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FINAL KA(-MĀ), A SHARED INNOVATION OF (TRADITIONAL) SOUTH SEMITIC

There has been much talk in the last decades, since Garbini 1960, about the need to overhaul the traditional classification of Semitic languages developed between the last portion of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, not only in order to accommodate new members, like Ugaritic and Eblaitic at least, but also and mainly by ushering a heretofore ignored subgroup, namely, the Central Semitic branch, exclusively represented by Arabic.

This proposal has met the approval of many established scholars,¹ particularly those concerned with Comparative Semitics and branches other than (traditional) South Semitic, quite symptomatically more so than specialists in Arabic, South Arabian and Ethiopic studies.² Most of these, however, have preferred not to comment much on this issue, we think because, strangely enough, it has acquired some ideological undertones, or at least of school affiliation, unbecoming of true scholars and better not to be entangled with in any case. Probably also, they have considered this issue a minor one but, in our case, and since Corriente 2003, we have deemed it necessary to take explicit exception to that proposal, and this we have done in several papers.³ In them, we have pointed to the weaknesses of the arguments brought forward in favour of that modified classification,⁴ and stated instead that:

1) The rather minor feature of glottalisation instead of velarisation is retained for /t/ by some Arabic dialects of Higher Egypt⁵ and has otherwise generated the substitution of /ʔ/ for /q/ in most Arabic urban dialects.

¹ E.g., Diakonoff 1988 and Hetzron 1997.

² And even an Arabist and generalist like Grande 1998, who sticks to the traditional classification.

³ Namely, in addition to that paper of 2003, in our articles of 2004, 2005 and 2006. See also our lengthy review of Belova *et al.*

⁴ See, e.g., Alice Faber in the chapter “The position of Arabic” of Hetzron 1997, p. 9.

⁵ See Fischer & Jastrow 1980:209. We have personally checked this point with native speakers.

2) The seeming absence in Arabic of geminate imperfectives is a mere prescriptive mirage, generated by the native grammarians' views and descriptive methods, above all a concept of analogy (*qiyās*), which excluded certain dialectal and supposedly "freak" features from their selective canon⁶.

3) There is no generalization of vowels in the prefixes of imperfectives within entire paradigms as soon as we go again beyond the narrow limits of standard descriptions of Classical Arabic and discover that *taltalah*, i.e., palatalisation of those vowels was common in Old Arabic dialects and is regular in the modern ones.

4) The generalization of {-tV} in the suffixes of perfective is again a very minor feature, with exceptions in some old and modern dialects of Arabic of the Yemenite area⁷. On the other hand, the acoustic likeness between /k/ and /t/ may have facilitated their mutual substitution, as suggested by the case of some Moroccan Jewish dialects, studied by our late friend and very knowledgeable specialist Simon Lévy.⁸

5) There is no negative *bal* in Arabic, but only an adversative conjunction of that shape meaning "but", this being besides a second-rate syntactical tool totally devoid of meaningful impact in any linguistic classification.

However, and since the proponents of the new arrangements are so heavily and rightly dependent on modern comparative linguistic theory, which attaches more weight to shared innovations⁹ than to retentions, i.e., preservation of old features, generally prone to disappear from younger phases of any linguistic family,

⁶ As expounded in our paper of 1976. About this particular issue, we have provided hundreds of examples of such items in our aforementioned article of 2004; if only because of the negative consequences derived from that incomplete picture of Arabic reality, the study of Arabic dialectology should be a must for every scholar interested in comparative Semitic grammar and lexicon: after all, this is the only basic Semitic tongue about which we have the most complete and even living picture, if only we are prepared to use it with profit.

⁷ See Conte Rossini 1931, p. x, and Fischer & Jastrow 1980, pp. 117-120. The secondary nature of this shift is proven by the very fact that the opposite shift has occurred in the 1st person sg. in every Semitic language which has not {-t} > {-k} in the 2nds, but for the Akkadian stative.

⁸ See his book, issued in Saragossa 2009, pp. 315-317, one of the last publications of the Instituto de Estudios Islámicos y del Oriente Próximo, before it was suppressed, like some years ago the Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura at Madrid, by the unspeakable combined action of some colleagues' envies and ill-will and the pathetic institutional ignorance of local patrons.

⁹ Thus, Hoenigswald 1960:151 speaks of "the famous principle that subfamilies are established on the basis of shared innovations", but he next (p. 152 ff.) warns of overlapping innovations, as in the case (p. 154) of a "shared" replacement owing its recurrence from sister language to sister language to the "accident" of independent identical change. This was suggested by Rundgren as an explanation for the seeming identity between the geminate imperfectives of Akkadian and Ethiopic but, otherwise, the proponents of the Central Semitic hypothesis have not paid sufficient attention to those "accidents". They might be present in some of the cases considered by them as decisive in order to separate Arabic from South Semitic, like the substitution of -tv for -kv suffixes in the 1st and 2nd persons of the perfective.

it might be appropriate to look for such instances in the languages integrating the South Semitic sub-branch of the old “Brockelmannian” classification, which we so markedly prefer.

Such is apparently the case of the final conjunction *ka(-mā)* “in order to”, and its varieties which, though absent from North and East Semitic,¹⁰ are consistently shared by the three South Semitic sisters, namely:

Epigraphic South Arabian: *ky*,¹¹ matched by the standard tools of Classical Arabic *kay* and *li-kay*.

Ethiopic (Geʿez): *kāmā*, standard and basic tool for this function, e.g., in Dillmann 1865:826-30, rendered as (*ita*) *ut*, with many examples, e.g., *männu anā kāmā əḥur* “who am I in order to go...”, and Chaine 1938:214, e.g., *tägabʾu kwellomu däqiqä əsraʾel ... kamä yəʿrägu* “all the sons of Israel met together in order to go up...”.

Arabic: in addition to the aforementioned standard (*li*)*kay*, there are also some rare instances of *kamā*, e.g., Reckendorf 1822:459: “sehr selten ... *imnaḥ ʾarfa ʿaynika ʾgayranā kamā yaḥsabū* “: “concede the glance of your eyes to others, so that they believe ...”, *ǧāʾat kabīrun kamā uḥaffirahā* “K. came so that I protect them”, and *lā taḍlimū nnāsa kamā lā tuḍlamū* “do not do wrong to people, so that you are not wronged”.¹² Granted that this feature in Arabic is often a mere consequence of South Arabian interference,¹³ it comes as no surprise that it be relatively frequent in dialects with a strong influence of that kind, like Andalusī Arabic, e.g., *maṭmūra maftūḥa kama tuhrāj minna alqastāl* “a silo opened in order to take out chestnuts” or, in Alcalá’s materials, p. 33/13 *queme yuḍcāru* “so that they are mentioned”, and *quemix* “in order not to”.¹⁴

From a diachronic viewpoint it is obvious that this final connotation has developed in an understandable and panchronically well-attested evolution from the original temporal and firstly comparative value of pan-Semitic *kv-*,¹⁵ which has retained the temporal function as well in South Semitic, e.g.,:

¹⁰ In his symptomatically short section about conjunctions, Brockelmann 1908:I 502-502 includes Hebrew *ki*, Syriac *kay* and Assyrian *ki* as “final”, but with their “original meaning”, i.e., an explanatory “*dass*”. Precisely because, as he says, “Da die Ausbildung eines komplizierteren Satzbau erst in den einzelnen Sprachen erfolgt ist, so stimmen sie nur in wenigen, primitiven Konjunktionen miteinander überein”, this shared feature is quite momentous for the general classification of Semitic.

¹¹ See Bauer 1966: 106: *wky wḡw* “in order to make peace”, with the allomorphs *kdm l*, *kl*, *kdl*, *klkdy l*, in which the reinforcement by pan-Semitic /l-/, also an allomorph itself, is obvious.

¹² Further proof of a shared development is the fact that both Arabic and Ethiopic require the subjunctive mood of verbs after *kamā*, *kay*, etc. In the case of Epigraphic South Arabian, unvocalized script makes nearly impossible to establish such a difference, see Grande 1966: 71.

¹³ Which, for Andalusī Arabic above all was surveyed in detail in Corriente 1989.

¹⁴ See Corriente 1977:136 and 1992: 118.

¹⁵ Pan-Semitic comparative *ka-* exhibits examples in all branches of Semitic, see Brockelmann 1908:I 496, with Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic and Assyrian witnesses. Temporal *kī(mā)*

ESA: *bkn*, e.g., *bkn tclmy* “when they both signed”.¹⁶

Modern South Arabian: (Mehri) *k(ə)* “at, in (of time)”, in Johnstone 1987:200.

Ethiopic: where comparative *kāmā* is standard in Ge‘ez, cf. Dillmann 1865:826-30, with many examples translated as *ut, sicut, quomodomo*, and the temporal function is also attested with the rendering *quando*, generally preceded by *əm*, e.g., *əmkāmā gäsäski* “when you touched”. In Amharic, according to Cohen 1970:301, comparative *kə* is felt as old-fashioned and mostly replaced by *kām*, while in Tigre, *kām(sal)* is temporal, e.g., *kām baṣṣhaka* “when you arrived”, *kāmsal abrəḥa* “when he switche it on”.¹⁷

Arabic: according to Reckendorf 1822:459, *kamā*, “est ist in zeitlichen Sinne selten ... *kamā yaqaʿu lḥaḡar taḥruḡu ahlu dḡayʿatayni mina nnisāʾ*”: “when the stones fall the women of the tow villages go out ...”. As could be expected, given its south Arabian connections, in Andalusi Arabic, this value is attested in many instances, e.g., Ibn Quzmān 23/6/1 *kamā jīt min annazāha* “when I came from the feast”, 91/4/2 *kamā asbāh* “when the morning arrived”,¹⁸ etc., and there are cases of causal meaning, as In Quzmān 88/2/3 *kamā ṭalāc larruqād* “because he went up for a nap”.

Summarizing, in the process of creating their own systems of subordinating marks, particularly in this case the final conjunctions, it appears that the South Semitic languages of the traditional classification, Arabic, South Arabian and Ethiopic have found and followed a common way, different from that of North and East Semitic and not attributable to overlapping in Hoenigswald’s terminology. This is further proof of the fallacy of the Central Semitic theory.

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is normal in Akkadian, according to Ungnad-Matouš 1964: 109 and 130-131, as well as in the nominalizing function (*dass-Sätze*, *ibid.*, p. 132-133). In Biblical Hebrew, temporal *kə*, *ki* or *kaʿāšer*, starting from the function of markers of co-occurrence, have acquired universal temporal value, according to Joüon 1947, 510-512.

¹⁶ Bauer 1966:105.

¹⁷ Raz, 1983: 92-93.

¹⁸ After Corriente 1977:136.

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