and to propose an alternative hypothesis for the emergence of the *qṭīl lī* construction. Following the conclusion of this section, this discussion is not about the origin of a construction; instead it is about the origin of the use of the dative to introduce the agent of the passive sentences. Similar to Kutscher I will propose that we consider this specific use of the datival preposition *l-* in the light of its other uses; however, while Kutscher related this use of the dative to its function in possessive constructions, I suggest we link between this use and the functions of non argument datives.

4. An alternative origin for the use of the dative

In many languages it is common to find among the uses of the datival expressions the function of introducing entities into the clause which are not lexically predicted by the verb, i.e. not subcategorized arguments (*inter alia*, from recent literature, O'Connor 2007, Horn 2009, Bosse et. al. 2012; regarding Hebrew and Semitic Languages Berman 1982, Borer & Grodzinsky 1986, Al-Zahre & Boneh 2010, Bar-Asher Siegal and Boneh 2014). Among the most common function of these datives is the introduction of the following semantic roles: possessor, benefactive/malefactive, attitude holder, affected experiencer and reflexive.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Note that Goldenberg (1992) provides a similar analysis for Syriac as he insists that the parallelism to Indo-European languages is only in that a passive construction is used. In any case, he does not confront directly the claim that this is a possessive construction, and in other places he presumably agrees with such a claim (Goldenberg 1990), moreover, regarding the later dialects, he describes the pronouns following the preposition *l-* as *possessive construction*. Goldenberg (2013: 198, 205) still speaks about "passive-possessive construction," saying that "the agent is marked as the possessor."

⁴⁸ Several recent typological studies have focused on encoding each of these functions. These discussions are not limited to the phenomenon of non-argument datives, and there is a wide overlap between these works. For example, Payne & Barshi (1999) explore external possession, while Zúñiga & Kittilä (2010) discuss the encoding of benefactives and malefactives. The attempt to propose an overarching semantic definition for all of these semantic functions is beyond the scope of the current paper.

These usages of the dative are also common in JBA. Following Berman's (1982) classification for Modern Hebrew, I shall bring examples from JBA (one can easily find their parallels in Syriac).⁴⁹ For our purposes it is insignificant whether there are syntactic or semantic (in terms of truth conditions) differences between the various functions of these datives (cf. Borer & Grodzinsky 1986, Bosse et. al. 2012 and Bar-Asher Siegal and Boneh 2014):

1. Dative marking of the experiencer, a dative with a univalent or bivalent predicate:

- (35) **nīh-ā** **l-eh**
 be.calm.PASS.PTCP-F.SG to-3.M.SG
 "He was satisfied" (*B. Qam.* 73b)
- qašy-ā** **l-eh**
 difficult.PASS.PTCP-F.SG to-3.M.SG
 "difficult for him"
- hwa** **m`īs-ā** **l-eh**
 be.3.M.SG be.repulsive.PASS.PTCP-3.F.SG to-3.M.SG
 "It was repulsive to him" (*Beṣah* 36b)

The common property of these constructions is that they are part of a predicate-dative construction and not of a subject-verb-object construction.

2. An "extended" construction with a trivalent predicate ("extended" in relation to the canonical construction):⁵⁰

Possessive:

- (48) '*amt-eh* *d-rabbi ḥiyya* **iggalli** **l-ah** *ḥamrā mbaššālā*⁵¹
 maidservant-3.M.SG f-rabbi ḥiyya reveal.PASS.PST.3.M.SG to-3.F.SG wine
 boil.PASS.PTCP.M.SG
 "The wine of Rabbi Ḥiyya's maidservant was revealed." (*'Abod. Zar.* 30a)
- '*iggneḥ* **l-eh** *kāsā* *d-kaspā*
 steal.PASS.PST.3.M.SG to-3.M.SG goblet of-silver
 "A silver goblet belonging to him was stolen." (*B. Meṣi'a* 24a)

⁴⁹ For Mandaic see Macuch (1965: 418-420, §276).

⁵⁰ Cf. Taube (1997: 89).

⁵¹ It is "possessive" since we can exchange it by a clause with adnominal possessive construction. Cf. Taube (1997: 85 n. 143), for example, who claims that the preposition *l-* in this kind of context marks possession. However, this exchange is not always available especially when there is already another adnominal possessive expression referring to a different entity.

Benefactive/malefactive:

- (49) *zil* *'ogar* *l-i* *po'alim*
 go.IMP.2.M.SG hire.IMP.2.M.SG to-1.SG workmen
 "Go (and) hire workmen for me." (*B. Mešī'a* 76a)

Locative:

- (50) *šhūp-ā* *l-eh* *maškiltā* *a-reš-eh*
 overturn.PASS.PTCP-3.F.SG to-3.M.SG wash.basin on-head-3.M.SG
 "The wash basin is overturned upon its [i.e. the idol's] head." (*'Abod. Zar.* 51b)⁵²

3. A reflexive or a pronoun referring the same referent of the agent:

- (51) *'zal* *l-eh* *gabrā d-hwa* *mistapp-enā* *min-eh*
 go.PST.3.M.SG to-3.M.SG man REL-be.PST fear.PTCP-1.M.SG from-3.M.SG
 "The man (of whom) I was afraid of has left." (*Mo'ed. Qat.* 24a)

Berman (1982) includes under the first group also the following sentence in Hebrew:

- (52) *lo yadua* *la-hem* *hexan hu*
 NEG know.PASS.PTCP.M.SG to-3.M.PL where he
 "It is unknown to them where he is."

This type of sentences is unique among the non argument datives, as it has a semantically equivalent sentence with an ordinary SVO construction, and all the characteristics of an active:passive relationship between the two sentences can be identified:

- (53) *hem einam yod'im* *hexan hu*
 they NEG know.PTCP.M.PL where he
 "They do not know where he is."⁵³

This is an interesting case of a mismatch between the semantic and the syntactic characterizations of these datives. On the one hand, as Berman portrays the uses of the non argument datives, this dative marks semantically the entity affected by the action; on the other hand, though, this is an argument of the verb *de facto*, since the experiencer is an argument of the verb "to know". Accordingly, the semantics in this phenomenon is more crucial than the syntax,

⁵² Although the locative is marked in *a-reš-eh*, the form *l-eh* can also mark a locative, at least according to Berman's categorization. In fact, all the "locative" categories can be linked to other categories; I, though, have used here Berman's categorization.

⁵³ Cf. Taube (1997: 85), and references there.

as the condition for using this construction is not lexical-syntactic (being a non argument), but semantic (for example, being affected by the event described by the predicate).

Following this observation, and relying on the fact that Modern Hebrew and JBA share all types of uses of the non-argument datives, I would like to propose that this phenomenon can provide the origin of the Aramaic *qtīl lī* construction. In fact, earlier similar sentences, with the same root *YD* ‘“know”’ were mentioned from both Syriac and JBA:

(15c) *ʿaynā* *d-men* *qaddīm* *ʾtdtʿ=wā* *l-eh*
 which.M.SG REL-from first know.PASS.PTCP.M.SG=be.3.M.SG to-3.M.SG
 “which he foreknew (lit., was known to him) (προέγνω)” (To the Romans 11:2)

(26d) *medaʿ* *yadtʿ* *l-eh* *l-rabbi Yehuda*
 know.INF know.PASS.PTCP.M.SG to-3.M.SG to-rabbi Yehuda
 “Rabbi Yehuda surely knew...” (*Pesah* 12b)

Accordingly, it is reasonable to propose that the introduction of a dative as the agent of the passive construction developed in the context of verbs in which one of the semantic roles regularly marked with such datives has the same semantic role of what could have been encoded as the subject of the active sentence for a given event. Consequently, when a passive sentence with a dative is expressed, the use of the dative can be perceived in one of two ways:

- I. the semantic role marked with the dative (experiencer, benefactive etc.); or
- II. the “agent” of the passive sentence.

The reason for the historical development is that sentences originally constructed because of (I) were perceived as (II); in other words these datives ceased being (in this context) non-argument datives and were re-analyzed as argument datives in passive sentences. Consequently their use has been expanded and they were used with all types of “agents”, regardless of their semantic role.

This hypothesis can be supported with some evidence from the languages with a productive *qtīl lī* construction. First, as noted earlier (§3.3), there is a difference between Syriac and JBA with regards to the extent of the use of the *qtīl lī* construction, and in JBA this construction is more widespread with perception verbs. Such verbs are examples of verbs in which the subject of the active sentence is the experiencer of the event. Thus, in passive sentences, the experiencer is introduced with a dative. It is possible that, in this regard, JBA is closer to the older stage in which the *qtīl lī* construction was limited to such verbs. Second, as noted earlier, (§3.3) in Syriac the use of the dative to introduce the agent with finite forms (i.e., not passive participle) is also more common with

perception verbs (although this restriction in Syriac is not found with the passive participles).

Furthermore, in many cases, the datives found with passive verbs can be interpreted as either tokens of such datives or as the agent of the passive sentences. Such an ambiguity between these functions can explain the grammaticalization of the extended use of the dative to encode agents more broadly. The following examples illustrate how it is often difficult to decide whether the object of the preposition *l-* is the “agent” or rather the beneficiary:

The expression *'etrmī l + nominal* means in Syriac, “to submit, yield; to give heed (to someone).”⁵⁴ This verb is the passive form of the root *RMY* “to put, to cast”. Take for instance:

(54) *w-lā netrmun l-šu 'y-ātā w-l-taš 'y-ātā d-šarb-ātā*
 and-NEG put.PASS.FUT.3.M.PL to-tale-F.PL and-to-story-F.PL of-genealogy
 “They should not head to myths and endless genealogies.” (1 Timothy 1:4)

(55) *'āp-lā mle šā 'ā 'etrmīn l-šu 'bād-hon*
 even-NEG complete hour put.PASS.PST.1.PL to-servitude-3.M.PL
 “We did not even give in to them for a moment.” (Galatians 2:5)

It is difficult to decide how to analyze this idiomatic expression: should *šu 'bād-hon* “their servitude” in the second clause be seen as the agent, or rather as the beneficiary of the action (as it turns out to be)?

Similarly in the following examples from JBA, mentioned earlier with finite forms other than the passive participle, the object of the dative can be analyzed either as the beneficiary or the agent:⁵⁵

(28) *hā miltā 'ibballā 'ā l-ī be midrašā d-rab himnuna*
 DEM.F.SG matter swallow.PASS.PST to-1.SG house.of study of.rabbi Himnuna
 “This matter was swallowed by me in R. Himnuna’s (PN) school [=I absorbed this matter...].” (*Ber.* 24b)

(31) *ki heki d-nitgeru l-eh po 'al-im*
 so REL-PASS.FUT.3.M.PL to-3.M.SG laborer.PL
 “So that laborers will be hired by/for him.” (*B. Meši 'a* 112b)

Thus also in cases of the passive participle, as we have already seen in the clause noted above:

(32) *rešā psīq-ā l-eh sepā lā psīq-ā l-eh*
 head cut.PASS.PTCP-F.SG to-3.M.SG end NEG cut.PASS.PTCP-F.SG to-3.M.SG

⁵⁴ Payne-Smith (1902: 542).

⁵⁵ Possibly this was also meant by Nöldeke (see above n. 26) when he talked about the use of the preposition *l-* in this context, describing the dative as “a dative relation”.

“He was decided (lit. “cut by/for him”) about the beginning of the text but not about the end.” (*Me’il.* 11a)

Sometimes the two possibilities give different meanings, and it is not always easy to decide which is meant. An example is the following sentence:

- (48) *'amt-eh* *d-rabbi ḥiyya iggalli* *l-ah* *ḥamrā mbaššālā*
maidservant-3.M.SG of-rabbi ḥiyya reveal.PASS.PST.3.M.SG to-3.F.SG wine
boil.PASS.PTCP.M.SG
“The wine of Rabbi Ḥiyya’s maidservant was revealed.” (*ʿAbod. Zar.* 30a)

It is unclear whether the maidservant is the discoverer, or whether it is her wine that was discovered. From the context of the Talmudic discussion it seems the second option is the correct one. According to what has been proposed thus far, the broader use of *l-* as a way of marking the agent in passive constructions⁵⁶ is a result of a reanalysis of the function of this dative in contexts where it can be analyzed either semantically (benefactor, experiencer etc.) or syntactically (agent).

Alternatively, it can be considered more synchronically as an extension of the role of these datives to function as that which connects between its complement and the main predication in a large scope of semantic relations.⁵⁷ Accordingly, sometimes the object of the datival preposition is adjacent to the one who experienced the action, sometimes to the one who is its beneficiary, etc. In light of this, one can raise the hypothesis that similarly in the Aramaic *qtīl lī* construction the preposition *l-* links between the predication and its agent.

Let us return now to possessive constructions in Aramaic in the dative-predicative possessive construction, mentioned earlier (§3), as these too can be linked to the phenomenon under discussion. According to Bar-Asher (2009) and Bar-Asher Siegal (2011b), and as I mentioned earlier in this paper (§3.1), the relevant predicative possessive relation in Aramaic is expressed by an existential predication with the marking of the possessor with a dative relation. According to this analysis, when using this construction a meaning of possession emerges, but the preposition *l-* does not express possession from the outset. It is rather a component within an existential clause that expresses possession in a compositional way, and this function of the dative is parallel to its uses in the non-argument datives.

I have returned thus to the possessive construction and claimed that there is an affinity between the possessive construction in Aramaic to the *qtīl lī* construction. This may seem similar to Kutscher’s proposal (discussed earlier in

⁵⁶ For another explanation of the origin of the construction, see Hopkins (1989: 418 n. 13).

⁵⁷ This is also the formulation used by Taube (1997: 89): “relating a predication to a specific pronoun by means of various prepositions.”

§1); however, one should be precise and see that this return is from a completely different angle. While Kutscher and others saw the possessive construction as a prototype, I propose to see both the possessive construction and the *qṭīl lī* construction as two cases of a more general phenomenon, namely the functions of the non-dative arguments.⁵⁸ While they spoke about an adnominal possessive constructions and consider a clause like *qṭīl lī* as if the pronoun following the preposition *l-* marked the possessor either of the action (the killing) or the object of action (the killed), I suggest that the origin of the dative is related in both the predicative possessive construction and the *qṭīl lī* construction.

5. The emergence of a new conjugation

The shift from a non argument to an argument dative is exhibited in JBA with a syntactic phenomenon: the addition of a verbal agreement with the agent in the *qṭīl lī* construction. It would be useful at this point to introduce the relevant data in the broader context of the historical development of the verbal system throughout the history of Eastern Aramaic.

As noted earlier, for Kutscher the *qṭīl lī* construction is not a passive construction, since it is allegedly a possessive construction. Elsewhere (Bar-Asher Siegal 2011a) I have devoted an independent discussion to the question regarding the passiveness of this construction.⁵⁹ One of the motivations for the suspicion that the *qṭīl lī* construction is not passive is related to the fact that the decedents of this construction in the Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects became the common way for expressing past tense.⁶⁰ Two separate questions, however, must be distinguished: (1) Are there signs of the phenomena present in Neo-Aramaic in earlier stages of Aramaic? (2) And is this construction, in every stage of Aramaic, a passive construction? In the present context I shall address only the first question.

Goldenberg (1990: 170-171; 1992: 118) argues, in the case of Syriac, that it has not yet undergone the grammaticalization present in later strata of Eastern Aramaic, in which the *qṭīl lī* construction has become a verbal tense. In his argumentation he relies on the fact that there is no obligatory inflected pronoun after the *l-*, noting other nouns can follow it. We have, in fact, already seen this exact phenomenon in sentence (22):

⁵⁸ Similar claims were raised regarding the use of the dative to mark the agent in passive constructions in Greek. In Goodwin's word: "Here there seem to be a reference to the agent's interest in the result of the *completed action*" (§1187 p. 252).

⁵⁹ Cf. Cohen (1984: 513-516) and Gutman (2008).

⁶⁰ Regarding the question whether one should consider the decedents of this construction in the modern dialects as a passive construction or as an ergative construction, there has been much debate in the literature. See Nöldeke (1868: 219-220 §104), and following him Polotsky (1979: 208), Hoberman (1989: 112-118) and Goldenberg (1990: 170-172; 1992 p.125), Doron and Kahn (2010, 2012a and 2012b).

- (22) *'aynā da-bne=wa* *l-ṭubānā*
 which REL-build.PASS.PTCPM.SG=be.3.M.SG to-blessed.one
 “which was built by the blessed one” (*ibid.*, p. 180)

In order to follow the grammaticalization process from Syriac to what is found in the Neo Aramaic dialects, I shall present three possible constructions in which the agent appears explicitly and not only pronominally. (I am referring only to the way the agent is marked. Of course, in order to cover all arguments the patient should be added.)⁶¹ These are merely their formal representations without their syntactic analysis:

1. [*qṭīl*] [1 + agent]
2. [*qṭīl*] [1 + pronoun_i] [1 + agent_i]
3. [*qṭīl*] [1 + pronoun_i] [agent_i]

As we have seen, in Syriac the ordinary construction is 1, with rare appearances of construction 2:

- (56) *'ap kāroz-e šbīq-īn* *l-eh* *l-malkā* *d-nakrezun*
 even herald-PL leave.PASS.PTCP-M.PL to-3.M.SG to-king REL-proclaim.
 FUT.3.M.PL
 “The king has also permitted heralds to proclaim...” (Acts of Thomas, p.174)

In early stages of Neo-Aramaic, in the Jewish homilies of the 17th century, construction 1 still exists:⁶²

- (57) *yxīlē-tin* *l-arye*
 eat.PST.PASS-2.M.PL to-lion
 “You were eaten by a lion / A lion ate you.”

Such is the case also in the Hertevin dialect:⁶³

- (58) *la l-kalw-e ḥel, la l-pahr-e ḥel, w la l-naše ṣṭe'*
 NEG to-dog.PL eat.PASS.PST NEG to-bird.PL eat.PASS.PST and NEG to-people
 throw.PASS.PST
 “Not eaten by dogs and not eaten by birds and not thrown by people” (Jastrow 1988: 144).

⁶¹ This is crucial since the preposition *l-* can also serve for the introduction of the patient. In order to complete the picture, note also the rare construction, which is found in the modern dialects: [*qṭīl*] [agent], without the preposition *l-*.

⁶² Goldenberg (1992: 120), and see there for references.

⁶³ I am grateful to Wolfhart Heinrichs, who drew my attention to this reference. See also Goldenberg (1993: 303, and n. 22). As Jastrow (*ibid.*, p. 59) and Goldenberg mentioned, this matter is linked to the relationship between the past tense (the inflection of the historical “passive participle” together with *l-* + bound pronouns) and the perfect (which is also expressed by the historical “passive participle”) in this dialect.

In JBA, however, especially with the passive participle, the common construction is 2, excluding rare exceptions, (usually only in one manuscript and in other manuscripts the agreement appear)⁶⁴ and construction 1 is absent:

(59) *sbīr-ā* *l-eh* *l-rabbi* *yehuda* *d-*
 think.PASS.PTCP-F.SG to-3.M.SG to-rabbi *yehuda* REL-
 “It was thought by Rabbi Yehuda that...” (*Ker. 10a*)

(60) *šmī*⁶⁵ *l-eh* *l-mar* *ha* *d-tany-ā...*
 hear.PA SS.PTCP to-3.M.SG to.master.1.SG DEM.F.SG REL-recite.PASS.PTCP-F.SG
 “What has been recited was heard by my master.” (*Erub. 38b*)

Construction (3) also appears in JBA, when the agent is topicalized and dislocated;⁶⁶ in such cases it is not preceded by the preposition *l-*, as in the example we have seen above:

(61) *rabbi yehuda* *k-rabban-an* *sbīr-ā* *l-eh*
 rabbi Yehudah as-rabbis-1.PL think.PASS.PTCP-F.SG to-3.M.SG
 “As for Rabbi Yehuda – on this matter he agrees with the Rabbis” (*B. Bat. 68b*)

I turn now to explore the reasons behind this shift from construction 1 to 2. The development of construction 2 in JBA is in fact a case of a much broader phenomenon that took place in JBA: when one of the arguments of a verb is definite and appears with a prepositional phrase, then an anticipatory pronominal suffix regularly appears next to the verb. Such pronouns occur first and foremost with the direct object: definite direct objects are preceded by the preposition *l-*, and prepositional phrases of direct object are preceded by an anticipatory pronominal suffix.⁶⁷ The suffix is attached to all verbal forms and suffixed to the preposition *l-* with the participle:

(62) *ʾaškḥ-eh* *l-z ʾīri*
 find-PST.3.M.SG-3.M.SG to-z ʾīri
 “He found Z ʾīri.” (*B. Bat. 87a*)

⁶⁴ Compare Sabbath tractate 130b that the verb *SBR* appears in MS Munich 95 without an anticipatory pronoun, while MS Oxford 23(366) and MS Vatican 108 have it.

⁶⁵ Thus (עמיץ) in MS Oxford 23(366) manuscript. In Vatican 109 the form is *šmī ʿā* (the expected feminine form). MS Munich 95 has *šmī ʿu* which is a rare masculine plural form, unexpected in this context. Note that this root tends to have many variants, and elsewhere (Bar-Asher Siegal 2011a) I have explained this phenomenon.

⁶⁶ The fact that the agent appearing without a preposition is conditioned by the fact that it is mentioned before the verb permits us to analyze this example as a dislocation. Elsewhere (Bar-Asher Siegal 2011a: 131-135) I have shown that such a construction appears in certain contexts in which topicalization is expected.

⁶⁷ Morgenstern (2004-2005).

- (63) *šunārā ki maškaḥ l-eh l-ḥiwyā*
 cat when find-PTCP.3.M.SG to-3.M.SG to-snake
 “As for a cat, when it finds the snake...” (*Pesah.* 112b)

Similarly, anticipatory pronouns with other participants appear next to the verb, introduced with the same preposition of the participant:

- (64) *yāda ‘-nā b-eh b-naḥmani d-lā hwā šāte ḥamrā*
 know.PTCP-1.M.SG in-3.M.SG in- *naḥmani* REL-NEG be.PST drink.
 PTCP.3.M.SG wine
 “I know that *Naḥmani* would not drink wine.” (*Ketub.* 65a)

- (65) *gadol bar r ‘ilay šdar l-ah gītā l-dbit-hu*
gadol bar r ‘ilay send.PST.3.M.SG to-3.F.SG get to-wife-3.M.G
 “*Gadol Bar R ‘ilay* sent a *get* to his wife.” (HPS 62)

- (66) *b ‘i min-eh m-rab hunā*
 ask.PST.3.M.SG from-3.M.SG from-*rab* *hunā*
 “He asked *Rabbi Hunā*.” (*B. Qam.* 21a)

Such anticipatory pronouns appear only with arguments of the predicate and not with the sentential adjuncts. In order to appreciate this phenomenon another fact concerning JBA should be mentioned here: prepositions also take an anticipatory third person pronoun with the object preceded immediately by the relative pronoun *d(i)*. This can be seen in the following example:

- (67) *legabb-eh d-rab*
 toward-3.M.SG REL-*rab*
 “toward *Rab*”

There is, however, a complementary distribution between this construction and the one discussed here. Some prepositions use the construction with the relative pronoun *d-* (“the *d*-construction”), and others always have the anticipatory pronominal suffix next to the verb (“the verb construction”). The distinction between the lists of prepositions is quite clear and it depends on whether the phrase following the preposition is an argument or an adjunct. Verbal arguments are indicated next to the verb, while adjuncts are not and have therefore the *d*-construction. It should be noted, however, that on a theoretical level the distinction between arguments and adjuncts is not strictly defined, and it is difficult to draw clear lines between these categories. In our context, however, the broader distinction is kept: prepositions describing spatial relations such as *legabbe-* “to”, or *‘aḥore* “behind” are adjuncts and use the

d-construction; in cases in which the complement is part of the meaning of the verb, such as direct and indirect objects, the verb-construction is used. The uncertainty comes in cases that may be understood as both. Thus, for example, the preposition *mi(n)* “from”, demonstrates an internal distribution. Compare the following two sentences:

(68) *b'ī min-eh m-rab hunā*
 ask.PST.3.M.SG from-3.M.SG from-rab hunā
 “He asked *Rabbi Hunā*.” (B. *Qam.* 21a)

(69) *rabbi zera hwa qa mištamīt min-eh d-rab yehuda*
rabbi zera PST IMPF tear.out.PTCP.3.M.SG from-3.M.SG REL-rab yehuda
 “*Rabbi Zera* avoided *Rab Yehuda*.” (Šabb. 41a)

The target of asking is an argument of the verb; however, this is not the case with the verb *ŠMT* “to tear out,” for the element which comes after the “from” is in this instance an adjunct (as this verb may stand independently of such a complement).

Returning to the *qtīl lī* construction, in light of this observation the emergence of construction 2 is natural. Since agents, even in passive sentences, are arguments of the predicates there are anticipatory pronouns following the preposition they are introduced with (*l-*) in the vicinity of the verb. As demonstrated in the case of the preposition *min* “from”, such anticipatory pronouns are sensitive to whether the participant is an argument or an adjunct. Thus also in the case of the preposition *l-* there is an anticipatory pronoun only when it is an argument. This is nicely illustrated with a clear distinction between the *qtīl lī* construction under discussion and another *qtīl lī* construction morphologically parallel but different in essence. The latter shows cases in which the passive participle is used as an adjective. In these cases what appears after the *l-* is not the agent but rather to whomever the nominal predication is turned. In this construction we find also cases of *l* + nominal without a pronominal expression. Please note the following examples:

(70) *qašy-ā l-rav*
 difficult.PASS.PTCP-3.F.SG to-rab
 “It is difficult for Rab.” (Sanh. 12b)

(71) *lā srīk-ā l-rabbi 'aqiba*
 NEG need.PASS.PTCP-3.F.SG to-rabbi 'aqiba
 “It is not required for *Rabbi 'Aqiba*.” (Pesah 112a)

Thus, it becomes clear that once the dative which originally marked the experiencer was reanalyzed as the marker of the agent, in JBA it must be marked as an argument of the verb, hence the anticipatory pronoun following the preposition *l-* next to the verb.⁶⁸ This observation is important beyond the scope of the current paper, as JBA provides us with a clear formal distinction between arguments and adjuncts. It also sheds some interesting light on the nature of the phenomenon of the non arguments dative, which is also not in the focus of our discussion.

It is possible to follow the development of this construction further. In the Zakho dialect construction 2 is non-existent,⁶⁹ and all the examples are found in construction 3.⁷⁰ As noted, in JBA, instances of construction 3 already appear, but only when the agent is dislocated. In Zakho, however, this construction is unmarked. The shift from construction 2 to construction 3 as the unmarked construction can be a result of a reanalysis of a topic as a subject, a very common phenomenon (*inter alia* Li & Thompson 1977). Once the topic is reanalyzed as the subject, the anticipatory pronoun is further reanalyzed as a verbal inflection, agreeing with the subject.

In summation let me note that Syriac has predominantly construction 1 and rarely construction 2. On the other hand, in JBA only construction 2 appears, while construction 3 is a marked construction (with dislocated elements). The last stage is the disappearance of construction 2 and the sole existence of construction 3 in some of the later dialects. The shift of 1>2 is a result of a grammatical requirement of the appearance of an anticipatory pronoun with a definite argument (unlike with adjunct). The shift from 2 to 3 is a result of a reanalysis of the grammatical relations: the topic is reanalyzed as the subject, and the anticipatory pronouns as verbal agreement with the subjects.

Before turning to our last discussion concerning the relationship between the *q̄tīl lī* construction and the Persian construction, the previous discussions have noticed various differences between Syriac and JBA:

⁶⁸ Concerning the borderline between argument and non argument datives, see Ariel *et al.* forthcoming.

⁶⁹ This is based on the information I got from my colleague Ya'ar Hever's examination of the Zakho dialect. This observation is confirmed by the data presented by Gutman (2008).

⁷⁰ Of course, every dialect should be examined separately, since, as we saw above, in the Hertevin dialect construction 1 is found.

Table 3: comparison between Syriac and JBA

	Syriac	JBA
I. Anticipatory pronoun next to the verb	rare	required
II. Marker of the agent in passive sentences	Passive participle: <i>l</i> (dative) Other tenses: common: <i>men</i> “from”; occasionally: (with perception verbs) <i>l</i> (dative)	All tenses: <i>l</i> (dative) - in general not very common. (rarely <i>mi(n)</i> mostly in higher register)
III. The frequency of the use of the <i>qīl lī</i> construction	Common – with all verbs	Common only with perception verbs

This comparison is striking, especially when considering the next stage in the history of Aramaic: the development of the tense-system of the Neo Aramaic period. While JBA seems to present a formal development of having a new inflection (I), which likely laid the foundation for the next development in the Neo-Aramaic period, on the semantic level Syriac seems to represent a more developed stage in the formation of a new tense, as it is not restricted to a certain group of verbs (III). This difference is not surprising, since, as we saw, the formal development in JBA is not related to the formation of a new tense but to a more general phenomenon in JBA: the requirement of anticipatory pronouns in the vicinity of the verb for all of its arguments. Syriac, however, seems to represent a more advanced stage in the formation of a new tense, with a special denotation of the agent (II), and hence the more general use of the tense with all verbs (III). As mentioned earlier (§3.1) the contact with Greek may have also played a role in this development.

6. Comparison to Persian

Following the previous sections it is possible to discuss anew Kutscher’s diachronic claim, namely that the Aramaic construction is a product of a Persian influence. This claim was based on the assumption that there is a morphological and functional parallelism between the constructions. However, following the analysis of this construction (§3.1), the systematic parallelism is inexistent, since in Aramaic the introduction of the agent after the preposition *l-* is present in all tenses and not only with the participle (§3.3).

Similar problems that were raised above against Kutscher's analysis of the Aramaic data were raised against Benveniste's analysis for Persian as well. In fact, the evidence in Aramaic parallels the data from Old Persian both regarding section §3.2 and section §3.3. In Old Persian an impersonal clause is expressed without an agent, hence the lack of any genitive-dative pronoun.⁷¹

(72) *taya kartaṃ*
what do.PASS.PTCP
“What has been done” (Skjærvø 1985: 217).

(73) *taya... parābartam āha*
which... take.away.PASS.PTCP
“Which has been taken away” (DB I, 61-62)

Thus, the expression of the perfect is not with a possessive construction, but rather with a verbal construction when the verbal form of which is found in the passive participle. Moreover, the expression of agents in passive constructions with genitive-dative pronouns used to denote the agent appears in other passive constructions with inflected verbs (not a passive participle):⁷²

(74) *utā=sā[m] Auramazdā na[i]y [aya]d[i]ya*
and=GEN.3.PL *Auramazdā* NEG worship.PASS.PST
“And by them Auramazdā was not worshiped.” (DB V 15-16)

In light of this, there is, in fact, both a functional and morphological parallelism between the two families of languages. Furthermore, when we take the diachronic point of view we encounter a different analogy between the history of Aramaic and Persian:

⁷¹ Skjærvø (1985: 217). For a summary of the literature on this, see Haig (2008: 29-32).

⁷² See Skjærvø (1985: 214), as well as Lazard (1984: 242), who wrote that in this context one cannot speak of possession. However, one should note there are only two examples of this phenomenon (Skjærvø, p.c.), and one of them is based on a reconstructed form. See also Haig (2008: 76-79).

Table 4: paralleled developments between Iranian languages and Eastern Aramaic dialects.

	Iranian languages	Eastern Aramaic dialects
Stage 1: the passive participle is used to express the perfect. The agent in this construction is expressed with a dative expression. Such constructions (although being passive) are unmarked.	Old Persian: <i>mana kartam</i> construction	Late Aramaic: <i>qṭīl lī</i> construction
Stage 2: increasing in mandatory clitics	Middle Iranian ⁷³	JBA
Stage 3: in the past tense there is a tense developed from the previous stage that acts with an ergative alignment ⁷⁴	Middle Persian, Modern Iranian languages	Eastern Neo Aramaic

We encounter here a very interesting case of paralleled developments between two groups of languages that were spoken in the same area. While previously the assumption was that Aramaic had borrowed the discussed construction from Persian; this conclusion was reached due to the fact that the phenomenon in Persian was seen as part of a more general phenomenon in Indo-European languages (the perfect being expressed by possessive constructions). However, according to our analysis, this is no longer the case, for this paper demonstrates how the different stages of the development can be explained as a natural internal development in Aramaic, while Haig (2008), among others, proposed an internal development for the Iranian languages. Thus, we are confronted with a phenomenon that can be explained both as an internal and as an external development in each family. In such circumstances we then must face a methodological choice: which explanation is more favorable? The known dilemma of the most ‘parsimonious’ explanation is endogeny vs. contact (*inter alia* Lass & Wright 1986, Filppula 2003; cf. Romaine 1995, Dorian 1993, and Thomason and Kaufman 1988 for a less dichotomist approaches).⁷⁵ While some strongly argue for the primacy of internal factors (*inter alia* Lass & Wright 1986, Lass 1990a, b), others favor external explanation (*inter alia* Vennemann 2001).

⁷³ See Haig (2008: 105-129), it must be noted that in both families there is a similar development of increasing uses of mandatory clitic pronouns; however, there is no absolute parallelism between the relevant phenomena in the different language families.

⁷⁴ I do not commit here to the ergative analysis of the construction. This description merely reflects the fact that the historical passive construction was frequently used and remained unmarked.

⁷⁵ For the history of this discussion see Jones & Esch (2002).

Overall this relationship between the two languages seems to be a good case of “convergence” in the limited sense of the term, that is that the languages in the same area through the combination of internal and external factors produce similar developments. However, while convergence usually assumes that one language becomes more similar to the other (cf. Ross 2001: 139), in our case we are faced with a truly parallel development.

It is worth noting that the proposal concerning Aramaic in §4 – that the origin of the shift from non-argument dative to argument dative originated in verbs in which an argument is also the experiencer – can also be extended to Iranian languages, for the relevant genitive in Old Persian denotes similar functions (Kent 1953: 80-81, Haig 2008: 55-58) including this function as well. This can be seen in the following sentence:

- (75) *ada=tai azdā bavātiy*
then=GEN.2.SG.know.PASS.PTCP be.PRES.3.SG
“Then it is known to you.” (Kent 1953: DNa, 43)

Thus, a complete parallel development can be proposed.⁷⁶

7. Conclusions

Returning to the questions posed at the beginning of this paper, the following suggestions have been advanced throughout our discussion:

At the synchronic level:

1. The perfect is not expressed by the expression *qtīl lī* as a construction, but by the passive participle alone (§3.2).
2. The agent in a passive clause may come after the preposition *l-* in all tenses (§3.3).
3. The *qtīl lī* construction is a passive construction in which the agent is presented after the preposition *l-*; it should not be seen, therefore, as a possessive construction (§2-3).

⁷⁶ Haig (2008) also proposed a similar development, however, he proposed that all functions of the genitives in Old Persian can be captured in terms of the semantic notion of Indirect Participation. He proposed the following development Benefactive>Possessor>Agent. The last development, according to Haig, is due to the fact that “both External Possessor and transitive Subjects exhibit essentially the same clustering of high animacy and topicality” (p. 77). While Haig cannot propose the mechanism of the final shift, besides some conceptual similarity, our proposal provides an explanation for the shift as a reanalysis of a participant as an agent of a passive construction. The differences between the approaches relies on a different concept of passiveness (see Bar-Asher 2011a).

At the diachronic level:

1. The use of the dative to denote the agent developed from its ability to mark the experiencer in non-argument datives. With certain verbs, particularly in passive constructions, it could have been reanalyzed as an argument dative denoting the agent (in the sense of the subject of the active sentence) (§4).

2. In JBA there was a further syntactic development: the requirement of anticipatory pronouns agreeing with all definite arguments. This laid the foundation for the new inflection in the Neo Eastern Aramaic dialects (§5). From the semantic point of view, in Syriac the *q̄l̄l l̄i* construction became more widespread with the participle, and the use of the preposition *l-* to indicate the agent with all verbs was almost exclusive to this context. We can thus see the beginnings of the development towards a new tense (some parallelism to Greek has been noted) (§3.3, 5).

3. Although there is an analogy between the development that occurred in the history of the Eastern Aramaic dialects and the development in some of the Iranian languages, it is very difficult to determine whether one of these developments stemmed from the other. We therefore seem to be faced with a case of “convergence” in the limited sense of the term, a situation in which languages in the same area, through internal and external factors, show similar developments (§6).

The various discussions throughout the paper are of significance beyond the scope of the Aramaic construction for the following issues:

1. Possessive-perfect constructions: it has been claimed in the literature that possessive perfect constructions rarely appear outside of Europe and beyond the Indo-European languages. The analysis of the *q̄l̄l l̄i* construction in Syriac and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic in this paper fits this generalization (§1-3).

2. Non-argument datives: the data in JBA demonstrate an interesting case of a mismatch between the semantic and the syntactic characterizations of the non-argument datives. It has been shown that the semantics in this phenomenon is more crucial than the syntax, as the condition for using this construction is not lexical-syntactic (being a non argument), but semantic (§4).

3. The argument-adjunct distinction: JBA demonstrates a formal distinction between arguments and adjuncts. When an expression in a prepositional phrase is definite, there is a complementary distribution that distinguishes whether it is an argument or an adjunct. An argument is co-indexed with as an anticipatory pronominal next to the verb (“the verb construction”); in the case of adjuncts we encounter the use of the construction with the relative pronoun *d-* (“the *d*-construction”) (§5).

4. Origin of an ergative system: if indeed the descendants of *q̄l̄l l̄i* construction in the Neo-Aramaic dialects exhibit features of an ergative system, the current paper provides a new proposal for the emergence of such constructions (§5).

5. An example “convergence”: considering the relationship between the development in the history of the Aramaic and the Iranian languages, it seems to be a good case of “convergence”. The languages in the same area through the combination of internal and external factors produced similar developments, in our case it is possible that we are faced with a truly parallel development (§6).

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