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 t, d, s, and z (t, d, s, z) indicates pharyngealization. A dot under the consonant h (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 –at ‘FEM PL’) and the marker for indefiniteness (–n—called 'nunation' in English, 'tanwin' 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, 'idāfa' in Arabic. In Levantine Arabic, for example, 'university', lit. 'university-FEM SG' (jāmī‘at/) is pronounced [jāmī‘-a]; 'his university', lit. 'university-FEM SG-his' is [jāmī‘-It-aa]; 'her university', lit. 'university-FEM SG-her' is [jāmī‘-It-ta]; 'Yarmouk University', lit. 'University-FEM SG-Yarmouk' is [jāmī‘-It yarmūk]; and 'The University of Jordan', lit. 'University-FEM SG DEF-Jordan' is [jāmī‘-It il-?urdu]. 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 (–in) which is closely connected to it.
Table 1: Classical Arabic Case Endings and their Modern Remnants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classical Arabic</th>
<th>Modern Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINGULAR</td>
<td>(F)</td>
<td>(M&amp;F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>-at</td>
<td>-u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>-at</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>-at</td>
<td>-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUAL</td>
<td>(F)</td>
<td>(M&amp;F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>-at</td>
<td>-āni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>-at</td>
<td>-ayni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>-at</td>
<td>-ayn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGULAR PLURAL</td>
<td>(F)</td>
<td>(M)/(F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>-āt</td>
<td>-ūna/-u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>-āt</td>
<td>-ına/-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>-āt</td>
<td>-ına/-ı</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRREGULAR (BROKEN) PLURAL = STEM CHANGING</td>
<td>(M&amp;F)</td>
<td>(M&amp;F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>φ</td>
<td>-u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>φ</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>φ</td>
<td>-a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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)V(n)# in singular and broken plural forms in context (non-pause) position became φ 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 $\phi$ 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--$\phi$--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 idāfa);
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 $u$ and $i$) were weakened and so were subject to loss in open syllables. Therefore, first the nominative marker $-u$ became $\phi$, and then the genitive marker $-i$ became $\phi$. After these changes, only the accusative marker $-a$ 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 $\phi$, and $-in$ became $\phi$.
3. A phonetic sound change made context $-a$ and pause $-\alpha$ ($-\text{an}$) become $\phi$. After this change, context $-\text{an}$ was the only case ending left.
4. Then $-\text{an}$ in context became $\phi$ due to morphological rebuilding (by analogy to the other forms which had $\phi$ 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, 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. ū and ţ dropped first because they were weaker than ɹ. 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 ɹ.

(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) syllables, so accusative -ə became ɹ. 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 ɹ 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 (-in) replaced the nominative markers (-an and -ün, 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. These are the writings of non-Arabs during the first five or so centuries of Arab rule (approximately 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 opportunity for extensive changes in Arabic to take place, due to the intermingling 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 malpropisms (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 ٍ or َ 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 ـ when the dialectal pronunciation no longer included the ـ; 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of instances</th>
<th>ASP Vowel (underlined)</th>
<th>for CA Vowel (underlined)</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ουδεμίσθη</td>
<td>ω-ι-σαωδια</td>
<td>and the streams'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>αεγκαλ</td>
<td>ιαραλ</td>
<td>'perhaps'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ιεγκαρ</td>
<td>γα-βορ</td>
<td>'can'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>εσειδε τ</td>
<td>ισταφαλ-at</td>
<td>'was kindled'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ϕαιδε τ</td>
<td>ϕα-σαλ-at</td>
<td>'and it gushed out'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>εα (same text)</td>
<td>ε</td>
<td>'heaven'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>εορνρ ~ εονρ</td>
<td>σαμα</td>
<td>'to them'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>λευρ ~ λαυρ</td>
<td>λα-χομ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>μχαδίρα</td>
<td>μα-χαδιρα-a</td>
<td>'ability'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>υδρμν</td>
<td>γα-βορ</td>
<td>'he will beat'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>υασιρ</td>
<td>γα-σιρ</td>
<td>'he will become'</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>δόδα</td>
<td>ιβδαν</td>
<td>'much'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>εσειδε τ</td>
<td>ισταφαλ-at</td>
<td>'was kindled'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>υσημο</td>
<td>σιμ</td>
<td>'peace'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>μηση</td>
<td>μιση</td>
<td>'haircloth'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>τηηουρ</td>
<td>τυυυρ</td>
<td>'fowels'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ϑ (written as</td>
<td>α</td>
<td>'therefore'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ϑαρα</td>
<td>ϑαρα-σαρ</td>
<td>'Mamre'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ϕαιδε τ</td>
<td>ϕα-σαλ-at</td>
<td>'and it gushed out'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>λεσιλικ</td>
<td>λισιλικ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 y occur in Arabic—and frequently—it would not be surprising if the non-native speakers of Arabic occasionally mixed up the prefixes which contained y and a. If ASP y 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 y for a substitutions noted by Blau and listed here should not be included in data showing that vowel quality in ASP was inconsistent.

The data in Table 2 shows that CA a, i, u, and ə were subject to phonological change in ASP and that, in general, the change was centralization: æ>ɛ, i>ɛ, and ə>ɛ. Also, occasionally i and u were interchanged. Centralization 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 ə; not ı or y; but a, ı, 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 -a are sometimes written with a in ASP, and CA -i 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 sukun, 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 ?alif, symbolized !) is sometimes added before an initial consonant that was followed by a short vowel in an open unstressed syllable in CA. Blau reasoned 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 ʕayhu ([ʕalayhim]) was written in ASP as ?ālyhu (['ʕaʕlayhim]).

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.\textsuperscript{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 (μενεξέ) for ἀδιδαν 'much', where -α for -ι 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:**

(1) oαψουβζ... καίσεδ—

wa-xulz-a-n...mə5?id-at-a-n

and-bread-ACC-INDEF...table-FEM SG-ACC-INDEF

'the bread...table'

(2) αυςουμη—

luhūm-a-n

meat-ACC-INDEF

'meat'

Case endings are not listed in the Greek/Arabic psalm even when the noun occurs in the 'construct state' ('ihdaf construction' in Arabic)—a syntactic construction made up of a series of nouns which indicate possession of N1 by N2 and—if three nouns occur—N2 by N3. 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, however, such nouns are written in their pause forms, and he gives the following example.

**ASP:**

oαψειψ...ραμή

elbouχυψ

wa-mi8l-l ḫaml-l-buḥūr

and-as-GEN sand-GEN-DEF-sea

'and as the sand of the sea'

In this example, the case vowel of CA mi8li was not written in the ASP text, and Blau says that the case vowel of CA ḫaml also was not written in the ASP. Since Greek ὅ—which occurs in this text after the Greek for ḫam—i—is a vowel, though, this could be the i of ḫaml. 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 ὅ was not the i from ḫaml), or nearly lost these distinctions (if the ὅ was the i from ḫaml).

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 ʔax 'brother', which is in the construct state, ends in the form of a CA case ending which is an incorrect ending for this context: ʔax-ʔ ('brother-NOM') signalled the nominative case in CA, but this construction required a genitive marker (-i) on this noun.

ASP:

(1) l(i) y(ʔ)ʕ̲q̲ūb ?(ʔ)x-ʔ r(u)b-nā
to James brother-NOM lord-our
'to James, the brother of our lord'

(2) r(i)sāl-ʔ y(ʔ)ʕ̲q̲ūb ?(ʔ)x-ʔ 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 discussed 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) xaʔ.ʔeʔ-ʔ̲w̲ā desire-FEM SG-ACC-their (MASC)
'their desire'

(2) kâd-ʔ̲w̲ā 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) ḏljaw.ʔaʔ.ʔ̲w̲ā with-idols-GEN-their (MASC)
'with their idols'
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 susceptible 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 ү) was used. The seven which are examples 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 ?ab in an example that includes three instances of ?ab—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 ʾa—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 ?ab 'father', ?ax 'brother', ?awān 'idols', and manxūtāt 'graven images'—or religious words in general—might have been preserved longer in their older forms (followed by case vowels) than other nouns in ASP were, because of having a special 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 diffusion. The forms followed by pronoun suffixes could have been preserved longer than the forms without these suffixes, due to protection by the suffixes. 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 ?ab and ?ax, 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 ?ab and ?ax 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 following either current pronunciations or recent pronunciations (exhibited by
a sense that a vowel should be attached after a noun in particular environments. 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 pronounced 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 ɨ) 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, ɨ-hi 'he' has become ɨ-hi in vowel harmony with the preceding (here, missing) genitive marker -ɨ, as shown by the underlinings in the reproductions of Blau's examples below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASP:</th>
<th>for CA:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) λι-σαβ-ɨ-hi</td>
<td>λι-σαβ-ɨ-hi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for-people-GEN-his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'for his people'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) χαλα-χαλασ-ɨ</td>
<td>χαλα-χαλασ-ɨ-hi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in-salvation-GEN-his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'in his salvation'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 phenomenon 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 -ɨ 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 -ɨ with the genitive case marker -ɨ. This use of the genitive marker could have been fostered by speakers hearing these expressions pronounced with -ɨ 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-σαβɨ-hi → li-σαβɨ-hi. Then hearers could have reanalyzed the -ɨ 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 -hī 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 preserved 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 element (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 ...dīwat-nā ?iyā-h
sonship father-NOM-our...call-our particle-him

?ab-ū-nā ... w-?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) mī ?ab-ū-hmā
with father-ACC-their (DU) (incorrect case vowel)

'with their father-ACC'
Of these six examples which begin with a preposition, two follow the noun with -\(i\) (which is the correct ending in CA when the noun also has an attached pronoun suffix), one follows with an accusative marker (\(\tilde{a}\)), and the other three with nominative markers (\(\tilde{u}\)). The two which have the genitive 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 \(\text{?ab}\) and \(\text{?ax}\) 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 contradict 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 endings 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 contained 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 pab and pax (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-7awOān-į him**
   - with-idols-GEN-their (MASC)
   - 'with their idols-GEN'

2. **bi-manxüt-āt-i-him**
   - with-graven image-FEM PL-GEN-their (MASC)
   - 'with their graven images'

3. **li-šaḥb-į hŷ**
   - for-people-2-his
   - 'for his people'

4. **šalā šalāš-į hŷ**
   - in salvation-3-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 pab and pax 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 correct 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 pab and pax 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 preceded 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 expressions, 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— discussed 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 pause 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 ending on nouns to be generalized to could well have been that just suggested— nouns with attached pronoun suffixes, particularly nouns used in religious ceremonies, and particularly nouns directly preceded by prepositions—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 generalization from pause forms. In this situation, speakers would have realized 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 indicated 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 provides 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 ~uy, 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-uy '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 generalize ?ab-uy 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 ?ax-uy in most positions as well. If this happened, speakers could well have been confused about what the appropriate 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 suggested, 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 indefinite 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 triptic singular and broken plural, and sometimes 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 Judeo-Arabic, Blau (1965: 210-211) wonders whether these manuscripts reveal a situation in which 'tanwin -un and -in had already disappeared, but tanwin -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 -an 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 no 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 -\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\) 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 -\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\) in all syntactic 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 gradually 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 oldest stage of the retention of tanwin, after the breakdown of the case system of Classical Arabic...'. But if the occurrence of -\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\) 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 tanwin, 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 chronological 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 -\(\text{\textasciitilde}ya\(\text{\textasciitilde}_n\) in the ASP texts where -\(\text{\textasciitilde}a\(\text{\textasciitilde}_a\) was used in the nominative of CA duals, as shown by the following example.

\begin{verbatim}
ASP:  CA:
ha\#/\$yn-1-naby-a\#a  ha\#/\$an-1-naby-\#a
this/OBL DU-DEF-prophet-OBL DU  this/NOM DU-DEF-prophet-NOM DU
'these-OBL two prophets-OBL'  'these-NOM two prophets-NOM'
\end{verbatim}

The replacement of the nominative case by the oblique case is also shown by the very frequent use of -\(\text{\textasciitilde}\(\text{\textasciitilde}_n\) in ASP texts where -\(\text{\textasciitilde}n(n)\) was used in the nominative of CA masculine sound plurals, as shown by the example below.
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 observations—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 system 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 Pāb and Pāx).

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 Contineau) 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 vowels, 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 nominative 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 beginning 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 preserved 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 prasal 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 -an 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 bina?i? in-GEN 'at the time when' was interpreted as one word and was spelled with the -an suffix in two manuscripts: bina?i? -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, ?ama?ala often occurs for CA ?ama?ala 'former', 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 \(-\text{an}\) 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 \(-\text{an}\) was seen only as an adverbial marker at the time of ASP. Two of these occur in the manuscript which uses \(-\text{an}\) in every syntactic position, so the reason for the use of \(-\text{an}\) on the two adverbs might easily be that the copyist used \(-\text{an}\) everywhere, rather than that the copyist used \(-\text{an}\) to mark adverbs. The other two occur after prepositions, as shown below with the prepositions and the occurrences of \(-\text{an}\) underlined.

**ASP:**

(1) bi-yaqin-an
with-certainty-case marker
'certainly'

(2) wa min bahd qalil-an
and from after little-case marker
'and not long after'

Therefore, these examples may be evidence that \(-\text{an}\) had become an invariable adverbial marker regardless of the case that had been required by CA. However, Blau also lists two other examples of \(-\text{an}\) 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 \(-\text{an}\) underlined.

(1) pila sawdun[sic] fa\(\text{\text-dash}3\text{\text-dash}an\)
big-case marker wide-case marker very
'to a big and very wide place'

(2) wa-kum-\(\text{\text-dash}3\text{\text-dash}an\)
and-\(\text{\text-dash}3\text{\text-dash}MASC.PL.PERF\)
people from tribe Sceva Jew-case marker
'there were some sons of Sceva, a Jew'.

The existence of these last two uses of \(-\text{an}\) following a preposition show that sometimes \(-\text{an}\) 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 \(-\text{an}\) as an invariable adverbial marker.

Therefore, since the uses of \(-\text{an}\) as an adverbial marker in ASP do not necessarily show—contrary to Blau—that \(-\text{an}\) 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, \(-\text{an}\) 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 \(-\text{an}\) 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 pattern 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 adverbial -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 accusative 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. Furthermore, 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 functions. 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.

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 overcome 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 deviations found in Arab poetry and hadith writings of the time. While the first reason is rather speculative, the other two reasons are more conclusive, 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.

References


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