CHAPTER 9

Terminative-Adverbial and Locative-Adverbial Endings in Semitic Languages: A Reassessment and Its Implications for Arabic

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0 Introduction

This paper proposes a reassessment of the traditional account of the locative-adverbial and terminative-adverbial endings, and argues for the hypothesis that Pre-Classical Arabic attests to relics of locative-adverbial differing from those already known in the literature, as well as to relics of terminative-adverbial, contrary to standard assumptions. Section 1 deals with Semitic endings in general. Section 2 addresses the issue of the relation between case endings and locative-/terminative-adverbial endings, and of their reconstruction in the earlier stages of Semitic languages. Section 3 offers an in-depth treatment of the locative-/terminative-adverbial endings in historically documented Semitic languages—Arabic included—by focusing on their distributional and typological aspects, which have been researched very little. In Section 4 a detailed reconstruction of the locative-/terminative-adverbial endings is developed, also on the basis of the Arabic data and Section 5 provides the main conclusions.

1 The Declensional Paradigms: Data, Analyses and Reassessment

1.1 Semitic Languages

The traditional description of the Semitic N distinguishes between two main declensional paradigms: a three-case system (u/a/i) and a two-case system (u/i), as illustrated in Moscati et al. (1964) and Hasselbach (2013), respectively.

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1 In the writing of this paper I greatly benefited from the suggestions of the audience at the Arabic in Context Congress at Leiden University (November 2013), as well as from the valuable comments by John Huehnergard, Ahmad Al-Jallad and Andrzej Zaborski. I also thank Ahmad Al-Jallad, who kindly suggested to me that Pre-Classical Arabic preserves a terminative-adverbial ending. All the errors are mine.
The sg and, whenever present, broken pl Ns fall into the former paradigm, while the sound pl Ns fall into the latter—no matter their (grammatical) gender and degree of definiteness. If we consider that broken pl Ns arise out of (collective) sg Ns (see, among many others, Fleisch 1961: I, 309), the relevant feature governing the N distribution within these paradigms is number.

Scholars widely agree that Akkadian and (pre-)classical Arabic\(^2\) are the historically documented Semitic languages that have fully productive case systems along the aforementioned lines, while scholars cannot state with certainty that Ugaritic and Old South Arabian belong to this category (see Owens 2006: 86 and the references therein). Accordingly, this paper will primarily discuss the aforementioned declensional paradigms of Semitic languages with regard to Akkadian and (P)CA. (P)CA is traditionally described (cp. Wright 1896) as including a further declensional paradigm, which can be construed as a two-case system (\(u/a\) instead of \(u/i\)) and encompasses several classes of Ns, including compounds (e.g., the toponym \(ḥaḍramawt\) ‘Ḥaḍramawt’). Though insufficient, a necessary feature governing the N distribution within this paradigm is the presence or absence of nunation or a genitive phrase, in the sense that, when co-occurring with these constituents, the Ns that generally take the \(u/a\)-endings convert them into \(u/a/i\)-endings. Finally, according to the traditional description (e.g., Wright 1896: I, 256 ff., II, 239), a ‘singleton’ paradigm is found in (P)CA, based on the \(a\)-ending, and is entered into by only a small set of Ns, the defining character of which is the compound status, as sometimes diagnosed by phonological reduction (e.g., \(ḥamsata-ʿašara\) ‘fifteen’ and \(ʿaḥada-ʿašara\) or \(ʿaḥada-ʿšara\) ‘eleven’). Akkadian’s traditional description does not assign it a two-case system \(u/a\) but recognizes for it the same \(a\)-based and ‘compound-sensitive’\(^3\) paradigm encountered in (P)CA, as exemplified by proper names,

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2 The term pre-classical Arabic (PCA) refers to a language stage between 300 AD to 800 AD, with the so-called Nemara inscription and the death dates of the first two attested grammarians (Sibawayhi, d. 177/798; al-Ḥalīl, d. 175/791), which serve as terminus a quo and terminus ad quem, respectively. It follows that the linguistic data gathered in the grammatical and/or lexicographical work by Sibawayhi and al-Ḥalīl, as well as by subsequent grammarians and/or lexicographers, who take extracts from such work (e.g., Lisān al-ʿArab), will be classified here as instances of PCA. The vexata quaestio of the authenticity of pre-Islamic poetry has no bearing on the validity of the PCA data used by the Arab grammarians and lexicographers, who adduce poetic lines of the jāhiliyyah as further examples of data already known to them, rather than as exclusive evidence (Rabin 1951: 15). Regarding the term Classical Arabic (CA), it refers to a language stage documented from 800 AD to 1500 AD, the death of the polymath al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) being arbitrarily taken here as terminus ad quem for the codification of this language variety. Cp. Grande (2013: 16–19) for further details.

3 In Hasselbach’s (2013: 288) terminology, “two-element names”.