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The Ugaritic Vocative in Light
of the Akkadian of Ugarit

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Ugaritic uses the following structures in vocative locutions: a) an unmarked noun; b) a noun preceded by the particle *l*; c) a noun preceded by the particle *y*; d) a noun with the 1st pers. sing. pronominal suffix *-y*.[1] The question arises whether an unmarked noun with the vocative function assumed a particular form. The word *ksì* in KTU 1.161,13 (*ksì . nqmd . ibky* "O throne of Niqmadu, be induced to weep"), which clearly has a vocative meaning and can shed light on this question, has been analyzed in a number of ways.[2] The final *i-alif* has been interpreted as the oblique pl. case ending, as a writing for an absent vowel-case, or as an aberrant orthography for *kussi'a*.[3] Alternatively, it can be parsed as a genitive sing. used as a vocative.[4] The question of the vocative in Ugaritic in general and of the parsing of the word *ksì* in KTU 1.161,13 in particular is difficult because of the lack of other passages with a III-*alif* word with a vocative meaning.[5] In approaching the problem two issues must be distinguished: 1) the presence of the final *-i* to mark the vocative; and 2) the nature of this final vowel.

The conclusion that the final vowel *-i* was present on the Ugaritic nouns in the vocative is supported by the distribution of the genitive suffixes of the 1st pers. sing. in the Akkadian of Ugarit. The Akkadian letters and juridical texts from Ugarit consistently use the suffix *-ī* for the vocative and *-ya* for all other

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[1] Tropper, 2000, 313–319. The ways of indicating the vocative described in b) and c) have limited distribution. See Greenstein, 1998, 413–414.

[2] The exhaustive discussion is provided by Taylor, 1985.

[3] For different interpretations and references see Bordreuil/Pardee, 1991, 158.

[4] It is not appropriate to postulate a separate vocative case ending because Semitic languages do not in general possess a distinct vocative case.

[5] For the rejection of Tropper's emendation {l ksì} in KTU 1.161,20, which would provide a parallel to KTU 1.161,13, see Pardee, 2003/2004, 188.

cases.[6] The reason for this distribution of the gen. suffixes in the Akkadian of Ugarit has not been explained satisfactorily.[7] A joint consideration of the data from the texts in Ugaritic and in the Akkadian of Ugarit suggests Ugaritic influence on Akkadian in this case. The generalization of the suffix *-ya* for all cases with the exception of the vocative is clearly an example of the reduction of allomorphism, a phenomenon well attested in the Akkadian of Ugarit and all peripheral dialects of Akkadian. This suffix had been generalized in all peripheral Akkadian but not at Ugarit. [8] One wonders what factor prevented the generalization of this suffix to the vocative precisely in the Akkadian of Ugarit. The singularity of the Akkadian of Ugarit leads to suspect an influence from Ugaritic, the mother tongue of the scribes who wrote this peculiar dialect.[9] Indeed, it is plausible that the ending *-i* on vocatives in Ugaritic was so widespread as to motivate the choice of the gen. suffix *-ī* for the vocative in Akkadian too, and thus to create a secondary opposition *-ī* : *-ya* between the vocative and all other cases.[10] The possibility of such an Ugaritic influence on Akkadian at Ugarit is further suggested by another case of the reduction of allomorphism, the use of the gen. fem. suffix *-ša* instead of the acc. *-ši*. This confusion can be easily

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[6] With a possible exception of Ug. V 21, 9, where one finds *a-bu-ia* in the vocative. See Huehnergard 1989, 126.

[7] For the data and their possible interpretation see Huehnergard, 1989, 125–127, and van Soldt, 1991, 401–403.

[8] For Ugarit see Huehnergard, 1989, 273–274. For the use of the suffix *-ia* for all cases in the letters from Sidon see Arnaud, 2001, 302. The same tendency is detectable in the texts from Emar as noted in Seminara, 1998, 253. Similarly, the suffix *-ia* is found in Carchemish in contexts where *-ī* is expected (Huehnergard, 1979, 30–31). For the Amarna letters, Rainey seems to affirm that the short form *-ī* appears on singular nominatives, accusatives and vocatives while the longer *-ia* is used on genitives and plurals. However, the examples of the suffix *-ī* that he adduces are limited to the nominative singular of the word *bēlu* (Rainey, 1996, vol. I, 71–72). Therefore, one should suspect that these forms are holdovers from an earlier tradition rather than evidence for the conscious and systematic distinction of the suffixes. The same explanation is valid for the Amurru Akkadian, in which one finds just a handful of examples of the suffix *-ī* on the word *bēlu* in the vocative, whereas the majority of the texts use the suffix *-ia* also in the vocative of the word *bēlu* (Izre'el, 1991, vol. I, 97–98).

[9] The possibility of the influence of the local language on the use of the pronominal suffixes in Akkadian is also suggested by their distribution in the texts from Emar. Indeed, the Emariote scribes used the two allomorphs of the suffix of the 1st pers. according to the rules of the Akkadian grammar in the scholarly texts they produced (such as literary and lexical ones) but in the legal texts they favored the suffix *-ia* over *-ī* (Seminara, 1998, 262).

[10] In a very few nouns with the 1st pers. sing. suffix in the vocative in Ugaritic, the suffix is *-y* /-ya/. See Tropper, 2000, 319. The use of the Ugaritic suffix in the vocative would have led to the adoption of the same suffix in the Akkadian of Ugarit and thus it cannot be the factor responsible for the distribution of the suffixes *-ī* and *-ya* in the Akkadian of Ugarit.

explained as an Ugaritic interference since this language had only one suf-
fix, -ha, for all cases. In this case the pressure of Ugaritic was greater because of
the phonic proximity of -ha and -ša.[11] The same phonic proximity of the Uga-
ritic -i on the vocatives and the Akkadian 1st pers. sing. suffix -ī would have
motivated the preservation of the latter in the vocative locutions in the Akkadian
of Ugarit.

The nature of the final -i in the Ugaritic vocatives is a difficult question
which can hardly be answered with certainty. As suggested by Bordreuil and
Pardee and reiterated by Pardee, the vocative particle l could represent a spe-
cialized use of the preposition l, which is regularly followed by the genitive. The
particle l could be dropped, leaving a free-standing noun with the final -i with
vocative meaning, as is the case with KTU 1.161,13.[12] However, against this
attractive proposal militates Huehnergard's analysis of the asseverative l. As he
argues, the Ugaritic vocative lamed originated from the asseverative particle
rather than from the preposition l.[13]

Alternatively, one may suggest the origin of the i-vowel of the Ugaritic voca-
tive in a shortened form of the 1 pers. sing. pronominal suffix which was no
longer interpreted as such by the native speakers of Ugaritic. This suggestion
receives support from Arabic. Indeed, in Arabic this suffix is generally shorte-
ned in the vocative to the i-vowel only and therefore it is noted solely with a
kasra.[14]

The third and probably more plausible explanation considers the final -i on
the Ugaritic vocatives as originating in a sort of a paragogic vowel to make the
vocative meaning more explicit or more emphatic. Although such an explana-
tion must remain hypothetical, it acquires reasonable probability if seen in a
broader Semitic context. For example, one may think about the Akkadian so-
called i-modus which consists in the addition of a final -i mostly to the verbs but
also occasionally to other parts of speech. It seems that it may represent a proso-
dic phenomenon, not yet fully grammaticalized and thus having functions that
vary from highlighting emotionality to coordination.[15] The occurrence of this
marginal i-modus in Akkadian warns us against dismissing too hastily the
possibility that the final i-vowel was used in Ugaritic to mark the vocative. This
possibility remains open, especially if one considers the syntactic nature of the
genitive and the vocative. By its nature the genitive is dependent on a head (pre-
ceded by a noun in the bound form or a preposition) and thus strictly integrated
into clausal constituents, while the vocative is only loosely linked syntactically

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[11] Van Soldt, 1991, 403–404. A more nuanced interpretation is given in Huehnergard, 1989, 128–130.

[12] Bordreuil/Pardee, 1991, 158, and in more detail Pardee, 2003/2004, 188–189.

[13] Huehnergard, 1983, 576–578, 584.

[14] Wright, 1896, vol. II, 87.

[15] Kouwenberg, 2010, 211, note 3.

with its host sentence. It follows that a noun with the final *i*-vowel (which normally marks the genitive) that is not preceded by a head cannot be interpreted with its usual genitival meaning and that its syntactic independence makes its interpretation as the vocative plausible.

In conclusion, the distribution of the 1st pers. pronominal suffixes in the Akkadian of Ugarit results from the Ugaritic substratum interference. Indeed, it can be postulated with probability that the Ugaritic language used a noun with the final -*i* as vocative. Although attested with certainty only in KTU 1.161,13, this use in Ugaritic must have been common enough to exercise influence on the Akkadian paradigm.

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