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## The split stem level of Classical Syriac: a four-level stratal OT analysis

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Classical Syriac (Afroasiatic, Semitic) is characterised by its extensive deletion of unstressed short vowels in open syllables (cf. Muraoka 2005: 10). Syriac vowel elision can be illustrated by examples such as /fema:/ → [f.ma:] ‘name’, /dahaba:/ → [dah.va:] ‘gold’, and /katab+u:/ → [k.θav] ‘they wrote’ (write\NPST-3PL.M). Contrary to most Stratal OT accounts (Bermúdez-Otero 2012, 2018; Kiparsky 2015), this analysis posits four strata rather than three: an inner stem level, an outer stem level, a word level, and a phrase level, following the approach of Jaker (2011) for Dogrib. The inner stem level discussed here aligns with the classical stem level (cf. Bermúdez-Otero 2012, 2018).

Vowels deleted in forms with only subject agreement markers reappear in forms that also include object agreement, cf. /katab+u:/ → [k.θav] ‘they wrote’, vs. /katab+u:+n/ → [kaθ.vu:n] ‘they wrote to me’. Thus, object agreement suffixes belong to the same phonological domain as subject agreement suffixes, i.e. the outer stem level. However, the subject agreement markers *-et* (1<sup>st</sup> sg. c.) and *-aθ* (3<sup>rd</sup> sg. f.) behave differently, necessitating their assignment to a higher stratum. The forms *keθbeθ* ‘I wrote’ and *keθbaθ* ‘she wrote’ result from an initial cycle /katab/ → [k.θav] at the outer stem level, which serves as the base for suffixation in a subsequent cycle at the word level. As will be demonstrated, only cyclic application of these suffixes predicts the correct surface forms *keθbeθ* and *keθbaθ*.

Support for a four-level analysis comes from the behaviour of the object agreement suffix /-xo:n/ (2<sup>nd</sup> pl. m.). This suffix is notable for its ability to attach to an inflected word form either within one cycle (e.g. [kθavt.xo:n] ‘I wrote to you all’) or within another (e.g. [keθ.baθ.xo:n] ‘she wrote to you all’). To account for the asymmetry in verbs suffixed by *-xo:n*, contextual allomorphy is suggested, involving a level-neutral allomorph and an one that triggers an additional cycle.

**References.** Bermúdez-Otero, R. (2012). The architecture of grammar and the division of labour in exponence. In J. Trommer (ed), *The morphology and phonology of exponence: the state of the art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 8-83. • Bermúdez-Otero, R. (2018). Stratal phonology. In S. J. Hannahs & A.R.K. Bosch (eds), *The Routledge handbook of phonological theory*. Abingdon: Routledge, 100-134. • Jaker, A. (2011). *Prosodic reversal in Dogrib (Weledeh Dialect)*. PhD dissertation, Stanford University. • Kiparsky, P. (2015). Stratal OT: a synopsis and FAQs. In Y. Hsiao & L.-H. Wee (eds), *Capturing phonological shades*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2-44. • Muraoka, T. (2005). *Classical Syriac: a basic grammar with a chrestomathy*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.