MORPHOPHONEMICS OF WEAK-STEM FORMS IN MODERN CHALDEAN

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ABSTRACT
This paper explores the derivation of the surface forms of the weak-stem verb forms in Modern Chaldean. Weak-stem forms are those forms that include the glides /y,w/ among their triconsonantal radicals. The intercalation of vowels in the verb paradigms include /y,w/, and the stable nature of these glides, produce surface forms that are at variance with the corresponding strong-stem paradigms.

1.0 INTRODUCTION
Modern-Chaldean is one of the currently spoken, and much changed, dialects of Classical Syriac/Aramaic. There are many such dialects, but the dialect that is the focus of this presentation is the dialect of /mangeš/, a town in the northern part of Iraq.

1.0 DATA AND PROCEDURES.
There is no lexicon for the Modern Chaldean dialect of /mangeš/ that will provide a list of all the weak-stem lexical items. I have depended on lists of words found in several grammars or lexica of other dialects as my data sources. The lexical items that were provided in these sources needed to be phonemically modified to the /mangeš/ sound patterns. These sources provided a representative sample of lexical items in which /wy/ occur in verbal paradigms.

2.0 STEMS WITH /y,w/

2.1 /y/ in Initial Position

The terms INITIAL, MEDIAL, and FINAL positions refer to the first, second and third consonantal stems of the root respectively. The following stems illustrate /y/ in initial positions in roots:

- yzx: 'long',
- yyy: 'bake',
- yyl: 'give birth',
- yyl: 'give birth',
- yys: 'burn',
- yyn: 'length',
- yyn: 'sit', etc.

In the conjugation of the verbal forms various changes take place that affect the initial /y/ of the stem. An instructive way of observing this process is to compare the strong and the weak paradigms of the verb in a conjugational framework. Only the singular paradigm is given here, since the plural suffixes do not affect the changes in the stem differently from the singular.

3.0 /y/ in Mid-Position

The following stems illustrate /y/ in mid-position:

- dzy: 'trample',
- dyd: 'increase',
- dyk: 'jostle',
- dyn: 'close',
- dyp: 'judge',
- dys: 'chew'

Strong/Weak

d-s: 'study',
/d-s/ 'to study', /dy-n/ 'to judge',
1s. /dars/ 'I study',
/dents/ 'study',
2s. /dars/ 'you study',
/dalp/ 'I learn',
3s. /dars/ 'he studies',
/yalp/ 'he learns',
1s. /drst/ 'I studied',
/dils/ 'you studied',
2s. /drst/ 'you studied',
/dils/ 'you learned',
3s. /drstl/ 'you learned',
imp.s. /dros/ 'study',
imp.p. /drus/ 'study',

R2. /y/ in Initial Position

The following stems illustrate /y/ in initial position:

- byn: 'build',
- bwy: 'beg',
- bwy: 'put',
- bwy: 'be',
- bwy: 'stick',
- bwy: 'put out',
- bwy: 'shorten'

Strong/Weak

d-s: 'study',
d-s: 'to study',
1s. /dars/ 'I study',
 /kaln/ 'I stay',
2s. /dars/ 'you study',
 /kaln/ 'you stay',
3s. /dars/ 'he studies',
 /kaln/ 'he stays',
1s. /drstl/ 'I studied',
 /kles/ 'I stayed',
2s. /drstlx/ 'you studied',
 /kles/ 'you stayed',
3s. /drstl/ 'he studied',
 /kles/ 'he stayed',
imp.s. /dros/ 'study',
imp.p. /drus/ 'study',

R3. /y/ in Initial Position before non-low vowel.

y → i_ /kalsn/ → /kalsn/
R5. Tense vowel lowering.
is. /i_y_ /kalsn/ → /kalsn/
R6. Vowel deletion.

V1V2 --> V2 /d/tl/ --> /d/tl
/kat/ --> /kat/

4.0 /w/ IN INITIAL POSITION

The following stems illustrate /w/ in initial position:

/wp/ 'dutu'  /wrq/ 'paper'
/wrd/ 'rose'  /wrq/ 'root'

No verbal form beginning with /w/ is available for conjugation.

4.1 /w/ IN MEDIAL POSITION

The following stems illustrate /w/ in medial position:

/hw/ 'become'  /zw/ 'buy'
/srw/ 'white'  /syr/ 'break'
/ste/ 'do'  /qw/ 'hard'

Strong/Weak

/d-t-s/ 'study'  /z-w-n/ 'to study'
/dars/ 'I study'  /ganwa/ 'to steal'

4.2 /w/ IN FINAL POSITION

The following stems illustrate /w/ in final position:

/ytw/ 'air'  /gqw/ 'steal'

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4.2 /w/ IN FINAL POSITION

The following stems illustrate /w/ in final position:

/ytw/ 'air'  /gqw/ 'steal'

5.0 SUMMARY

The /w, y/ segments change in the sequences of verb paradigms according to specific rules that are determined by the contexts in which these segments occur. There is similarity between the rules for the glides but no identity. There are more changes that are operative with the high front glide /i/ than the changes of the back high glide /u/. The discussion of the changes was limited to the verbal paradigm, and may be extended to other lexical paradigms with comparable expectations. There are other contexts in which these changes take place, and are under investigation.

5.1 R1. y-Deletion.

y --> 0 /# C

-syll
[-cons] [+high]--> [0] /# [+cons]
[-tens] [+back]
[-rond]

5.2 R2. y/w-Syllabification.

y --> i / V C

-syll, cons. + high, + tense ]

[-syl, cons] [+high]--> [-high] /# [-cons]
[-tens] [+back]
[-rond]

5.3 R3. y-Syllabification before non-low vowel.

y --> i / V C

-syll
[-cons] [+high]--> [-high] /# [-cons]
[-tens] [+back]
[-rond]

5.4 R4. y-Deletion between two non-low vowels.

-syl [-cons] + hi + tense - bk - rand]

/-y-

[+syll]
[-cons]
[-tens]
[-back]
[-rond]

R5. Tense vowel lowering.

u --> e /V_

[+syll]
[-cons]
[-tens]
[-back]

REFERENCES


