

REMARKS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOME PRONOMINAL SUFFIXES IN HEBREW

by

JOSHUA BLAU

Hebrew University, Jerusalem

ABSTRACT: The paradigmatic pressure for the preservation of the final vowels of pronominal suffixes after long vowels, where gender opposition could not be marked by the preceding vowel, was strong enough to create in rabbinic Hebrew, in Aramaic, and in Arabic, dialect doublets, viz., suffixes without final vowel after originally short vowels (as rabbinic Hebrew *yādāk* 'your hand'), and those with final vowels after long vowels (as *yādekā* 'your hands').

1. In *Hebrew Annual Review*, R. C. Steiner (1979), among a plethora of stimulating observations, dealt with the 2ms and 3fs pronominal suffixes in biblical and rabbinic Hebrew. In the following, I would like to consider these features from somewhat different angles.

2. As to the 2ms pronominal suffix, in biblical Hebrew in context it invariably terminates in *-kā*, e.g. *yādākā* 'your hand', in pause either in *-āk*, e.g. *lāk* 'to you', or, as a rule, in *-ekā*, e.g. *yādekā*. In rabbinic Hebrew, on the other hand, its usual form is *-āk*, e.g. *yādāk*, after bases ending in a vowel *-kā*, e.g. *yādekā* 'your hands' (for particulars, see Steiner 1979, p. 158). The prevalence of the *-āk* type in rabbinic Hebrew reflects an Aramaism, according to Ben-Hayyim (1954, pp. 63f); Steiner (p. 162) mentions as an additional factor the tendency of biblical Hebrew pausal forms to spread into nonpausal positions in rabbinic Hebrew. Both explanations, however, cannot be considered decisive, Ben-Hayyim's view, because the distribution of *-āk* in rabbinic Hebrew differs significantly from that in Aramaic (as pointed out by Steiner, pp. 161–2), Steiner's sugges-

tion, because pausal forms terminating in $-\bar{a}k$ (such as $l\bar{a}k$) are quite restricted in biblical Hebrew.

3. Accordingly, Steiner (p. 163) submitted that it was analogy to the distribution of the 3fs pronominal suffix $-\bar{a}h/-h\bar{a}$ in biblical and rabbinic Hebrew that limited the borrowing of Aramaic $-\bar{a}k$ (or the spread of pausal $-\bar{a}k$) to positions where $-\bar{a}h$ was already present, and blocked its spread to environments in which $-\bar{h}\bar{a}$ was used. Accordingly, $*y\bar{a}d\bar{a}k\bar{a}$ ¹ changed to $y\bar{a}d\bar{a}k$ on the analogy of $y\bar{a}d\bar{a}h$, but $y\bar{a}d\bar{e}k\bar{a}$ remained, influenced by $y\bar{a}d\bar{e}h\bar{a}$. This, of course, raises the problem of the distribution of the 3fs pronominal suffix in biblical and rabbinic Hebrew.

4. It is generally recognized that the 3fs pronominal suffix after originally short vowels (which have now disappeared) has the form $-\bar{a}h$ (e.g. $y\bar{a}d\bar{a}h$), after long vowels² $-\bar{h}\bar{a}$ (e.g. $y\bar{a}d\bar{e}h\bar{a}$). We owe it to Steiner's insight (pp. 163–64) that originally also forms terminating in a consonant preceding the pronominal suffix governed $-\bar{h}\bar{a}$, e.g. $ki'\bar{a}satt\bar{a}$ 'she angered her', being synchronically identical with $*ki'\bar{a}sath\bar{a}$.³

Cantineau (1937) accounted for the distribution of this and other (also Aramaic and colloquial Arabic) pronominal suffixes by positing a rule of quantitative vowel harmony in Proto-Semitic, according to which the length of the vowel in a monosyllabic pronominal suffix is determined by the length of the base-final vowel. After a short base-final vowel, then, the *a* of the 3fs pronominal suffix was short and, hence, subject to apocope; after a base-final long vowel or diphthong, the *a* of the 3fs pronominal suffix was long and, hence, not deletable.⁴

I do not consider Cantineau's theory well-grounded, not so much because of Steiner's stricture (p. 171) that it fails to explain why the apocopated allomorph (in our case $-\bar{a}h$) is not found after bases ending in a consonant in Proto-Hebrew (it may easily be included in Cantineau's hy-

1. I prefer to posit the rabbinic Hebrew etymon $*y\bar{a}d\bar{a}k\bar{a}$, basing myself on biblical Hebrew pausal forms, see Steiner (p. 162, n. 10) and especially Kutscher (1963, p. 277), contrary to Steiner (p. 163), who derives $y\bar{a}d\bar{a}k$, etc. from $y\bar{a}d\bar{a}k\bar{a}$, etc. Nevertheless, this reconstruction is not without problems, see Haneman (1980, pp. 39–62).

2. And those features, mainly imperfect forms (e.g. $yiq\bar{t}\bar{a}l\bar{e}h\bar{a}$), which have been analogically restructured through the influence of III-y verbs, exhibiting long *e* preceding the pronominal suffix (such as $yig\bar{l}e\bar{h}\bar{a}$, root *gly*). These features have to be mentioned in any synchronic description due to their frequency.

3. It should be noted that $-\bar{a}h$ later intruded into forms after original consonants. This is the case, e.g., after the short imperfect and the imperative. Accordingly, Steiner's (p. 166) wording "only bases which ended in a short vowel in Proto-Hebrew select the allomorph $-\bar{a}h$ in Masoretic Hebrew" needs qualification.

4. I have adopted Steiner's wording (pp. 170–71).

pothesis, by positing a rule of quantitative *syllable* harmony), but rather because of a diametrically opposed tendency obtaining in classical Arabic. As demonstrated by Fischer (1926), the 3ms pronominal suffix in classical Arabic terminates in a long vowel (-*hū*) after short(!) vowels, in a short vowel (-*hu*) after long(!) vowels (and often also after closed syllables), i.e. quantitative vowel disharmony (or even syllable disharmony) obtains. This does not disprove Cantineau's theory; yet it makes it much less likely.

Steiner (pp. 171–72), as an alternative to Cantineau's theory, suggests that apocope was blocked in cases where it would have created an impermissible cluster, i.e., two consonants at the end of the syllable (CVCh) or vowel length plus consonant at the end of the syllable (CV:h). Yet this theory is not flawless either. It is, to be sure, based on the correct supposition (cf. Steiner, p. 168) that, before the loss of case-endings and mood-endings in Proto-Hebrew, syllables could not terminate in two consonants nor could long vowels occur in closed syllables. *Yet with the loss of final short vowels such syllables became permissible.* This means that, at the time of the apocope of the final vowel of the 3fs pronominal suffix (which in all probability coincided with the general loss of final short vowels⁵), such syllables became permissible, so that no blocking took place.

5. In my opinion, the various forms of the 3fs pronominal suffix result from the rule of the elision of *h* in open juncture (i.e., when two morphemes form a single stress unit), their gist being that, after short vowels, *h* in this position was elided, yet after long vowels it was preserved (see Blau 1974, pp. 21–24; 1976, pp. 24–25). Accordingly *mar'eḥā* 'her sight' with long *e* preceding the *h* preserved the *h*, yet *lahā*, with short *a* preceding the *h*, has become *lā* (as Num 32:42). Yet not only did the ending -*ā* mark feminine (*valdā*⁶ being understood as 'girl', rather than 'her boy'), but, because of forms like *'ābīhā*, etc., *h* was considered characteristic of 3fs and therefore again added: *lah*. When directly preceded by a consonant, the *h* was, as a rule, assimilated to it: *ki'šattā*.

6. Still, along with Steiner (p. 163, cf. above par. 3), one could interpret the distribution of the 2ms pronominal suffix in rabbinic Hebrew as being due to analogy with the 3fs pronominal suffix. Steiner (pp. 163–64) has even succeeded in demonstrating convincingly that *higgī'atkā* 'it has reached you, it's yours' is a genuine rabbinic Hebrew form, corresponding to *ki'šattā*,

5. One could claim that final (even long) vowels of pronouns were elided even before the change of the syllable structure rules; cf. *infra* par. 7. Yet even later, with the change of syllable structure, one would have expected the blocking to cease and the final vowel to drop.

6. It is very likely that the feminine ending in Hebrew never terminated in *h*, see Blau (1980, pp. 19–20).

synchronically identical with **ki'āsathā*.⁷ Nevertheless, despite the possibility of such an analogical formation, I would like to submit a more powerful theory, which also explains the distribution of other, Aramaic and colloquial Arabic, pronominal suffixes. I submit that paradigmatic resistance often blocked the elision of functionally significant final vowels of pronominal suffixes. In rabbinic Hebrew, after words originally terminating in short vowels,⁸ the 2ms pronominal suffix was sufficiently differentiated from the feminine one without taking the final *-ā* of *-kā* into consideration; therefore, it was elided (**yādākā* : *yādēk* > *yādāk* : *yādēk*). Yet, after long vowels (and original consonants) these pronominal suffixes differed only in the final *-ā* (*pīkā* : *pīk*); accordingly, it was preserved.

The case of the 2s pronominal suffix in some Arabic dialects, e.g. Cairo (and Damascus), is similar. After original short vowels (e.g. '*andak* : '*andik* 'with you') the final vowels, being functionally insignificant, have been elided. Yet, after long vowels (type *fīk* : *fīki* 'in you') the elision of the final *-i* of the 2fs suffix would have destroyed the masculine : feminine opposition; therefore it was preserved. In contradistinction to Hebrew, presumably by analogy to the *-î* suffix of the imperfect (e.g. *taktubî*), it was the *-i*, rather than the *-a* of the masculine, that was preserved.

In the Arabic dialect of the Bani Kâled of Transjordan, one of the rather limited number of dialects in which the final *-ā* of the 3fs pronominal

7. Cohen (1981, p. 51, n. 7), to be sure, did not accept Steiner's arguments, discarding the possibility of analogy to a nonexistent feature. In my opinion, however, forms like *ki'āsattā* and **ki'āsathā* are, indeed, synchronically identical, as claimed by Steiner. Nor are Cohen's other strictures convincing. *Higgî'atkā* is, indeed, a single form, yet such forms are in general not frequent. Cohen has, to be sure, discovered one(!) form terminating in *-tāk*, yet the later intrusion of *-āk* into forms after original consonants parallels the intrusion of *-āh* into this position, see note 3 above. On the other hand, Cohen's (1981, p. 17) own explanation, that the special vocalization of *higgî'atkā* results from it being a halakic term which denoted dedication to Temple property, has to be taken into consideration. As a matter of fact, Cohen has discovered *-kā* also in expressions of curse. Nevertheless, Steiner's explanation is more attractive.

8. Throughout this paper we have taken it for granted that in Proto-Semitic the system of cases did not differ in absolute and construct (including *status pronominalis*), the construct also having full inflection. For particulars, see Blau (1978, pp. 129b–30a), and Steiner (1979, p. 166, n. 20). Against the theory that nominative and accusative had zero ending in construct, cf. Hebrew prepositions terminating in *-a* preceding pronominal suffixes: *lāk*, *bāk*, *'ōtāk*; for these, see Steiner (1979, p. 170, n. 30). If, in Hebrew at least, the accusative had in fact terminated in zero, Hebrew prepositions with pronominal suffixes would not behave differently from nouns. Only the assumption that the accusative preceding pronominal suffixes was marked by *-a* accounts for the preference of *-a* in prepositions, which originally were adverbial accusatives, whereas in nouns the various case endings alternated.

suffix *-hā* is not preserved in every position, this pronominal suffix has the form *-a^h* (e.g. *beⁱta^h* 'her house') after originally short vowels, *-ha* (type *'abūha* 'her father') after long vowels (Cantineau, 1936-37, pp. 78; 184; Cantineau, 1937, pp. 156-58). One will assume that the final *-a* in *'abūha*, etc., has been preserved in order to differentiate these forms from *'abū^h* ('his father'; for which see Cantineau, 1936-37, p. 180).

In the Arabic dialects of the 'Ömür, the Slût and the Sirhân, the 1s pronominal suffix after verbs has the form *-an* after originally short vowels, yet that of *-ni* after long ones (type *yöntûni* 'they will give me'; Cantineau, 1936-37, pp. 73-75, 176; Cantineau, 1937, pp. 157-58). It seems that in forms in which *-ni* was attached to the 2/3mpl forms of the imperfect, the final *-i* was preserved in order to differentiate these forms from the corresponding imperfect forms without pronominal suffix (to differentiate *yöntûni* from *yöntûn* 'they will give'). By analogy to these forms, the *-i* was preserved after long vowels in general.

In some cases, in accordance with the redundant character of language, both members of the functionally significant opposition of final vowels were retained. Thus in Official Aramaic, after long vowels, both the 3ms and the 3fs pronominal suffixes preserve their final vowels, e.g. *'ăbūhî* : *'ăbūhā*. (After short vowels the opposition between the pronouns is marked by the vowel preceding *-h*, e.g. *rěšēh* : *rěšah* 'his head': 'her head'.)

7. In order to understand how this paradigmatic pressure operated (cf. also Blau, 1979, pp. 7-10), it is worthwhile to observe it in living languages. In the following, I cite one of the finest works on Arabic dialectology that has appeared in the 1970s, viz. Jastrow (1978, pp. 217-18), as to the paradigmatic pressure exercised on the perfect 1s : 2ms : 2fs in modern Arabic dialects. In classical Arabic this paradigm has the form *qataltu* : *qatalta* : *qatalti*. In some Arabic dialects, in fact, despite the paradigmatic pressure, all these forms merged into one (Tunis: *qtalt*). In other dialects, the full opposition has been preserved (Dêr iz-Zôr: *qataltū* : *qatalat* : *qatalti*). In other cases, the 1s and 2ms again merged, but not the 2ms and 2fs (Damascus: *'atalt* : *'atalt* : *'atalti*), or alternatively, the 2ms and 2fs merged, while the 1s remained different (Morocco: *qtelt* : *qteltī* : *qteltī*). Accordingly, paradigmatic pressure creates certain tendencies, which, however, may suffer many exceptions. Thus, in biblical Hebrew, the pausal masculine and feminine *lak* have coincided, and, e.g., in Tunisian Arabic, in which the opposition of gender in the second person has altogether disappeared, it is the original feminine pronominal suffix *-(i)k* that serves for both genders.

Yet, for the somewhat erratic character of the preservation and omission of the final vowels of pronominal suffixes, we have also to take into

consideration that these vowels were anceps.⁹ Accordingly, on the one hand, no real sound shift existed necessitating their deletion. On the other hand, in morphemes as frequently used as the pronominal suffixes are, even final long vowels may be omitted, not only in languages which elide their final short vowels, but also in those which keep them. A case in point is classical Arabic, which, as is well known, preserves even short final vowels. Nevertheless, it *may* elide even final long vowels in pronominal affixes. Thus, the original form of *-tum*, *-kum*, *-hum* in classical Arabic was, no doubt, *-tumū*, *-kumū*, *-humū*. Preceding *wasla*, to be sure, this “reappearing” *-u* is spelt without vowel letter, but this is due to its being always in a closed syllable. Forms of the type *katabtumūhu* ‘you wrote it’ clearly demonstrate the length of this vowel, which nevertheless, was generally elided, whereas other vowels (as in the feminine forms *-tunna*, *-kunna*, *-hunna*) were preserved. This is also the case with Hebrew, Aramaic and colloquial Arabic pronominal suffixes. We have already mentioned the omission of the final vowel even where it is functionally significant (biblical Hebrew pausal *lāk*). On the other hand, the final vowel may be preserved, even where it has no function. So, e.g., in Official Aramaic, the gender opposition in the second person singular after originally short vowels is *-āk* : *-ēkī*, the final *-ī* of the 2fs being preserved in every position, and this is also the case in some Arabic dialects (Negev, cf. Blanc, 1970, pp. 130–31, especially n. 35). In most Arabic dialects, the final vowel of the 3fs pronominal suffix *-hā* is not elided.

8. Nevertheless, in spite of deviations and inconstancies (for particulars, from a different point of view, see Cantineau, 1937), the paradigmatic pressure for the preservation of the final vowels of pronominal suffixes after long vowels (where gender opposition could not be marked by the preceding vowel) was strong enough to create allomorphs in many cases, viz., suffixes without final vowels after originally short vowels, and suffixes with final vowels after long vowels. Such doublets *may* have even become productive, favoring similar rhythmical structures.¹⁰

9. Pace Steiner (1979, pp. 168–69, n. 27), I consider these final vowels, as customary, to be anceps. For the (occasional) length of the perfect affix *-iā*, for instance, see the decisive proofs adduced by Nöldeke (1904, p. 20), thus making also the anceps character of the *a* of *'anta*, *-ka* more than likely. For the length of the *a* of the perfect affix *-inna/-tunna*, see Nöldeke (1904, pp. 24–25), which thus demonstrates the length of the *a* of *'antina/antunna* and *-kinna/-kunna* (and even of *(-)/hinna/(-)/hunna*). For Arabic *hummā*, cf. Jastrow (1978, p. 128)—if not influenced by the dual, cf. the literature cited in Blau (1966-67, p. 134, n. 8).

10. In some cases other factors operated. We have already dealt with the 3fs pronominal suffix in Hebrew (par. 5), which, in our opinion, was affected by the rules of the elision of *h* in open juncture.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ben-Hayyim, Z. 1954. *Studies in the Traditions of the Hebrew Language*. Madrid-Barcelona.
- Blanc, H. 1970. "The Arabic Dialect of the Negev Bedouins." *The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Proceedings IV*, 7:112–50. Jerusalem.
- Blau, J. 1966–67. *A Grammar of Christian Arabic*. Louvain.
- . 1974. "'Iyyunim bətorat hakkinnuyim (kolel 'et hayyiddua') bilšonot šemiyot." *Henoch Yalon Memorial Volume*, pp. 17–45. Eds. E. Y. Kutscher et al. Ramat Gan.
- . 1976. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. Wiesbaden.
- . 1978. "Kinnuyey nistar wənistaret bənun ubil'adeha bə'ibrit hammiqra." *Eretz Israel* 14:125–31.
- . 1979. "Non-Phonetic Conditioning of Sound Change and Biblical Hebrew." *Hebrew Annual Review* 3:7–15.
- . 1980. "The Parallel Development of the Feminine Ending *-at* in Semitic Languages." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 51:17–28.
- Cantineau, J. 1936–37. "Études sur quelques parlers de nomades arabes d'Orient." *Annales de l'institut d'études orientales* 2:1–118; 3:119–237.
- . 1937. "Une alternance quantitative dans des pronoms suffixes sémitiques." *Bulletin de la Société Linguistique de Paris* 38:148–64.
- Cohen, H. 1981. *Kinnuyey hammušša heḥabur 'el happo'al bilšon hammišna 'al pi ktab yad Kaufman*. Master's thesis, Tel Aviv University.
- Fischer, A. 1926. "Die Quantität des Vokals des arabischen Pronominal-suffixes *hu (hi)*." In *Oriental Studies Dedicated to Paul Haupt*, pp. 390–402. Leipzig.
- Haneman, G. 1980. *Torat haššurot šel ləšon hammišna*. Tel Aviv.
- Jastrow, O. 1978. *Die mesopotamisch-arabischen qəltu-Dialekte I*. Wiesbaden.
- Kutscher, E. Y. 1963. "Ləšon ḥazal." In *Seper Henoch Yalon*, pp. 246–80. Jerusalem.
- Nöldeke, T. 1904. *Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft*. Strassburg.
- Steiner, R. C. 1979. "From Proto-Hebrew to Mishnaic Hebrew: the History of *-kā* and *-hā*." *Hebrew Annual Review* 3:157–74.