Loss of Nominal Case Endings in the Modern Arabic Sedentary Dialects*

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1.0. Introduction

Classical Arabic (CA), which is widely accepted as representing pre-Islamic Arabic speech and therefore the ancestor language of the present-day Arabic dialects (cf. Birkeland 1952; Blau 1961, 1965, 1966-67; Ferguson 1959; Fück 1955), had nominal case endings, while the modern sedentary (non-Bedouin --generally, urban) dialects do not have these endings. Since the modern sedentary dialects differ from each other in a number of ways--even to the extent that a number of them are not mutually intelligible--the question arises as to how all these dialects came to have in common the lack of nominal case endings. This paper examines some of the evidence that has been brought to bear on this question, proposes some different analyses, and evaluates several of the existing theories in light of the new analyses.

Unless otherwise noted, the transcription used here is phonemic and uses symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet. A dot under the consonants t̲, d̲, s̲, and z̲ (ṭ, ḍ, ṣ, ẓ) indicates pharyngealization. A dot under the consonant ḥ (h) indicates a voiceless pharyngeal fricative.

2.0. The Classical Situation (Nominal Case Endings) and the Modern Situation (Reanalyzed Remnants)

The CA nominal case endings and their modern reflexes are shown in Table 1 below. In addition, the markers for feminine gender (-at 'FEM SG' and -āt 'FEM PL') and the marker for indefiniteness (-n--called 'nunation' in English, 'tanwīn' in Arabic) are shown. CA words which are definite do not include the indefinite -n but, rather, end with the vowel which marks the case ending (-u 'NOM', -i 'GEN', or -a 'ACC') or with the dual or regular masculine plural endings. The parentheses around the t in the modern feminine singular marker -at indicate that the t is pronounced only in certain environments. These environments are those in which the feminine marker is followed by a pronoun or a noun which is in a possessive relationship to the noun--the latter called 'construct state' in English, 'iḍāfa' in Arabic. In Levantine Arabic, for example, 'university', lit. 'university-FEM SG' (/jāmʕ-at/) is pronounced [jæmʕ-ə]; 'his university', lit. 'university-FEM SG-his' is [jæmʕ-It-u]; 'her university', lit. 'university-FEM SG-her' is [jæmʕ-It-hə]; 'Yarmouk University', lit. 'University-FEM SG-Yarmouk' is [jæmʕ-It yarmūk]; and 'The University of Jordan', lit. 'University-FEM SG DEF-Jordan' is [jæmʕ-It Il-ʔurdun]. Note that the t in the feminine marker for the modern dual (where pronounced) and the modern regular plural is always pronounced since it is followed by a suffix (-īn) which is closely connected to it.

Table 1:   Classical Arabic Case Endings and their Modern Remnants

	CLASSICAL ARABIC			MODERN ARABIC		
	Gender	Case	Indefinite-	Gender	Case	Indefinite-
SINGULAR	(F)	(M&F)	ness (M&F)	(F)	(M&F)	ness
Nominative	-at	-u	-n			
Genitive	-at	-i	-n } >	-a(t)	∅	∅
Accusative	-at	-a	-n			
DUAL	(F)	(M&F)	(M&F)	(F)	(M&F)	(M&F)
Nominative	-at	-āni	∅	-at/∅	-ayn/∅	∅
Genitive	-at	-ayni	∅ } >	(Most dialects have ∅, and		
Accusative	-at	-ayni	∅	plural has replaced dual)		
REGULAR PLURAL	(F)	(M)/(F)	(F)	(F)	(M)/(F)	(F)
Nominative	-āt	-ūna/-u	-n			
Genitive	-āt	-īna/-i	-n } >	-āt	-īn/∅	∅
Accusative	-āt	-īna/-i	-n			
IRREGULAR (BROKEN) PLURAL = STEM CHANGING						
		(M&F)	(M&F)		(M&F)	(M&F)
Nominative	∅	-u	-n			
Genitive	∅	-i	-n } >	∅	∅	∅
Accusative	∅	-a	-n			

As Table 1 shows, nouns in the modern dialects have generally undergone four changes from CA in phonology and morphology:

   (1, 2) Phonology: unconditioned loss of indefinite -n and -V, and
              conditioned loss of feminine singular -t.
   (3, 4) Morphology: merger of the nominative marker with the genitive/
              accusative marker in the regular plural and—in those dialects
              that retain it—the dual.

These changes have resulted in the sedentary dialects losing their nominal case distinctions.

It is unclear, however, how all these dialects have come to have this same change in common since the dialects are spread out over a vast area. Several theories have been advanced which specifically account for this phenomenon by postulating phonological and morphological changes that led to it. Prominent among them are those of Birkeland (1952), Cantineau (1953), and Blau (1961, 1965, 1966-67), all outlined below.

2.1. Birkeland's Theory

Harris Birkeland (1952), drawing on the observation that Classical Arabic had pausal (citation) forms which were essentially like the modern forms (except for the nominative/oblique merger), took these forms as the origin of the modern dialectal forms. That is, in CA -(t)V̆(n)# in singular and broken plural forms in context (non-pause) position became ∅ in pause position (in isolation and sentence finally) in the nominative and genitive, and it became -ā in the accusative. Furthermore, some Old Arabic dialects

had pausal forms which ended in ϕ for all the cases. Birkeland proposed that these reduced pausal forms of these old dialects were then generalized to context position in a later stage of the dialects so that forms representing more categories replaced forms representing fewer categories: the earlier system with one form representing each of the nominative, genitive, and accusative cases gave way to a system with one form––ϕ––representing all three cases. Birkeland stated that this conclusion is the only one possible because:

(1) we know that CA and some old dialects had both context forms and pausal forms;
(2) the modern sedentary dialects have only pausal forms, with context forms as relics in places that could not have pausal forms (the construct state, or iḍāfa);
(3) therefore, the form that survived had to have replaced the lost form.

Even though this conclusion is not explicit as to how the replacement happened, it is a plausible explanation of the changes in nouns that took place between CA and the modern dialects.

2.2. Cantineau's Theory

Jean Cantineau (1953) proposed that the loss of case endings was brought about by a phonetic sound change which dropped short final vowels, plus a morphological rebuilding of the case system, in the following steps.

(1) Short vowels (especially u̲ and i̲) were weakened and so were subject to loss in open syllables. Therefore, first the nominative marker ‑u̲ became ϕ, and then the genitive marker ‑i̲ became ϕ. After these changes, only the accusative marker ‑a̲ remained.
(2) The case system underwent morphological rebuilding to lose the nominative and genitive distinctions in indefinite nouns, too (by analogy to definite nouns): ‑un became ϕ, and ‑in became ϕ.
(3) A phonetic sound change made context ‑a̲ and pause ‑ā̲ (<‑an) become ϕ. After this change, context ‑an was the only case ending left.
(4) Then ‑an in context became ϕ due to morphological rebuilding (by analogy to the other forms which had ϕ endings already).

2.3. Blau's Theory

Joshua Blau (1961, 1965, 1966-67) maintained that the modern Arabic dialects grew out of Middle Arabic dialects which diverged from CA as CA spread outside the Arabian Peninsula during the Islamic conquests (c.a. 632-800 A.D.). These new dialects differed from each other because they developed in different towns, but they all lost case (and mood) endings due to (1) the influence of the foreign languages which did not have case endings, (2) the stress changing from weakly centralizing to strongly centralizing,[1] and (3) the generalization of pausal forms to context position. He argued that these changes occurred in the following steps.

(1) Short vowels in open syllables (especially word finally) were

weakened and therefore tended to drop. u and i dropped first
because they were weaker than a. This resulted in nominative
and genitive definite singular nouns, feminine sound (regular)
plurals, and broken (irregular) plurals losing -u and -i.

(2) Nominative and genitive pause forms were extended to context, so
     that -uu and -in became ∅.

(3) Word final long vowels became short so that pausal accusative -ā
     from context -an became -a.

(4) a was weakened and then dropped in open (especially final) sylla-
     bles, so accusative -a became ∅. At this stage, -an in context
     was the only vestige of the former case markers left, no longer
     signifying case since the system had broken down so much.

(5) Accusative pausal forms (with ∅ ending) were optionally extended
     to context, so that no final case markers were left except
     optionally.

(6) The oblique case markers of the dual (-ayn) and the masculine
     sound (regular) plural (-īn) replaced the nominative markers
     (-ān and -ūn, respectively), since there was no longer a
     need to distinguish cases.

3.0. Evidence Which Illuminates These Theories

All of these theories deal with plausible types of changes, and so,
since they are not mutually exclusive, it is possible that any or—as Blau
argues—all of the factors which they propose could have contributed to the
loss of case endings in the Arabic dialects. The task, then, is to find
evidence that sheds light on what probably occurred, so that the amount of
speculation necessary about what possibly occurred can be minimized.

There is a body of documents available which provides such evidence and
which scholars in general—including those mentioned above (except Blau)—
had not considered when developing their theories.[2] These are the writings
of non-Arabs during the first five or so centuries of Arab rule (approxi-
mately the 8th through the 12th centuries A.D.). Blau (1961, 1965, 1966-67),
who has analyzed hundreds of these writings, maintains that they provide
information about characteristics of colloquial Arabic immediately following
the Islamic conquests. As such, they are the oldest documents available
which reveal the colloquial speech after the conquests provided the oppor-
tunity for extensive changes in Arabic to take place, due to the interming-
ling of Arabs from different areas in military campaigns and settlements and
to the learning of Arabic by the conquered non-Arabs. They thus reveal a
stage of Arabic which is intermediate between Classical Arabic, which had
case endings, and the later stage of dialectal Arabic which does not have
case endings (Blau's 'Modern Arabic'). Blau termed this intermediate stage
'Middle Arabic (MA).' As an intermediate stage, MA provides information
about some of the steps the language went through as it changed from the CA
type to the modern dialectal type.

These texts are written in CA, which was the standard written language,
and the characteristics of MA are revealed in them as deviations from CA.
Blau points out that there are no known texts written in colloquial MA, so
the best that can be done to ascertain the traits of MA is to analyze texts
of CA which contain deviations. He states that these texts are very

revealing sources of MA since they contain numerous deviations. He argues that such deviations represent either intrusions from the spoken language or hyper- or hypo-corrections since the writers were generally trying to write in the prestigious standard language (CA).

The deviations appear almost exclusively in manuscripts written by Jews and Christians who wrote (usually copied) mainly religious texts in their new language—Arabic. Blau notes that while a few colloquialisms occur in official Muslim papyri of this time, they do not occur often because, as the language of their religion, CA was an extremely high ideal for Arabs. Consequently, Arabs were very careful not to let many colloquialisms enter their writing, while non-Arabs were either not as careful or not as able since CA was not such a high ideal or as familiar for them. Even so, Blau points out that the few colloquialisms which occur in Arab papyri and poetry at the beginning of the 8th century A.D. have the same basic characteristics as those which occur in non-Arab texts. Therefore it can be assumed that MA was in use as early as this and that the Arabic spoken by Arabs at this time had the same basic characteristics as that spoken by non-Arabs and revealed in their writings.[3]

According to Blau (1961, 1966-67), among the non-Arabs, the texts which reveal the most about the spoken language of this time are those written by Christians in Southern Palestine for other Christians because there are many more texts available from this area than from the other areas which produced such texts. Furthermore, these writings include the earliest dated documents which include numerous examples of MA and numerous manuscripts which were written in the monasteries there in the second half of the 9th and the 10th centuries. They also include a number of undated manuscripts with numerous examples of MA for which there is evidence that they were written there in the 8th century—some as early as the beginning of the century. Most of these are translations from Greek and Syriac, but some are originals in Arabic, showing that the native non-Arabs did, indeed, produce this type of writing. As Blau points out, the dialect characteristics revealed in these documents are not homogeneous with the characteristics revealed in documents from other areas, other religions, or other times. However, his studies have shown that the basic features of all these different dialects are the same, and so Southern Palestinian Christian Arabic—or Arabic of Southern Palestine, abbreviated ASP by Blau 1966-67—can reasonably be used to represent MA as a whole, while also noting the deviations in the documents which represent only ASP or only the particular copyist. Blau (1966-67) does just this, and so the present study looks at the ASP deviations which Blau indicates are also common to other MA dialects.

Blau (1961, 1966-67) notes that precautions must be taken when analyzing MA texts because some of the deviations from CA do not represent the spoken Arabic of the time. For example, a number of the deviations are pseudo-corrections, which are a mixture of standard and colloquial features, resulting from the writers trying to use CA but not always applying its rules correctly. Types of pseudo-corrections which are found in the texts include malapropisms (such as writing lasiyyamā for lā siyyamā 'especially'; Blau 1966-67: 50), use of CA forms where they are not appropriate (called 'hyper-' or 'over-correction'—such as use of the prestigious nominative case where the less prestigious oblique case is appropriate; Blau 1966-67:

51), and mixtures of MA forms with CA forms (called 'hypo-' or 'half-correction'---such as use of a dual verb before a dual subject, when CA used a singular verb before a dual subject, and MA used a plural verb before a dual subject; Blau 1966-67: 51). Blau notes that the ASP texts also show influences from the other language spoken in the area---Aramaic---as well as loan translations from the languages that many of the texts were originally written in---Greek and Syriac. The texts also show influences from CA spelling (such as usually spelling words which had CA ḍ or ẓ with their respective CA letters even though these sounds had probably merged in ASP; Blau 1966-67: 56, 113-114) and from traditional literary features which had disappeared from the spoken language (such as following an imperfect verb which ended in a long vowel with the symbol for -n when the dialectal pronunciation no longer included the -n; Blau 1966-67: 57). Therefore, in order to identify the true MA features from these texts and weed out the pseudo-corrections and other deviations from CA which did not represent influences from colloquial Arabic, Blau (1965, 1966-67) listed in his studies of Judaeo-Arabic and ASP texts only those features which occurred in a number of the texts as reliable features of MA, because they recurred. The present study relies only on these recurrent MA features of ASP which Blau compiled.

4.0. What These Texts Show about the Loss of Nominal Case Endings

Blau's (1966-67) compilation of a grammar of Christian Arabic based on his analysis of numerous grammatical characteristics of the Southern Palestinian texts includes a number of conclusions about the historical changes that the language underwent to reach this stage of Middle Arabic. A reanalysis of the data he considered points to some additional conclusions, some different conclusions, and some of the same conclusions, as discussed below.

4.1. A Stress Shift Could Have Occurred

Blau notes that while long vowels are generally indicated in these texts, short vowels generally are not, making it difficult to draw conclusions about ASP based on the occurrence or nonoccurrence of vowels. However, the places where vowels are indicated show that some of the vowels (short vowels more than long vowels) were sometimes written with symbols which indicated a different vowel quality than the vowels had in CA, and that long vowels were often shortened in final open syllables and short vowels were often dropped in open unstressed (especially final) syllables. The changes in short vowels are shown mainly by an 8th century fragment of Psalm 78 which is written all in Greek letters and includes the original Greek text and a translation into Arabic. Since it is written in Greek letters, it indicates all the Arabic vowels, including the short vowels--which the Arabic script generally does not indicate. It thus provides a rare window on the full vocalization of Arabic at this time.

A reanalysis of the data cited by Blau (1966-67) supports his conclusions (p. 44) that these general trends occurred. The fact that the data bears out his conclusion that 'the quality of the short vowels was rather inconstant' supports his subsequent conclusion that the vowels in ASP 'were weakened, thus becoming liable to change and elimination.' The inconstancy of ASP's vowels is shown in the examples that Blau (1966-67: 63-65) cites of ASP letters which represent different vowel qualities from CA, listed below

in Table 2.

<div align="center">

Table 2: ASP Words with Vowel Qualities that Differ from CA
(from Blau 1966-67: 63-65)

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Number of instances	ASP Vowel (underlined)	for CA Vowel (underlined)	Meaning
8	e	a	
(1-3)	οελευδιευ	wa-l-ʔawdiya and-DEF-streams	'and the streams'
(4)	λεϫαλ	laʕall	'perhaps'
(5)	ιεκ.διρ	ya-qdir 3MASC SG IMPERF-can	'can'
(6-7)	εχτεϫ.αλετ	ištaʕal-at kindle/PASSIVE-3FEM SG PERF'	'was kindled'
(8)	φαϭέλετ	fa-sāl-at and-gush out-3FEM SG PERF	'and it gushed out'
2	e~a (same text)	a	
(1)	ϭεμα ~ ϭαμα	samā	'heaven'
(2)	λευμ ~ λαυμ	la-hum to-them	'to them'
(3	u	a)*	
(1)	muqadira	ma-qadir-a noun-can-FEM SG	'ability'
(2)	yudrub	ya-ḍrub 3MASC SG IMPERF-beat	'he will beat'
(3)	yusīr	ya-sīr 3MASC SG IMPERF-become	'he will become'
2	e	i	
(1)	ϫεϭϭα	jiddan	'much'
(2)	εχτεϫ.αλετ	ištaʕal-at kindle/PASSIVE-3FEM SG PERF	'was kindled'
2	u	i	
(1)	sulm	silm	'peace'
(2)	mush	mish	'haircloth'
1	i	u	
(1)	τ.η.ουρ	ṭuyūr	'fowels'
3	ē (written as ā in Arabic)	ā	
(1)	mamrā	mamrā	'Mamre'
(2)	φαϭέλετ	fa-sāl-at and-gush out-3FEM SG PERF	'and it gushed out'
(3)	λιϭέλικ	liðālik	'therefore'

*The parentheses around the listing of ASP u written for CA a indicate
that these instances may represent morphological, rather than phonetic,

substitution. This is so because all of the examples that Blau cites
exhibit the substitution in a prefix: one instance of mu- for ma-
(prefixes for verbal nouns), and two instances of yu- for ya- (prefixes
for imperfect active verbs). Since these prefixes which contain the u
occur in Arabic—and frequently—it would not be surprising if the
non-native speakers of Arabic occasionally mixed up the prefixes which
contained u and a. If ASP u for CA a were a phonological change, one
would expect to also find it in environments other than those which are
morphologically defined (here, prefixes). Therefore, it seems that the
u for a substitutions noted by Blau and listed here should not be
included in data showing that vowel quality in ASP was inconstant.

The data in Table 2 shows that CA a, i, u, and ā were subject to phonologi-
cal change in ASP and that, in general, the change was centralization: a>e,
i>e, and ā>ē. Also, occasionally i and u were interchanged. Centraliza-
tion could have been a reason for this, too, if the pronunciation of these
vowels diverged from peripheral toward central so that hearers perceived them
as falling within the opposite phoneme boundary. All these changes point to
a situation in which these four vowels varied from their CA pronunciations,
at least sometimes, enough that ASP hearers (including writers) perceived
them as different vowels, and then ASP writers wrote them as the different
vowels. In such a situation, it would not be unusual that fewer of the long
vowels varied in their pronunciations than the short vowels did (as this data
shows—only ā; not ī or ū; but a, i, and u) since their longer duration
would have made them more resistant to centralization, both in production
and in perception.

Along with this inconstancy of vowel quality, the data listed by Blau
also indicates that, in contrast to CA, long vowels were shortened in final
open syllables, and short vowels were deleted in open unstressed syllables—
especially word finally. Some of the evidence cited by Blau in support of
the first claim is that words which end in CA -ā are sometimes written
with -a in ASP, and CA -ī is sometimes written as -i in ASP. The second
claim is supported by Blau's report that a symbol indicating the lack of a
vowel (Arabic sukūn, symbolized °) following the consonant it is written
above is sometimes written in ASP at the ends of words which ended in a
short vowel in CA. The loss of short vowels in open unstressed syllables in
ASP is further supported by Blau's observation that a symbol indicating
glottal stop followed by a vowel (Arabic ʔālif, symbolized ʔ) is sometimes
added before an initial consonant that was followed by a short vowel in an
open unstressed syllable in CA. Blau reasons that a vowel was added before
the initial consonant of the word because the unstressed vowel following
this consonant had been dropped. The vowel was inserted, apparently, in
order to break up the consonant cluster which resulted when the unstressed
vowel was dropped—a phenomenon which is common in Arabic. For example, CA
ʕlyhu ([ʕalayhIm]) was written in ASP as ʔʕlyhm ([ʔaʕlayhIm]).

Blau (1969: 221, 1965: 45) states that the changes in the vowels in ASP
described above played an important role in bringing about the loss of case
endings and that a factor in bringing about these vowel changes was a change
in stress. He claims that CA must have had weakly centralizing stress (see
Footnote 1) because short vowels were preserved in open unstressed syllables,
but that the stress must have shifted to strongly centralizing in ASP because

short vowels were then blurred in open unstressed syllables, as described above.[4] While it seems likely that the changes in vowels (especially loss of final short vowels) contributed greatly to the loss of the case endings-- some of which were marked solely by particular final short vowels--it is not clear whether a change of stress did or did not bring about these vowel changes.

The conclusion that a stress shift occurred is consistent with the facts, and so it is a possible explanation for them. It is widely accepted that vowels which get centralized (reduced) are unstressed and often occur in open syllables, especially at the ends of words. Since centralization weakens the vowels (makes them less perceptually distinct), such vowels are often subsequently lost altogether. Therefore, it would be expected that if the stress in Arabic had changed from CA to MA in such a way as to favor centralization of vowels more than it had before, then more vowels than before would show centralization and possibly total loss in these environments. Since this prediction describes the phenomena exhibited for the vowels which occur in the ASP texts, the conclusion could be reached for this stage of Arabic that a shift in the type of stress had occurred.

However, such a conclusion is not required by the facts. Vowel centralization can occur whenever a syllable is unstressed; it does not need to be preceded by a shift in stress. The syllables in which the vowels were reduced or lost in MA could also have been unstressed in CA but not have undergone vowel reduction or loss yet. If this was the case (and there is no evidence that it was not the case), then ASP would simply be the stage at which the vowel changes occurred, after the impetus for the changes was set up at an earlier stage. Therefore, since such a situation does not require positing that a shift in stress occurred between CA and MA, the vowel phenomena do not show that there had necessarily been a shift in stress; they only show that there could have been a shift in stress.

So these data show that Cantineau's and Blau's theories that the loss of case endings began with a shift in stress could be right but may not be. The fact that they give enough information to show that these theories could be correct is a step forward from the argumentation supplied by Cantineau and Blau, who extrapolated their conclusions from only a few facts. The fact that these data show that there is not enough information to confirm these theories is also a step forward, since Cantineau and Blau both assert that a stress shift did occur, implying that the evidence definitely supports such a conclusion.

4.2. Nominal Case Endings May Not Have Been Lost Completely Yet

The ASP texts give evidence that the nominal case endings had been lost at the ends of words by this time, supporting Blau's (1961, 1965, 1966-67) claim that the case endings had completely disappeared by the time of ASP. However, contrary to Blau's claim, the ASP texts also give evidence that the case endings may not yet have disappeared when followed by a pronoun suffix. The evidence supporting this situation of partial preservation of the case endings at this time is examined below.

4.2.1. Case Endings at the Ends of Words

Blau (1967: 317-318) reports that, except for one word (ξεῖδα) for
jiddan 'much', where -α for -a- marks the accusative case--discussed below
in Section 4.2.4), the Greek/Arabic fragment of Psalm 78 exhibits no case
endings at the ends of words. The examples that Blau gives are listed below.
Here, and in the rest of this paper unless otherwise noted, underlining of a
blank space in the ASP text indicates the place where a CA letter would have
occurred. Underlining in the corresponding CA word shows the CA letters
that are not indicated in the ASP text.

ASP: for CA:

(1) οαχουβ₃-- ...   wa-xubz-<u>a-n</u>   ...mā?id-<u>at-a-n</u>
     μάίδεὺ---   and-bread-<u>ACC-INDEF</u>...table-<u>FEM SG-ACC-INDEF</u>

                        'and bread...table'

(2) λυχουᴎ--   luḥūm-<u>a-n</u>
                        meat-<u>ACC-INDEF</u>

                        'meat'

Case endings are not listed in the Greek/Arabic psalm even when the noun
occurs in the 'construct state' ('iḏāfa construction' in Arabic)--a syntac-
tic construction made up of a series of nouns which indicate possession of N_1
by N_2 and--if three nouns occur--N_2 by N_3. In this construction, the nouns
are very closely tied together and therefore--except the final word--would
not be pronounced in their pause forms in CA. Blau states that in ASP, how-
ever, such nouns are written in their pause forms, and he gives the following
example.

ASP: for CA:

οαμέθλ-.ραμλ-.   wa-miθl-<u>i</u> raml-<u>i</u>-l-buḥūr
ελβουχουρ   and-as-<u>GEN</u> sand-<u>GEN</u>-DEF-sea

                        'and as the sand of the sea'

In this example, the case vowel of CA mi̱θli was not written in the ASP
text, and Blau says that the case vowel of CA ra̱mli also was not written in
the ASP. Since Greek ε--which occurs in this text after the Greek for raml
--is a vowel, though, this could be the i of ramli. This possibility is not
likely, since the dots in the Greek rendering of ASP apparently indicate word
boundaries, but it should be considered and investigated further. In any
case, this example shows that ASP dropped at least some case endings in this
construction. Since this position is so resistant to deletion, this is
strong evidence that ASP had either, as Blau claims, totally lost the case
distinctions which formerly occurred at the ends of words (if the Greek ε
was not the i from ramli), or nearly lost these distinctions (if the ε was
the i from ramli).

Two other examples which Blau (1967: 320) cites as evidence that the
cases had been lost in ASP actually show that the form which marked the
cases in CA did not always disappear--sometimes it just ceased to carry out

its former function. In these two examples, listed below, the noun ?ax
'brother', which is in the construct state, ends in the form of a CA case
ending which is an incorrect ending for this context: -ū in ?ax-ū
('brother-NOM') signalled the nominative case in CA, but this construction
required a genitive marker (-ī) on this noun.

ASP:

(1) l(i) y(a)ʕqūb ?(a)x-ū   r(u)b-nā
     to   James   brother-NOM lord-our

     'to James, the brother of our lord'

(2) r(i)sāl-a   y(a)ʕqūb ?(a)x-ū   r(u)b-nā
     epistle-FEM.SG James   brother-NOM lord-our

     'the epistle of James, the brother of our lord'

Therefore, these endings, while retained in form at the end of the word,
appear to no longer be functional as case markers. This situation is dis-
cussed in detail in the next section.

4.2.2. Case Endings Before Pronoun Suffixes

     Blau (1967; 318 n.3) points out that sometimes the CA case endings were
omitted in ASP before attached pronoun suffixes, and he claims that these
instances represent the actual ASP usage. The two examples he cites of this
type of omission, from the Greek/Arabic Psalm 78, are:

ASP: for CA:

(1) χε.ύ.οετ_.ύ/ν   šahw-at-a-hum
                            desire-FEM SG-ACC-their (MASC)

                            'their desire'

(2) καδ.σ_.όυ   quds-i-hī
                            sanctuary-GEN-his

                            'of his sanctuary' (no overt preposition)

     He notes that at other times the case endings occurred in this position in
ASP, and he claims that these instances were not the general usage but were due to
the influence of CA—that is, that they were hyper-corrections. The two examples
he gives of this are the following, with the case endings underlined.

ASP: for CA:

(1) βι.Jaυ.εάγ.ιύ/ν   bi-?awθān-i-him
                            with-idols-GEN-their (MASC)

                            'with their idols'

(2) βη·μεν·χουτέ.   bi-manxūt-āt-i-him
     τη·ὑΗ   with-graven image-FEM PL-GEN-their (MASC)

     'with their graven images'

If these occurrences of case endings are hyper-corrections, it is
curious that they occur only before a pronoun suffix and never at the end of
a word. If the writer was correcting his Arabic according to the rules of
CA, it would be expected that he would have at least occasionally written
case endings in the most obvious place they occur in CA—at the ends of
words. Since he did not do this, it raises the question of whether the
instances of case endings before the pronoun suffixes are, indeed, instances
of hyper-correction.

The alternative is that these case endings represent the actual usage
of the time. Perhaps case ending vowels had not been totally lost yet but
were still pronounced—at least sometimes—when they were not at the end of
a word. This is plausible, since such vowels would have been protected by
the suffixes which attached after them, so they would have been less suscep-
tible to changes that affected the ends of words than vowels which came at
the ends of words would have been.

Additional evidence in support of this hypothesis comes from the
examples Blau (1967: 318-321) gives of vowels that represent cases in CA
which occur in ASP texts after ?ab 'father' and ?ax 'brother.' Blau cites
124 instances where this happens in a number of manuscripts. Of the 12
examples that he writes out fully (which include 26 instances of ?ab or ?ax),
all but two (those listed above) have pronoun suffixes attached after the
vowels. This is a substantial increase over the examples noted by Blau in
both the number of examples and the number of manuscripts in which these
vowels were written in ASP. Therefore, these examples make it look more
plausible than Blau indicates that at this time what had been case vowels in
CA continued to be pronounced when they occurred before pronoun suffixes (as
well as sometimes without the suffixes).

This evidence is not unquestionably supportive of the theory just
advanced, and the theory is not without qualifications. But the possibility
that CA case vowels were pronounced in ASP at least sometimes (possibly
mainly before pronoun suffixes) is one of several scenarios that would
explain all this evidence without leaving problematic exceptions that need
to be explained as influence from CA in only limited environments—as Blau's
theory does. All these explanatory theories deserve to be considered, and
so the qualifications of the above theory as well as the rest of the theories
are discussed below.

One of the problems that must be accounted for is that, as noted above,
the case vowels which occur in the ASP texts described here are often the
wrong vowels for the cases that should occur in these positions. Of the 124
examples involving ?ab and ?ax which Blau cites, almost all are examples in
which the wrong case vowel (often ū) was used. The seven which are exam-
ples of the correct vowel being used are from manuscripts that Blau says are
grammatically corrected (even though they also exhibit deviations from CA in
the case vowels), and so he discounts them. Only the two examples first

mentioned in this section---from the Greek/Arabic psalm and one instance of
ʔab in an example that includes three instances of ʔab---have the correct CA
vowel for the case ending without the possibility of it having been corrected
after the original writing.   The theory that the case vowels were sometimes
pronounced in ASP must therefore be qualified to account for many of these
vowels being wrong.   Three possibilities exist to account for these vowels
in the theory just proposed.

    One possibility is that a vowel was often pronounced in the case-marking
position but that the particular vowel always or often varied randomly so
that sometimes it matched the CA vowel used to mark the particular case, and
sometimes it did not.   Such a situation would have occurred if ASP had a
rule to insert a vowel--but, for many people at least, not any particular
vowel but often ū--after a noun in particular environments (mainly before
a pronoun suffix).   If this was a rule that not everyone used or that was
violated occasionally, the few exceptions in the examples examined here in
which a vowel was not inserted between a noun and a pronoun suffix would be
explained.   If this rule was sometimes extended to nouns in the construct
state, the two examples examined here of a wrong case vowel being used in
the construct state would be explained.   In such a situation, the system of
case marking would have either broken down entirely already or would have
been in the process of breaking down, depending on whether some speakers
still had a sense of case marking---even possibly including some rules to
place the correct CA vowel in the correct position at particular times.

    The second possibility is that the case vowels were pronounced only in
the environments exhibited here.   That is, the words ʔab 'father', ʔax
'brother', ʔawθān 'idols', and manxūtāt 'graven images'---or religious
words in general--might have been preserved longer in their older forms (fol-
lowed by case vowels) than other nouns in ASP were, because of having a spe-
cial status as religious vocabulary and because of being repeated often in
their old CA forms in religious contexts, or as the result of loss by diffu-
sion.   The forms followed by pronoun suffixes could have been preserved
longer than the forms without these suffixes, due to protection by the suf-
fixes.   In this situation, ASP or some speakers of ASP could have had rules
such as those described for the first possibility above, except that the
environments would have been specified either for these particular words or,
more generally, for religious words.   This would be a situation in which the
system of case marking had broken down even more than it would have for the
first scenario described above, but---contrary to Blau's theory---some sense
of it would still have existed.

    A third scenario is also possible -that the case vowels represented by
the Arabic ASP writings are indicative of only the writing system and not of
the spoken language of ASP.   In this situation, the vowels concerned are the
long vowels attached after ʔab and ʔax, since these are the only case vowels
that occur in these examples in writings done in the Arabic script.   In this
situation, if the vowels following ʔab and ʔax are only part of the Arabic
writing system for ASP, then they likely represent an earlier pronunciation,
and so they still have something to reveal about the history of spoken Arabic
case endings.   For the same reasons as given above, whenever the spellings
of the case vowels began to not follow the CA rules, they were probably fol-
lowing either current pronunciations or recent pronunciations (exhibited by

a sense that a vowel should be attached after a noun in particular environ-
ments). So if the case vowels had ceased to be pronounced entirely by the
time of ASP, the ASP spellings show that these vowels had formerly been pro-
nounced for a longer time before pronoun suffixes--either in religious words
or generally--than in other environments. In this situation, then, the ASP
spellings just continue an earlier writing tradition that placed random long
vowels (often ū) in the environments in question.

There is other evidence, though, that there was some awareness of case
endings at the time of ASP. This is provided by two examples that Blau
(1966-67: 318 n.3) mentions from the Greek/Arabic psalm. In these, no case
endings are present, but the vowel of the pronoun suffix has been changed to
agree with what the vowel of the genitive case ending would have been if it
had been there, as was done in CA when the genitive ending was present.
That is, -hū 'he' has become -hī in vowel harmony with the preceding
(here, missing) genitive marker -i-, as shown by the underlinings in the
reproductions of Blau's examples below.

ASP: for CA:

(1) λιτχϽχειȣ.ρ_ύί   li-šaSb-i-hī
                               for-people-GEN-his

                               'for his people'

(2) ȣαλα χαλαθ_ίι   Salā xalāṣ-i-hī
                               in salvation-GEN-his

                               'in his salvation'

Blau terms this phenomenon 'remarkable' and attributes it to hypo-correction
--a mixture of ASP and CA.

But this does not have to be seen as a remarkable and unexplainable phe-
nomenon except by appeal to the influence of CA. These words could, in fact,
show the real ASP usage--that the pronoun vowel was pronounced in these words
so as to represent the genitive case ending in some way. There are three
possibilities for the way this could have been done.

First, the -i of the pronoun could have represented the genitive case
ending directly. Such a situation could have been brought about by speakers
being aware that these expressions should have a case ending but reanalyzing
the ending and thinking that the case should be marked at the end of the
expression rather than at the end of the noun. In such a situation, speakers
would have placed the case ending at the end of the expression, replacing the
original vowel of the pronoun -hū with the genitive case marker -i. This
use of the genitive marker could have been fostered by speakers hearing
these expressions pronounced with -i at the very end only--instead of
following the noun itself. Such a pronunciation could easily have occurred
if speakers elided the unstressed case vowel after the noun, e.g.:
li-šaSbihī --> li-šaSbhī. Then hearers could have reanalyzed the
-i at the end of the expression as a case marker.

Second, even if the case endings had already been lost after nouns—as
Blau claims—the phenomenon here could be explained if speakers were still
aware of cases and knew that in CA the vowel in the pronoun suffix -hū was
changed to -ī when the construction was in the genitive case. When they
knew the case of an expression was genitive, then—even though the expression
did not have a case ending to mark it—they would have changed the pronoun
ending -hū to -hī. It would have been obvious to Arabic speakers from
the occurrence of the preposition in these examples that the genitive case
was appropriate here, and they would have marked this case by changing -hū
to -hī.

This possibility suggests that case marking phenomena may have been pre-
served longer when elements in the environment made it obvious what the case
was. None of the four examples cited by Blau (1966-67) in which the case
endings were lost totally (without even adjustment for them in the pronoun
ending) has an overt element (e.g. preposition) to signal what the case
should be. On the other hand, the four examples Blau cites as exceptions to
his thesis that case endings had disappeared totally in ASP (in which either
the case endings were preserved or the vowel of the pronoun suffix was
changed to agree with the absent case ending) were preceded by an overt ele-
ment (preposition) which would signal the appropriate case. This is a small
set of data, though, and so is only suggestive of a possibility rather than
indicative of a probability.

Consideration of the examples Blau gives for ?ab and ?ax extends the
data somewhat and provides support for this hypothesis, which was suggested
above by noting that the eight examples Blau gave for case endings having
disappeared altogether in ASP do not unequivocally support his claim. The
data for ?ab and ?ax do not neatly fit the pattern noted for the previous
eight examples, but some do, and the rest do not contradict this hypothesis.
Of the 124 examples Blau gives in which a vowel different from that called
for by the CA case system follows the noun, six nouns directly follow a
preposition, as shown below. Since these examples are in Arabic script,
short vowels are not indicated, but case endings are indicated by long
vowels since these nouns have attached pronoun suffixes. The prepositions
and the case vowels which are attached to the following nouns are underlined
below.

(1) bnūwat ?ab-ū-nā   ...dʕwat-nā ?iyā-h
     sonship father-NOM-our...call-our particle-him

     ?ab-ū-nā   ...w-l-?ab-ī-h
     father-NOM-our...and-to-father-GEN-his (the last case vowel is
                                                              correct)

     'to be sons of our father...to call him our father...and to his
     father-GEN'

(2) mʕ   ?ab-ā-hmā
     with father-ACC-their (DU) (incorrect case vowel)

     'with their father-ACC'

(3) mʕ ?ab-ī-hmā
with father-GEN-their (DU) (correct case vowel; from a manuscript
which exhibits corrections)

'with their father-GEN'

(4) b-?ax-ū-hā
of-brother-NOM-her (incorrect case vowel)

'of her brother-NOM'

(5) qdām ?ax-ū-h
before brother-NOM-his (incorrect case vowel)

'before his brother-NOM'

(6) y-tk'lm   ʕla   ?ax-ū-h   ?aw
3MASC.SG.IMPERF-speak against brother-NOM-his and

y-dīn   ?ax-ū-h
3MASC.SG.IMPERF-judge brother-NOM-his (incorrect case vowel)

'he speaks against his brother-NOM and judges his brother-NOM'

Of these six examples which begin with a preposition, two follow the noun
with -ī- (which is the correct ending in CA when the noun also has an
attached pronoun suffix), one follows with an accusative marker (ā), and
the other three with nominative markers (ū). The two which have the geni-
tive marker following a preposition are further examples of the correct case
ending occurring when a preposition overtly indicates the genitive case, and
so they also support the hypothesis that cases remained longer in this type
of situation. The four other examples mentioned here which have the wrong
case ending even though they are preceded by a preposition do not provide
support for this hypothesis, but they are consistent with it. These four
could well show that even in this situation the sense of case marking was
also breaking down or was breaking down for some people.

The fact that all the other examples which Blau gives of the wrong case
vowel being used with ?ab and ?ax are instances which do not occur with a
preposition to overtly signal the correct ending makes it all the more
curious that the only places that the correct ending occurs in all these
instances are those in which the noun directly follows a preposition. This
is further support for the hypothesis suggested here. Further analysis of
the data from these manuscripts needs to be done to check this hypothesis
more thoroughly, but these examples at least indicate that this situation is
a possibility. It should be noted that if this is borne out, it would con-
tradict Blau's (1961: 81-82; 1966-67: 46 n.49) suggestion that the existence
of prepositions was a cause for the loss of cases because they made case end-
ings less necessary by marking one case themselves. It seems, however, that
if the more detailed analysis suggested here is borne out, then a rejection
of the more general conclusion reached by Blau would be warranted.

There is a third possible explanation besides Blau's for the occurrence

of the case vowel before the pronoun suffixes and for the changed vowel in
the pronoun suffixes even when the genitive case ending was not present.
These occurrences might have been borrowings from CA which originally con-
tained the genitive ending -i as well as a changed pronoun vowel, but
subsequently lost the genitive -i while retaining the changed pronoun vowel
because it was fixed that way in these expressions. This looks reasonable
for the four expressions that do not contain ?ab and ?ax (which Blau treats
in a section by themselves). These four are repeated below, with the case
marker and changed pronoun vowel underlined.

ASP:

(1) bi-?awθān-i -him
     with-idols-GEN-their (MASC)

     'with their idols-GEN'

(2) bi-manxūt-āt-i-him
     with-graven image-FEM PL-GEN-their (MASC)

     'with their graven images'

(3) li-šaʕb- -hī
     for-people-ø-his

     'for his people'

(4) ʕalā xalāṣ- -hī
     in salvation-ø-his

     'in his salvation'

All of these could easily be expressions that were used repeatedly in
religious ceremonies and so became fixed in a form that was closer to the
original CA than everyday ASP was.

When the ?ab and ?ax data is considered in relation to this possibility,
though, it does not fit in as well as the above four examples do. All of
these new examples are religious in nature and could easily have been
repeated often in religious ceremonies. Yet only two of them have the cor-
rect case vowel. So in these examples the original CA system was not
retained as it was in the four examples above, and it appears that these
examples with ?ab and ?ax would not have been fixed in their CA form as the
previous four could have been. Even if these four examples were fixed in
their CA form, it is still curious that the noun in each is immediately pre-
ceded by a preposition. This, again, points to the reasonableness of the
previous hypothesis.

Whatever the reason, though, for the changed pronoun suffix in the
expressions which do not have a preceding genitive case vowel, these expres-
sions, along with the expressions which lost the case vowel but did not
change the pronoun vowel, provide evidence about a cause of the loss of the
case endings. They show that the loss of the endings cannot have been due

just to the loss of final short vowels without something causing internal
changes as well-- as Cantineau maintained---because these words in which the
case vowel dropped did not have the vowel at the end of the word. Rather,
the vowel was inside the word before the pronoun suffix, where it would have
been protected from loss due to dropping of word final vowels. Instead, the
loss here must have been due to either elision of unstressed vowels---dis-
cussed in Section 4.1 above---or to a generalization from other forms. If
this loss was due to generalization from other forms, this suggests two
possibilities.

First, the generalization could have been from pausal forms to context
forms--as Birkeland and Blau maintained. In such a situation, speakers
would have realized that nouns were spoken without their case vowels when
they were alone or at the ends of utterances, and they could have then
started pronouncing nouns inside utterances in the same way. This would no
doubt have been a gradual process, and so one of the last contexts for the ϕ
ending on nouns to be generalized to could well have been that just sug-
gested---nouns with attached pronoun suffixes, particularly nouns used in
religious ceremonies, and particularly nouns directly preceded by prepo-
sitions--which overtly indicated the appropriate case.

Second, the generalization could have come from nouns that had lost
their case endings due to another reason, such as phonetic change or gen-
eralization from pause forms. In this situation, speakers would have real-
ized that some nouns which were in context did not have case endings, so the
motivation to use case endings there would have disappeared, and speakers
could gradually have quit using case forms in context. Again, such a process
would have been gradual, so that nouns in environments that obviously indi-
cated their case, as described above, could well have been the last to lose
their case endings.

Furthermore, the data containing ?ab and ?ax which Blau cites also pro-
vides evidence about a possible cause and a direction of the loss of case
endings. In this data, as Blau notes, by far the prevalent wrong case ending
is -ū-, which is the nominative marker. This suggests that the nominative
form was being generalized as the form for ?ab and ?ax in all positions. The
reason for this is unclear, but a reasonable possibility is that there were
common religious phrases that included ?ab-ū 'father-NOM', which made the
nominative form of ?ab very frequent and the prevalent form in speakers'
minds. If this happened, then it would have been easy for speakers to gen-
eralize ?abū to other positions where ?ab was used. Then speakers could
easily have extended the common use of the nominative case for ?ab to the
closely related ?ax 'brother', using ?axū in most positions as well. If
this happened, speakers could well have been confused about what the appro-
priate use of the case endings was. Such confusion could have been extended
to the use of case endings throughout the whole nominal system, contributing
to their loss.

It is clear that more questions are being raised than are being solved
by this examination of data showing where ASP used, used incorrectly, and
did not use CA case endings. A number of new possibilities have been sug-
gested, though, by this examination, showing that more information can be
gleaned from the data available than has been recognized so far by

researchers. Several of the proposals here also show that the data may
provide a more coherent whole than has so far been demonstrated. For
example, the possibility that case endings may have been retained longer
when followed by a protective environment such as a pronoun suffix, or when
preceded by an overt marker of case such as a preposition provides an
explanation for facts that were previously viewed as exceptions to the
apparent generalizations. In order to settle the questions raised here, a
wider examination must be done of the data available with the goal of
verifying or rejecting these proposals.

4.3. The Accusative Case in Singular and Broken Plural Nouns

4.3.1. The Evidence

   Blau (1966-67: 323-345) describes a number of ASP usages of the indefi-
nite accusative marker -an which occur both in accordance with and contrary
to CA usage. First, in the ASP texts, accusative -an sometimes appears where
it would in CA to mark the triptotic singular and broken plural, and some-
times it does not. While Blau does not discuss the frequency of occurrence
of the accusative marker (except for adverbs—discussed below in Section
4.3.4), he says the occurrences and nonoccurrences alternate 'freely', which
indicates that there is no apparent reason (except for adverbs) for their
occurrence or nonoccurrence. His conclusion is that this is evidence that
the cases have already disappeared and that ASP is a mixture of MA and CA.

   Second, sometimes accusative -an occurs in ASP texts where it would not
in CA. One of these instances is more common than the others--to mark
adverbs regardless of case (discussed below in Section 4.3.4). Of the other
instances which are less widespread in the ASP texts, Blau notes that some
occur in the same categories as in modern Bedouin dialects, and others do
not. While stating that all of these usages probably occurred in ASP speech,
Blau attributes their occurrence in the ASP texts to hyper-correction. He
reasons that since the most common Bedouin usage of -an which is contrary to
CA usage (marking indefinite nouns followed by an attribute) is not found in
the ASP texts, then there must have been no hyper-corrective factors to bring
it into the texts and that, therefore, the other occurrences of -an contrary
to CA usage are due to hyper-correction. He notes that most of these
instances would have required the nominative case and a few of them the
genitive case in CA, but he draws no conclusions from these observations.

   Third, in a manuscript from the 10th century A.D., accusative -an is
often used in every syntactic environment, replacing even the nominative and
genitive endings that would have been appropriate in CA. Sometimes this
manuscript also omits -an even where it was appropriate in CA. Blau states
that this cannot be an idiosyncrasy of the manuscript or of the copyist
since two later (13th century) manuscripts which are unrelated to the first
also exhibit these characteristics. In his earlier work on Judaeo-Arabic,
Blau (1965: 210-211) wonders whether these manuscripts reveal a situation in
which 'tanwīn -un and -in had already disappeared, but tanwīn -an could
be used optionally in every syntactic environment....' In his later work on
ASP, however, Blau (1966-67: 340 n.84) terms his earlier assumption 'rather
daring' because it would force the postulation of 'a very intricate history
of development' of the ASP manuscript and its two related predecessors. So

Blau makes no conclusions about this situation, either.

Once again, these facts point to more information about spoken ASP than Blau deduces. As with the data discussed above in Section 3, the data here do not show conclusively—contrary to Blau—that case endings had already been lost in ASP. The data here do show that the writers of ASP manuscripts were deviating substantially from CA rules and therefore that the case system as it existed in CA was not in spoken use any more (if it was, the writers would not have deviated from it as much as they did). But this does not mean that case endings were completely absent in speech. As with the data in the previous section, this data is consistent with the possibility that some sort of case system or some sense of a case system existed at the time of ASP, and so that possibility merits consideration.

The fact that in these writings the accusative case was used a number of times in place of the CA nominative and genitive cases suggests that the accusative case had some psychological reality for ASP speakers. That is, -an as an indefinite case marker might have still been in use enough that speakers were aware of it as a case marker and so optionally extended it to positions where they knew any indefinite case markers were used. This could have happened if the other case markers had been lost faster than the accusative marker, so that the others lost psychological reality as a whole before the accusative marker did. (The others may still have retained psychological reality in particular contexts where they were overtly marked, as suggested above for the genitive marker when preceded by a preposition.) A reason for the accusative marker being retained longer than the other case markers could have been its greater sonority and therefore perceptibility, as a low or mid vowel, than the other vowels, which are high. This explanation for the ASP data therefore supports the theories of Blau and Cantineau that -a was retained longer than -u and -i due to phonetic factors. It also supports Cantineau's and Blau's claim that at one point in the history of spoken Arabic -an was the only case marker left, while the nominative and genitive markers had already been lost so that many nouns had $\emptyset$ endings at this time.

Furthermore, this theory—that the accusative marker was retained longer than the other case markers and was even optionally extended to the positions of the other markers—is appealing because it can explain some problems raised by Blau and can tie together some conclusions reached from the ASP texts. First, this possibility could explain the lack in the ASP texts of -an marking a noun followed by an indefinite attribute in positions that would have called for the nominative or genitive case in CA, without having to call it a 'remarkable phenomenon' as Blau (1966-67: 329) does. If -an were being or had been generalized in speech to positions formerly occupied by only nominative or genitive markers while a sense of the case system still remained, use of -an to indicate that a noun in any position was followed by an indefinite attribute would stand out as being contrary to the CA case system. It could very well have been avoided by the ASP writers precisely because they used it in their speech but recognized it as a deviation from the preferred usage. One does not, then, have to conclude, as Blau does, that there were no hyper-corrective factors at work on this construction while there were on the other constructions in which -an appears contrary to CA usage in these texts. While possible, Blau's conclusion seems unlikely, since if hyper-correction was at work in most of these situations,

it is odd that it would never be found in one of them. The other usages of
-an could easily have slipped into the writings from speech because they are
less easily identifiable as contrary to CA usage since there are similar CA
constructions which take the accusative case. In such a scenario, then, all
the data are accounted for by the same phenomenon, rather than positing the
existence of one phenomenon in most of the instances but a lack of its
existence in one situation.

Second, this theory could explain the occurrences of -an in all syntac-
tic positions in the one CA manuscript without having to posit a complicated
history of this manuscript and its related manuscripts, which were written
in the century before it was written. If the accusative case marker gradu-
ally spread to positions where formerly only the nominative and genitive
markers were used, then this manuscript could reflect the situation in which
the accusative marker had finally spread to all these positions. The two
related manuscripts which were written earlier could reflect an earlier
situation in which the accusative marker had not yet spread to all the other
positions. Blau (1965: 211) assumes that the use of the accusative case
optionally in all positions (even those in which it occurred obligatorily in
CA) would have been the more archaic stage of these two, calling it 'the old-
est stage of the retention of tanwīn, after the breakdown of the case sys-
tem of Classical Arabic....' But if the occurrence of -an optionally in all
syntactic positions is seen as the end of a process of the accusative case
being generalized to other positions rather than as the beginning of the loss
of tanwīn, then the use of the accusative case optionally in all positions
would follow its use in some positions formerly occupied by case markers. In
such a situation, the problematic ASP manuscript is no longer a problem
because its structure logically comes later than the structure of its chrono-
logical predecessors, so it can credibly be seen as representing that which
it intuitively seems to represent--a stage in the spoken language of ASP.

Finally, as discussed in the next section, this theory of the history of
the indefinite accusative marker in singular nouns and broken plurals would
provide a unified account of the history of the accusative case throughout
the nominal system.

4.3.2. The Oblique Case throughout the Nominal System

Blau (1966-67: 218-226) indicates that in ASP the oblique (accusative
and genitive) case had replaced the nominative case of CA in dual nouns and
in masculine sound (regular) plurals. This is shown by the very frequent use
of -ay(n) in the ASP texts where -ā(n) was used in the nominative of CA
duals, as shown by the following example.

ASP: CA:
hāð/ayn-l-naby-ayn   hāð/ān-l-naby-ān
this/OBL DU-DEF-prophet-OBL DU   this/NOM DU-DEF-prophet-NOM DU

'these-OBL two prophets-OBL'   'these-NOM two prophets-NOM'

The replacement of the nominative case by the oblique case is also shown by
the very frequent use of -ī(n) in ASP texts where -ū(na) was used in the
nominative of CA masculine sound plurals, as shown by the example below.

ASP: CA:
y-urā-l-barān-<u>in</u>   y-urā-l-barān-<u>ūn</u>
3MASC.SG.IMPERF-think-DEF-   3MASC.SG.IMPERF-think-DEF-
  stranger-<u>OBL MASC PL</u>   stranger-<u>NOM MASC PL</u>

'the strangers-OBL think'   'the strangers-NOM think'

Since, according to Blau, these usages are so frequent, the conclusion that
they reflect spoken ASP seems warranted. The theory proposed here that the
indefinite accusative marker was generalized throughout the nominal system
for singular nouns and broken plurals could be combined with Blau's observa-
tions---that the oblique marker replaced the nominative marker in dual nouns
and masculine sound plurals--to yield the general hypothesis that in ASP the
nominative case in nouns was replaced by an oblique case. Such a theory is
appealing because it unifies what have formerly been treated as unrelated
phenomena, suggesting that ASP speakers treated the whole nominal case sys-
tem the same way, rather than treating its different components separately
(excluding, of course, instances of analogy which were confined to specific
lexical items or contexts, such as that described above in Section 4.2.2 for
?ab and ?ax).

4.3.3. Generalization of the Internal Oblique Markers

     The timing of these changes is not clear from these texts, though. As
described above in Section 2, researchers who have included phonetic factors
in their chronology of events in the loss of case endings (cf. Blau and Can-
tineau) have considered such factors to have played a motivating role at the
beginning of the chronology of events in the loss of the case system.
Because of its neatness, it is certainly appealing to assume, as Blau does,
that (1) phonetic factors and generalization of pausal forms to context
brought about the loss of final short vowels, thereby doing away with the
case distinctions that were marked by final short vowels only; and (2) other
case distinctions were subsequently lost by analogy to the forms which had
lost final case endings, since the reason for the case distinctions had
become blurred with the loss of final short vowels.

     However, the generalization of the oblique nominal case markers to nomi-
native contexts in the dual and the masculine sound plural suggests another
possible sequence of changes. Since the oblique markers represented two
cases in CA while the nominative markers represented only one, speakers could
easily have generalized the marker which represented the greatest number of
cases to the positions of the marker which represented fewer cases---without
needing prior dropping of final case vowels elsewhere in the system to blur
the case system and trigger these changes. Such a possibility for the begin-
ning of the loss of case endings is supported by the fact that Blau (1965:
127 n.1) mentions that the oblique case occurs twice in the Qur'ān for the
nominative case in the masculine sound plural, while he states that CA pre-
served short vowels (Blau 1961: 213, 1965: 69, 1966-67: 43), which means that
the phonetic changes did not happen until Middle Arabic. This shows that
the generalization of the oblique marker could occur without being aided by
the phonetic change.

     If the possibility suggested here had been the motivation for the loss

of the case distinction formerly made by internal long vowels, then the chronology of events in the loss of nominal case endings would place this event as beginning first, followed shortly by the phonetic changes and generalization of pausal forms to context. In such a scenario, most of the separate events would have taken place concurrently, and loss of the nominal case distinctions in the dual and the masculine sound plural could have contributed by analogy to the loss of case markers at the ends of words (both with and without a following ⁻n to indicate indefiniteness and definiteness, respectively), rather than vice versa. In this scenario, the whole nominal system would have moved slowly toward the generalization of oblique markers to all contexts, rather than changing one type of marker first, and later changing other types. The timing of these changes may never be known conclusively, but this second possibility deserves to be considered with the more popular first possibility since these early MA documents suggest that it could be plausible.

4.3.4. Accusative ⁻an as an Adverbial Marker

While discussing the occurrences of ⁻an in ASP texts (summarized above in Section 4.3.1), Blau (1966-67: 323-324, 327) notes that adverbs and adverbial constructions which are accusative have the ending ⁻an in ASP more frequently than other types of accusatives do (although they, like all occurrences of ⁻an in these texts, are often omitted as well). Furthermore, in the Greek/Arabic psalm, ⁻an occurs only on an adverb, and in two manuscripts ⁻an is never omitted on adverbs but is omitted other places where it would have been appropriate in CA. Blau concludes that ⁻an had been reinterpreted as an adverbial suffix only (one of its functions in CA) and that non-adverbial occurrences of ⁻an were no longer seen as case markers but were without function. Then the non-adverbial occurrences of ⁻an began to be lost because they had no function, while the adverbial occurrences of ⁻an were retained longer because they had a function. He states, furthermore, that six occurrences of ⁻an on adverbs where CA would have used the nominative or genitive show that ⁻an was extended to these new positions because it was now seen as an invariable adverbial marker and had no function as a case marker.

This conclusion that ⁻an was seen as an invariable adverbial marker in some instances is reasonable, but the evidence does not require that this is the only function that ⁻an had. Since the texts show more frequent instances of ⁻an marking adverbs in positions where it would have occurred in CA than they show ⁻an in any other function it had in CA, it seems that ⁻an as a marker for adverbs was more salient than ⁻an as a marker for any of its other CA functions. If it had high salience as an adverbial marker, it would also have been easy and not surprising for speakers to have extended it to other words that became interpreted as adverbs, as two of Blau's six examples indicate. In these, CA hīna ʔiðⁱⁿ-in-GEN 'at the time when' was interpreted as one word and was spelled with the ⁻an suffix in two manuscripts: hīnaʔiðⁱⁿ-an-ACC 'then'. So these examples do not show that ⁻an had taken on a new, invariable function, but only that one of its CA functions was still salient and productive. There is even an indication that this productivity began in late CA, so that ASP was not innovative regarding the productivity but was continuing a trend that had already started. Blau records that in ASP, ʔawwalan often occurs for CA ʔawwala 'formerly', and he

notes (1966-67: 324 n.23) that this is attested in late CA.

Blau's other four examples, while being consistent with the hypothesis that -an was seen as an invariable adverbial marker, also do not require this as the reason for their use. So they, too, do not show a need for Blau's conclusion that -an was seen only as an adverbial marker at the time of ASP. Two of these occur in the manuscript which uses -an in every syntactic position, so the reason for the use of -an on the two adverbs might easily be that the copyist used -an everywhere, rather than that the copyist used -an to mark adverbs. The other two occur after prepositions, as shown below with the prepositions and the occurrences of -an underlined.

ASP:
(1) bi-yaqīn-an
    with-certainty-case marker

    'certainly'

(2) wa min baSd qalīl-an
    and from after little-case marker

    'and not long after'

Therefore, these examples may be evidence that -an had become an invariable adverbial marker regardless of the case that had been required by CA. However, Blau also lists two other examples of -an used incorrectly (according to CA) in the ASP texts following a preposition, when the words it is attached to are not adverbs. These are listed below with the prepositions and -an underlined.

(1) Pila mawduS[sic] SaSīm-an   wāsiS-an   jiddan
    to   place   big-case marker wide-case marker very'

    'to a big and very wide place'

(2) wa-kān-ū   Panās min banī Pasqū yuhūdiy-an
    and-was-3MASC.PL.PERF people from tribe Sceva Jew-case marker

    'and there were some sons of Sceva, a Jew'.

The existence of these last two uses of -an following a preposition show that sometimes -an was used incorrectly (according to CA) without being an adverb. Therefore, the instances in which it was used incorrectly and was an adverb could have been due to the general reason that CA rules often were not followed, rather than to a specific change of ASP using -an as an invariable adverbial marker.

Therefore, since the uses of -an as an adverbial marker in ASP do not necessarily show--contrary to Blau--that -an was seen in ASP as an invariable adverbial marker, a different explanation may provide a more consistent account of their occurrences. Since, as Blau notes, -an is often missing in ASP manuscripts even when it would have been used in CA to mark adverbs in the accusative, this indicates that the sense of -an as an adverbial marker

was not extremely high in ASP. When considering this with the fact that -an
appears in the ASP texts as an accusative adverbial marker more than it
occurs to mark other accusatives as it had in CA, the strongest conclusion
that can be drawn about -an is that ASP speakers retained a sense of it more
as an accusative adverbial marker than as any other type of marker, but that
even this function was not extremely salient to them.

   Seen in this perspective, then, the use of -an to mark adverbs in ASP is
not very different from its use to mark other functions in ASP--contrary to
Blau's claim. Therefore, this function, which Blau discusses as an exception
to the pattern he proposes, can instead be seen as part of the general pat-
tern proposed above in Section 4.3.2--that ASP was undergoing the process of
extending oblique markers (including -an) to all contexts. This would
explain the last six of Blau's examples discussed above in which -an was used
in non-accusative contexts--whether marking an adverb or not. In fact, this
explanation would provide a coherent account of all the facts about adverbial
-an, while Blau's account raises the questions discussed above. The adver-
bial -an data can, therefore, be taken as additional support of the theory
proposed here, since they show one more way that this theory provides a
coherent account of otherwise somewhat problematic and seemingly unrelated
facts.

5.0. Conclusions

   This reanalysis of data provided by Blau (1966-67) on the Middle Arabic
Southern Palestinian Christian Arabic dialect has suggested a number of new
conclusions about the characteristics of nouns in this dialect and the
changes that brought about these characteristics. These conclusions support
some previous analyses and call others into question. This study has shown
the following:

   (1) The data is consistent with Blau's and Cantineau's claim that a
        stress shift occurred, thereby creating a situation favorable
        for vowels to weaken and drop. However, there is not enough
        data to confirm this hypothesis.
   (2) Contrary to Blau's assertion that case endings had been dropped
        already, the data show that case endings had only sometimes been
        dropped at the ends of nouns and before pronoun suffixes. Case
        endings had sometimes been retained in form in these positions
        but had ceased to carry out their case marking function.
   (3) Contrary to Cantineau and in support of Birkeland and Blau, the
        data show that loss of the single vowel case endings cannot have
        been due just to the loss of final short vowels--something must
        have caused internal changes as well. This could have been
        either elision of unstressed vowels or generalization of pausal
        forms to context position.
   (4) The data support Blau's and Cantineau's assertion that the accusa-
        tive case may have been the last case lost in singular and broken
        plural nouns. It also suggests more than these theories--that
        the accusative ending was optionally extended to the positions of
        the other case endings.
   (5) The data show that the nominative case may have been replaced with
        the oblique case throughout the nominal system, not just in dual

nouns and in masculine sound plurals as Blau indicates. Further-
more, generalization of the oblique case may have begun before
final case vowels were lost.

(6) As Blau asserts, the data show that accusative -an was retained
more consistently as an adverbial marker than in its other func--
tions. However, contrary to Blau, the data indicate that this
was not an exceptional phenomenon but that it was part of the
pattern of generalizing oblique markers throughout the system
(#4 above).

One final point should be made. The change proposed here that the
oblique case (which is often considered to be a marked case), rather than
the nominative case (which is often considered to be an unmarked case), was
generalized throughout the nominal system in Arabic does not follow what has
been claimed to be the most usual direction of morphological change--that
unmarked forms generally replace marked forms rather than vice versa (cf.
Mańczak 1957; and Bybee & Brewer 1980). The situation proposed here is
not unknown in changes in case systems, though. For example, the accusative
case was the basis upon which the singular paradigm was remade between
Ancient and Modern Greek, and it was generalized in the Romance languages as
they evolved from Latin. Although a number of different factors influence
the direction of morphological change--markedness and frequency being very
influential, although not always the most influential (cf. Greenberg 1966,
1969; Mańczak 1957; and Tiersma 1982, who summarizes previous work on
markedness and frequency in morphological change and discusses some
systematic exceptions), it would be reasonable for the ASP oblique
marker--which included the greater number of cases (two)--to be the one that
was generalized throughout the system while the nominative marker--which
included only one case--was lost.

Notes

*I would like to thank Brian Joseph for his helpful comments on several
drafts of this paper.

1. Blau uses these terms frequently in his discussions of MA but does
not define them anywhere. The closest he comes to an explanation is to say
(Blau 1961: 213) that since CA preserves 'short vowels in open unstressed
syllables, it seems necessary to assume a weakly centralizing stress. In
Middle Arabic, however, stress has become strongly centralizing, as may be
inferred from a large number of phenomena,...: final short vowels have
disappeared...; final long ones have been shortened...; and even in the
interior of the word short vowels in open unstressed syllables have been
elided....' Since Blau uses preservation vs. shortening and disappearance
of vowels to define the types of stress, I assume he means that the stress
is either weak (which would allow vowels to be preserved) or strong (which
would allow vowels to be shortened and dropped), and both types also result
in centralization of the vowels. It does not seem to me that he means that
the vowel centralization was first weak and then strong.

2. As Blau (1961: 206-207, 220; 1966: 39) notes, Fück (1950: 5, 57-62)

discusses Middle Arabic briefly, but he relies on his intuitions about its
origins, saying that the details are nearly unknown because there is no
evidence available from that time. The manuscripts analyzed by Blau over-
come this problem, since they begin only two generations after the beginning
of the Islamic conquests and so provide evidence from essentially the time
that Arabic had the impetus from the conquests to change drastically.

3. Blau (1961: 220, 224; 1965: 6-8) states that these early official
Muslim papyri were probably written by scribes who were not native Arabs,
but that, since these scribes were no doubt from the upper stratum of
society, they were probably imitating the speech of their Arab masters and
so were reflecting the speech of the Arabs in the documents. He also notes
that the few deviations from CA found in these papyri are like the devia-
tions found in Arab poetry and ḥadīth writings of the time. While the
first reason is rather speculative, the other two reasons are more conclu-
sive, and so the conclusion seems reasonable.

4. In his summary of Judaeo-Arabic, Blau (1965) specifically declines
to take a stand on the role that a change in stress played in the loss of
the case endings for this dialect. However, Blau (1965: 168-169) argues
that hypothetical phonetic laws and extension of pausal forms to context
probably brought about the loss of case endings, with stress playing an
important role in some of the dialects.

5. Since the case vowels for these two words when followed by connected
complements are the only case vowels that are long in CA, and long vowels are
the only vowels that are normally indicated in the Arabic script, the vowels
in these examples may also be the only case vowels that are indicated in all
of the Arabic ASP writings.

6. Sometimes a change is said to start where an element is redundant,
since the element is apparently not needed there because its purpose is also
indicated by another element. For example, Corriente (1971, 1973) argues
that a cause for the loss of the Arabic case endings was their redundancy.
(But see Blau's 1972 reply.) However, elements are also sometimes retained
longest in environments where they are redundant--as is claimed here. In
Greek, for example, the infinitive is retained longest in contexts in which
its subject is uniquely determinable (e.g. after can and begin) and it is,
therefore, redundant.

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