Classical Syriac
Estrangela Script
Chapter 7
(Last updated January 9, 2023)

7.1. Pronominal Suffixes on Nouns[1]

As we saw in chapter 6, pronominal suffixes can be attached to prepositions, the possessive particle ܕܝܠ-, and the particles of existence and non-existence. Pronominal suffixes can also be attached to nouns. When this happens, the pronominal suffix has a genitival ("of") relationship with the noun to which it is attached. In most cases, however, pronominal suffixes on nouns simply indicate possession (e.g. his book) or relationship (e.g. his son).

As with pronominal suffixes on prepositions, two sets of pronominal suffixes can be used with nouns. The first set is used with masculine singular, feminine singular, and most feminine plural nouns and is identical to the suffixes that are used with the preposition ܠ. The second set is used with masculine plural nouns and feminine plural nouns that are formed like masculine plural nouns. These suffixes are identical to the ones used with the preposition ܥܠ.

When pronominal suffixes are attached to nouns, the noun is placed in the pronominal state (i.e. the emphatic state minus the emphatic marker ܐ along with its connecting vowel) and the suffixes are added directly to the noun. The following chart provides both sets of forms for pronominal suffixes on nouns:

Table 7.1 – Pronominal Suffixes on Nouns				
	1st Set	**Example**	**2nd Set**	**Example**
3msg	ܗ	ܡܠܟܗ (his king)	ܘܗܝ	ܡܠܟܘܗܝ (his kings)
3fsg	ܗ	ܡܠܟܗ (her king)	ܝܗ	ܡܠܟܝܗ (her kings)

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[1] Cf. Nöldeke §§65, 145; Muraoka §42; Duval §§281–82; Mingana §§454–71; Brockelmann §§91–92, 163–65.

2msg	ܳܟ	ܡܰܠܟܳܟ (your king)	ܰܝܟ	ܡܰܠܟܰܝܟ (your kings)
2fsg	ܶܟܝ	ܡܰܠܟܶܟܝ (your king)	ܰܝܟܝ	ܡܰܠܟܰܝܟܝ (your kings)
1csg	ܝ (silent)	ܡܰܠܟܝ (my king)	ܰܝ	ܡܰܠܟܰܝ (my kings)
3mpl	ܗܘܢ	ܡܰܠܟܗܘܢ (their king)	ܰܝܗܘܢ	ܡܰܠܟܰܝܗܘܢ (their kings)
3fpl	ܗܶܝܢ	ܡܰܠܟܗܶܝܢ (their king)	ܰܝܗܶܝܢ	ܡܰܠܟܰܝܗܶܝܢ (their kings)
2mpl	ܟܘܢ	ܡܰܠܟܟܘܢ (your king)	ܰܝܟܘܢ	ܡܰܠܟܰܝܟܘܢ (your kings)
2fpl	ܟܶܝܢ	ܡܰܠܟܟܶܝܢ (your king)	ܰܝܟܶܝܢ	ܡܰܠܟܰܝܟܶܝܢ (your kings)
1cpl	ܰܢ	ܡܰܠܟܰܢ (our king)	ܰܝܢ	ܡܰܠܟܰܝܢ (our kings)

a) Observations About the First Set:

- The ܟ of the 2msg, 2fsg, 2mpl, and 2fpl suffixes has the soft pronunciation since it is preceded by a vowel sound.
- The letter ܝ in the 1csg pronominal suffix is silent. This ending would have been pronounced in earlier phases of Aramaic but lost its pronunciation in Classical Syriac.
- In both sets, the letter ܝ in the 2fsg pronominal suffix is also silent. This ending also would have been pronounced in earlier phases of Aramaic.

b) Observations About the Second Set:

- Apart from the 3msg and 3fsg pronominal suffixes, the connecting vowel is always pṯāḥāʾ (ܰ).
- With the exception of the 3msg pronominal suffix, the suffixes used with masculine plural nouns include the ܝ that is typically found in the construct state of masculine plural nouns.
- The final element in the 3msg pronominal suffix is not pronounced (note the presence of the hastener line above the ܗ). This element was pronounced in earlier forms of Aramaic but eventually lost its pronunciation in Classical Syriac. Like many words in English (e.g. might, night, through, etc.), the earlier spelling was retained even though the letters are no longer pronounced.[2]
- The letter ܟ in the 2msg, 2fsg, 2mpl, and 2fpl suffixes has the hard pronunciation since it is preceded by a diphthong (ܰܝ).

In both sets of suffixes, the letter ܗ in the 3fsg pronominal suffix has a dot above it. This dot is used to identify the ܗ as a feminine ending, which is very useful when translating unvocalized texts.

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[2] The *gh* in the words *might* and *night* would have been pronounced in earlier forms of English. Note their equivalents in Standard German (*macht*, *nacht*, and *durch*) where the *ch* is fully pronounced.

7.2. Nouns With Irregular Pronominal States in the Singular[3]

When pronominal suffixes are attached to plural nouns, the rule for finding the pronominal state (i.e. the emphatic state minus the emphatic marker ܐ and its connecting vowel) works quite consistently. The same, however, cannot be said of singular nouns in all their forms. Two types of singular nouns have irregular pronominal states for some of their forms:

a) When the expected pronominal state of a noun ends in three consonants in a row with no intervening vowels (e.g. ܡܠܟܬܐ), a vowel needs to be inserted between the final two consonants with 1csg, 3mpl, 3fpl, 2mpl, and 2fpl suffixes—otherwise, the word would be impossible to pronounce. Since the remaining suffixes begin with vowels, no vowel needs to be inserted with these forms. The same thing applies when the expected pronominal state ends in two consonants and the two consonants are preceded by a long vowel (e.g. ܪܚܡܐ). For feminine nouns whose stem ends with the feminine marker ܬ, the vowel that needs to be inserted is ܿ (e.g. ܡܠܟܬܟܘܢ); in other cases, the vowel that needs to be inserted must be learned on a case-by-basis. Note the following example:

Table 7.2 – Pronominal Suffixes on ܡܠܟܬܐ and ܪܚܡܐ			
	1st Set	**ܡܠܟܬܐ**	**ܪܚܡܐ**
3msg	ܗ	ܡܠܟܬܗ (his queen)	ܪܚܡܗ (his friend)
3fsg	ܗ	ܡܠܟܬܗ (her queen)	ܪܚܡܗ (her friend)
2msg	ܟ	ܡܠܟܬܟ (your queen)	ܪܚܡܟ (your friend)
2fsg	ܟܝ	ܡܠܟܬܟܝ (your queen)	ܪܚܡܟܝ (your friend)
1csg	ܝ (silent)	ܡܠܟܬܝ (my queen)	ܪܚܡܝ (my friend)
3mpl	ܗܘܢ	ܡܠܟܬܗܘܢ (their queen)	ܪܚܡܗܘܢ (their friend)
3fpl	ܗܝܢ	ܡܠܟܬܗܝܢ (their queen)	ܪܚܡܗܝܢ (their friend)
2mpl	ܟܘܢ	ܡܠܟܬܟܘܢ (your queen)	ܪܚܡܟܘܢ (your friend)
2fpl	ܟܝܢ	ܡܠܟܬܟܝܢ (your queen)	ܪܚܡܟܝܢ (your friend)
1cpl	ܢ	ܡܠܟܬܢ (our queen)	ܪܚܡܢ (our friend)

b) Some nouns with only two consonants follow the same rule:

Table 7.3 – Pronominal Suffixes on ܒܪܐ and ܫܡܐ			
	1st Set	**ܒܪܐ**	**ܫܡܐ**
3msg	ܗ	ܒܪܗ (his son)	ܫܡܗ (his name)

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[3] Cf. Nöldeke §65; Muraoka §§11, 42–43; Duval §§281, 284; Mingana §460; Brockelmann §165.

3fsg	ܿܗ	ܒܳܪܳܗ (her son)	ܫܡܳܗ (her name)
2msg	ܿܟ	ܒܪܳܟ (your son)	ܫܡܳܟ (your name)
2fsg	ܟ̱ܝ	ܒܪܶܟ̱ܝ (your son)	ܫܡܶܟ̱ܝ (your name)
1csg	ܝ (silent)	ܒܪܝ (my son)	ܫܶܡܝ (my name)
3mpl	ܗܘܢ	ܒܢܰܝܗܘܢ (their son)	ܫܡܗܘܢ (their name)
3fpl	ܗܝܢ	ܒܢܰܝܗܝܢ (their son)	ܫܡܗܝܢ (their name)
2mpl	ܟܘܢ	ܒܢܰܝܟܘܢ (your son)	ܫܡܟܘܢ (your name)
2fpl	ܟܝܢ	ܒܢܰܝܟܝܢ (your son)	ܫܡܟܝܢ (your name)
1cpl	ܲܢ	ܒܪܲܢ (our son)	ܫܡܰܢ (our name)

c) The pronominal states of ܐܰܒܳܐ and ܐܰܚܳܐ are irregular. Except when the 1csg pronominal suffix is added, the pronominal states of these words end in a vowel. Since the pronominal state ends in a vowel, alternative forms for the suffixes are used when the suffix begins with a vowel (the alternative forms are highlighted):

Table 7.4 – Pronominal Suffixes on ܐܰܒܳܐ and ܐܰܚܳܐ			
	1ˢᵗ Set	**ܐܰܒܳܐ**	**ܐܰܚܳܐ**
3msg	ܗ̱ܝ	ܐܰܒܘܗ̱ܝ (his father)	ܐܰܚܘܗ̱ܝ (his brother)
3fsg	ܗ̇	ܐܰܒܘܗ̇ (her father)	ܐܰܚܘܗ̇ (her brother)
2msg	ܟ	ܐܰܒܘܟ (your father)	ܐܰܚܘܟ (your brother)
2fsg	ܟ̱ܝ	ܐܰܒܘܟ̱ܝ (your father)	ܐܰܚܘܟ̱ܝ (your brother)
1csg	ܝ (silent)	ܐܳܒܝ (my father)	ܐܳܚܝ (my brother)
3mpl	ܗܘܢ	ܐܰܒܘܗܘܢ (their father)	ܐܰܚܘܗܘܢ (their brother)
3fpl	ܗܝܢ	ܐܰܒܘܗܝܢ (their father)	ܐܰܚܘܗܝܢ (their brother)
2mpl	ܟܘܢ	ܐܰܒܘܟܘܢ (your father)	ܐܰܚܘܟܘܢ (your brother)
2fpl	ܟܝܢ	ܐܰܒܘܟܝܢ (your father)	ܐܰܚܘܟܝܢ (your brother)
1cpl	ܢ	ܐܰܒܘܢ (our father)	ܐܰܚܘܢ (our brother)

7.3. Anticipatory Pronominal Suffixes With Genitives[4]

In chapter 3, we saw that the particle ܕ is used quite frequently in Classical Syriac to indicate a genitival ("of") relationship between two words. The first word in a genitival relationship is

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[4] Cf. Nöldeke §205; Muraoka §112; Duval §359; Mingana §428; Brockelmann §202.

referred to as the **head noun** or **head word** while the second word is referred to as the **governed noun** or **governed word**. Note the following example:

Example	
Syriac	**English**
ܒܪܵܐ ܕܡܲܠܟܵܐ	The son of the king.

In this case, the head noun is ܒܪܵܐ while the governed noun is ܡܲܠܟܵܐ.

Quite frequently, when a genitival relationship exists between two words using the particle ܕ, an anticipatory pronominal suffix is attached to the head noun. An anticipatory pronominal suffix is a pronominal suffix that refers to and points forward to (i.e. anticipates) the governed noun in a genitival relationship.[5] Since the anticipatory pronominal suffix points forward to the governed noun, it matches the governed noun in gender and number. When learning to translate anticipatory pronominal suffixes, the construction can be conceptualized in the following way:

Example		
Syriac	**Initial Translation**	**Final Translation**
ܒܪܹܗ ܕܡܲܠܟܵܐ	The son of him, (namely) of the king	The son of the king

In practice, however, once the use of anticipatory pronominal suffixes has been learned, the pronominal suffix can simply be ignored when translating into English.

In terms of usage, anticipatory pronominal suffixes are only used when both the head noun and the governed noun are definite in meaning. Keep in mind, however, that the head noun and governed noun can also be definite in meaning without the use of an anticipatory pronominal suffix.

The following examples illustrate the use of anticipatory pronominal suffixes in the context of a full sentence:

Examples	
Syriac	**English**
ܘܲܩܪܵܐ ܬܲܡܵܢ ܐܲܒ݂ܪܵܡ ܒܲܫܡܹܗ ܕܡܵܪܝܵܐ.	And there Abram called on the name of the Lord. (Gen 13:4)
ܟܬ݂ܵܒ݂ܵܐ ܕܝܼܠܝܼܕ݂ܘܼܬ݂ܹܗ ܕܝܼܫܘܿܥ ܡܫܝܼܚܵܐ ܒܪܹܗ ܕܕ݂ܵܘܝܼܕ݂ ܒܪܹܗ ܕܐܲܒ݂ܪܵܗܵܡ.	The record of the birth of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matt 1:1)
ܘܗܵܕ݂ܹܐ ܗ̱ܝ, ܣܵܗܕ݂ܘܼܬ݂ܹܗ ܕܝܘܿܚܲܢܵܢ.	And this is the testimony of John. (John 1:18)

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[5] Muraoka (§112) refers to this as prolepsis.

ܘܐܡܗ ܕܝܫܘܥ ܐܝܬ ܗܘܬ ܬܡܢ.	And the mother of Jesus was there. (John 2:1)

7.4. Relative Clauses[6]

Relative clauses are clauses that begin with a relative pronoun and are used to describe or further specify an element in the main part of the sentence. Relative clauses in English begin with the relative pronouns *who* (who, whose, whom), which, or that. Note the following examples in English:

1. The man **who painted the house** wrecked all the furniture.

Note that the relative clause in this example ("who painted the house") functions as a description of the word "man" in the main part of the sentence. Which man wrecked all the furniture? The man who painted the house wrecked the furniture.

2. The car **that I normally drive to work** broke down this morning.

Note again that the relative clause ("that I normally drive to work") functions as a description of the word "car" in the main part of the sentence. Which car broke down this morning? The one that I normally drive to work broke down this morning.

In Classical Syriac, relative clauses are introduced by the particle ܕ (who, which, that). When used to introduce a relative clause, the particle ܕ can have the following grammatical functions within the relative clause itself:

(a) The particle ܕ can function as the grammatical subject of the relative clause:

Examples	
Syriac	**English**
ܟܠ ܗܟܝܠ ܕܫܡܥ ܡܠܝ̈ ܗܠܝܢ ܘܥܒܕ ܠܗܝܢ ܢܬܕܡܐ ܠܓܒܪܐ ܚܟܝܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܒܢܐ ܒܝܬܗ ܥܠ ܫܘܥܐ.	Everyone, therefore, who hears these my words and does them is like the wise man who built his house upon the rock. (Matt 7:24)

(b) The particle ܕ can function as the object of a relative clause (i.e. it receives the action of the verb). In some cases, the fact that the particle ܕ functions as the object of the relative clause is not indicated. In other cases, the verb in the relative clause takes a pronominal suffix to indicate the function that the particle ܕ has within the relative clause.[7] This is referred to as a **resumptive pronoun** since it occupies the place that the particle ܕ is supposed to take in the sentence as the object of the verb in the relative clause. Note the following examples:

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[6] Cf. Nöldeke §§341–56; Muraoka §§15, 77, 111; Duval §§399–401; Mingana §512; Brockelmann §§238–40.
[7] Pronominal suffixes on verbs will be dealt with in a later chapter.

Examples	
Syriac	**English**
ܘܐܡܪ ܐܕܡ: ܐܢܬܬܐ ܕܝܗܒܬ ܥܡܝ: ܗܝ ܝܗܒܬ ܠܝ ܡܢ ܐܝܠܢܐ: ܘܐܟܠܬ.	And Adam said, "The woman whom you put with me—she gave me [the fruit] from the tree and I ate [it]. (Gen 3:12)
ܡܢܐ ܗܟܝܠ ܨܒܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܐܥܒܕ ܠܗܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܘܕܝܐ.	What, then, do you want to do to this one whom you call, "King of the Jews." (Mark 15:12)

(c) The particle ܕ can function as the indirect object of a clause (i.e. the object of a preposition). Since the particle ܕ cannot be preceded by a preposition (e.g. "to whom" or "from whom" in English), the preposition is either attached to the particle ܕ along with a pronominal suffix or, in the case of the preposition ܠ, separately within the relative clause. Note the following examples:

Examples	
Syriac	**English**
ܗܢܘ ܡܘܫܐ ܘܐܗܪܘܢ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ ܡܪܝܐ. ܐܦܩܘ ܠܒܢܝ ܒܥܡܝܠ ܡܢ ܐܪܥܐ ܕܡܨܪܝܢ.	This is Moses and Aaron, to whom the Lord said, "Bring the children of Israel out from the land of Egypt." (Exod 6:26)
ܘܗܐ ܩܠܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܕܐܡܪ: ܗܢܘ ܒܪܝ ܚܒܝܒܐ. ܕܒܗ ܐܨܛܒܝܬ.	And look! A voice from heaven that says, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am pleased." (Matt 3:17).
ܗܢܘ ܓܝܪ ܕܥܠܘܗܝ ܟܬܝܒ	For this is the one about whom it is written… (Matt 11:10).

(d) The particle ܕ can also be used as a possessive/relational relative pronoun (i.e. whose). When this happens, a pronominal suffix is simply attached to the word that is being possessed.

Examples	
Syriac	**English**
ܘܐܡܪܘ: ܬܘ ܢܒܢܐ ܠܢ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ: ܘܡܓܕܠܐ ܕܪܝܫܗ ܒܫܡܝܐ.	And they said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a town and a tower whose top is in the heavens." (Gen 11:4)
ܘܐܡܪܝܢ ܗܘܘ. ܠܐ ܗܘܐ ܗܢܐ ܝܫܘܥ ܒܪܗ ܕܝܘܣܦ. ܗܘ ܕܐܒܘܗܝ ܘܐܡܗ ܝܕܥܝܢ ܚܢܢ.	And they said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, the one whose father and whose mother we know? (John 6:42)

7.5. Vocabulary

Verbs	
ܐܒܰܕ	(Pᵉᶜal) to perish, be lost
ܢܦܰܠ	(Pᵉᶜal) to fall
ܥܒܰܪ	(Pᵉᶜal) to cross, pass over, walk by, violate (a law)
ܥܡܰܕ	(Pᵉᶜal) to immerse, plunge, bathe, be baptized
ܦܩܰܕ	(Pᵉᶜal) to visit, command, order
ܩܪܶܒ	(Pᵉᶜal) to come near, draw near, approach
ܫܒܰܩ	(Pᵉᶜal) to leave, go away, abandon, forsake, forgive (sins, debts)

Nouns		
Singular	**Plural**	**Meaning**
ܐܰܢ݊ܬܬܐ	ܢܶܫܶܐ	(f) woman, wife
ܐܰܬܪܐ	ܐܰܬܪܰܘܳܬܐ	(m) place, region
ܓܰܒܪܐ	ܓܰܒܪܶܐ	(m) man
ܗܰܝܟܠܐ	ܗܰܝܟܠܶܐ	(m) palace, temple
ܟܺܐܦܐ	ܟܺܐܦܶܐ	(f) stone, Cephus
ܟܶܢܫܐ	ܟܶܢܫܶܐ	(m) crowd, gathering, assembly
ܠܶܒܐ	ܠܶܒܶܐ	(m) heart
ܡܰܠܐܟܐ	ܡܰܠܐܟܶܐ	(m) angel, messenger
ܡܰܠܦܢܐ	ܡܰܠܦܢܶܐ	(m) teacher
ܣܦܺܝܢ݊ܬܐ	ܣܦܺܝܢ݊ܬܐ, ܣܦܺܝܢܶܐ	(f) boat
ܥܰܡܐ	ܥܰܡܡܶܐ	(m) people, nation
ܩܪܺܝܬܐ⁸	ܩܘܪܝܐ	(f) village, town
ܪܺܫܐ	ܪܺܫܶܐ	(m) head, top, leader, ruler, beginning
ܬܰܠܡܺܝܕܐ	ܬܰܠܡܺܝܕܐ	(m) student, disciple

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⁸ The absolute state of ܩܪܺܝܬܐ is ܩܪܺܐ (e.g. Gen. 47:21). ܩܪܺܬܐ is listed in Payne-Smith in the absolute state.

Proper Nouns	
ܗܶܪܳܘܕܶܣ	Herod
ܛܺܝܡܳܬܶܐܳܘܣ	Timothy
ܡܰܪܩܳܘܣ	Mark
ܦܰܘܠܳܘܣ	Paul
ܦܺܝܠܰܛܳܘܣ	Pilate

7.6. Homework

a) Using practice sheet 7.1, memorize the pronominal suffixes used with singular nouns (i.e. the first set) and attach the suffixes to the indicated nouns. The following link can be used to help you learn pronominal suffixes on both singular and plural nouns: https://quizlet.com/_clijmi?x=1jqt&i=2z26w0.

b) Using practice sheet 7.2, memorize the pronominal suffixes used with plural nouns (i.e. the second set) and attach the suffixes to the indicated nouns.

c) Memorize the vocabulary in 7.5 above. Make sure you can translate the words from Syriac to English as well as English to Syriac. The following link on Quizlet can be used to help you learn the vocabulary: https://quizlet.com/_c8kq2p?x=1qqt&i=2z26w0.

d) Using exercise sheet 7.3, translate the sentences from Syriac to English.