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**THE PROTHETIC VOWEL (*waṣla*)
IN CLASSICAL ARABIC**

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Now we may tentatively write some rules:

- $e \rightarrow u / _ CCu$ except *ibnun, istun, imru'un*
 $e \rightarrow u / aw _$ except *'aw, law*
 $e \rightarrow \emptyset / V _$
 $e \rightarrow i / _$ (elsewhere)

Adding now the junctures & (word boundary before *waṣla* in context), # (sentence boundary) and + (morpheme boundary⁴) we may discuss the first rule.

On the lexical level we have *ektub, estuf^cila*, but *ebn+un, est+un*. Thus, we see that the regressive assimilation of *e* to *u* is not possible over a boundary (+). In *imru'un* the lexical form is *emrV'+un*, *V* being assimilated to the casus vowel (*imru'un, imra'an, imri'in*). The etymological root vowel is either *a* or *i*, certainly not *u*.⁵ Accordingly we may write rule (1):

- (1) $e \rightarrow u / \# _ CCu$ (N.B. not / # $_ CC+u$)

Turning our attention to $e \rightarrow u / aw _$ we note that *-u-* in *ramaw-u-lmusli-mu:na* and *muṣṭafaw-u-lla:hi* is no auxiliary vowel but an etymological vowel appearing before &. ⁶ Compare

lexical level: *ramay+u*:⁷
 realization: *ramaw∅∅∅*
 and
 muṣṭafaw+un
 muṣṭafa∅∅∅n
 to
 ramay+u:&El+muslimu:na
 ramaw∅u∅∅∅l∅muslimu:na
 and
 *muṣṭafaw+u&Ella:hi*⁸
 muṣṭafaw∅u∅∅lla:hi

So we have no rule $e \rightarrow u / aw _$, but instead $e \rightarrow i / aw\& _$:

law&enfa^cala
law∅infa^cala

The semivowel *w* is handled just as any other consonant.⁹

Thus we may write rules

- (1) $e \rightarrow u / \# _ CCu$

<i>minÄ&ebnihu</i>	<i>minÄ&El+rağuli</i>
<i>minØØibnihi</i>	<i>minaØØrØrağuli</i>
<i>El+rağulu</i>	<i>qa:la&El+rağulu</i>
<i>arØrağulu</i>	<i>qa:laØØrØrağulu</i>
<i>baytiyA&Elladi:</i>	<i>fi: baytiyA</i>
{ <i>baytiØØØlladi:</i> }	<i>fi: bayti:Ø</i>
{ <i>baytiyaØØlladi:</i> }	

With these rules and a mini-lexicon we have overcome the difficulties of an automatic analysis of *wağla*. Still, it remains to be proved that the doublets *minÄ*, *El*, *+(n)iyA* are no imaginary crutches helping us in the automatic analysis, but that *mina*, *al*, and *+(n)iya* are really existing variant forms of *min* etc., and *a* cannot be considered a realization of *e*.

+(n)iya may well be the etymological form for 1st person suffixes or it may have been formed by analogy from *+ya* in *cağa:+ya*.¹² In both cases it is clear that *baytiy-a-lladi:* cannot be analyzed as follows

baytiy&Elladi:

baytiyØalladi:

but must be analyzed

baytiyA&Elladi:

baytiyaØØlladi:

In the article we have two accepted variant forms; context form *el* and sentence-beginning form *al*, of which the latter is older.¹³

Brockelmann¹⁴ derives the preposition *min* from the root \sqrt{mny} , which would explain the longer form *mina*. However, this is highly speculative and in no way convincing. I would rather draw attention to two parallels which are better attested; firstly in Arabic we have a doublet *li/la*, and secondly in Ge^cez the prepositions take an obscure ending *-a*.¹⁵ In addition to these we have some data from pre-Islamic dialects. Quda^ca-tribe is said to have a preposition *mina:*, whereas in some other dialects the *n* of *min* is assimilated to the article (*mil-*).¹⁶ According to Rabin the final vowel is inherent.¹⁷ Furthermore, we have in Akkadian doublets *an/ana* and *in/ina*, the latter being used in some dialects in ablative functions.¹⁸ Why this longer *mina* is attested only before the article is not clear to me.¹⁹

Thus we can state that the prothetic vowel *e* in Classical Arabic is realized as *i*, *u* or \emptyset according to rules

- (1) $e \rightarrow u / \# \text{ ____ } CCu$
 (2) $e \rightarrow \emptyset / V(:)\& \text{ ____ }$
 (3a) $e \rightarrow i / C\& \text{ ____ }$
 (3b) $e \rightarrow i / \# \text{ ____ } CC -u$

and a mini-lexicon

' <i>antumU</i>	<i>muḏU</i>
<i>humU</i>	+ <i>iyA</i>
+ <i>kumU</i>	+ <i>niyA</i>
+ <i>humU</i>	<i>minĀ</i>
+ <i>tumU</i>	<i>EL</i>

which is accompanied by rules for the realizations of *U*, *A*, *Ā* and *E*

- $U \rightarrow u / \text{ ____ } \&$
 $U \rightarrow \emptyset / \text{ ____ } \text{ (elsewhere)}$
 $A \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \emptyset \\ a \end{array} \right\} / \text{ ____ } \&$
 $A \rightarrow \emptyset / \text{ ____ } \text{ (elsewhere)}$
 $\dot{A} \rightarrow a / \text{ ____ } \&EL$
 $\ddot{A} \rightarrow \emptyset / \text{ ____ } \text{ (elsewhere)}$
 $E \rightarrow a / \# \text{ ____ }$
 $E \rightarrow e / \text{ ____ } \text{ (elsewhere)}$

NOTES

* This paper is a part of a larger work on automatic morphological analysis of Classical Arabic, which is supported by Suomen Kulttuurirahasto.

1 See e.g. Fischer (1972) §20.

2 *e* is of course not a phoneme, but for practical reasons I have adapted it on the lexical (i.e. phonematic) level. For some discussion on this point see Schabert (1973) p. 240.

3 See e.g. Wright I §§18-23, Fischer (1972) §§19-22, 54.

4 In the following, morpheme boundaries are marked only when relevant to our subject (thus *muslimu:na* pro *mu+slim+u:+na*).

5 See Fischer (1967) p. 43.

6 Etymological features appearing in sandhi are well known e.g. in French; compare '*ont-ils?*' and '*ils-ont*' to '*ont*' and '*ils*'. Because of missing this point Fischer (1967 p. 40 and note 36) and Rabin (1951 p. 153) give erroneous interpretations. Both take forms with a diphthong as the starting point (*ra'aw+ṭnayni*, *ištaraw+ḏ-ḏala:lata*) though what we have is *ra'awu:&-eṭnayni* and *ištarawu:&EL+ḏala:lata*.

- 7 **ramayu*: > **ramawu*: > *ramaw*.
- 8 Concerning *El* see below.
- 9 In the same way *e* → *i* / *ay& ___*:
- qamay&El+baqari*
qamayØilØbaqari
- At the synchronic level we thus have combinatory variants for *tertia* *infirmae* pl. 3. m. endings (-*aw*/*-awu*:).
- 10 And in some other cases (e.g. +*tumU*+suff.) which do not concern us here.
- 11 See e.g. Moscati (1980) pp. 105-106.
- 12 For discussion on this point see Moscati (1980) pp. 108-109.
- 13 See Fischer (1967) p. 44.
- 14 Brockelmann I pp. 497-498.
- 15 Dillmann (1899) p. 344.
- 16 According to Liḥyani, reference in Rabin (1951) p. 73.
- 17 Rabin (1951) pp. 72-73. See also Zamaḥṣarī §666, who relates, according to Sībawayhi, that there are eloquent (*fuṣaḥa*:') people who say "*min-a-bnika*". There are also people who say "*min-i-rraḡuli*", but this, he says, is rare and bad Arabic (*qali:la wa ḥabi:ta*).
- 18 See von Soden (1969) §114c.
- 19 It must, in some way or another, be due to the fact that both *mina* and *al* have an etymological *a*. In contrast to this in *^eaw+al* and *mina+ibnin* only one of the words has an *a*. It must be remembered that also +(n)*iya* appears in most, if not all, cases before the article. For similar remarks, see A. Fischer's article in *Islamica* I (1925) pp. 1-40, especially pp. 39-40.

Additional note

After I had completed this paper, a new edition of texts from Ebla was published (Maria Giovanna Biga & Lucio Milano, *Testi amministrativi: assegnazioni di tessuti* (archivio L.2769). *Archivi reali di Ebla*. Testi-IV. 1984). In these texts a longer form of the preposition *min* has indeed been attested, though with the vowel *-u* (*mi-nu*). This preposition denotes the origin from and it is attested at least seven times (see p. 313), always before a geographical name (e.g. p. 17: [...] è /*mi-nu*/ *Ar-mi^{ki}*). The vowel *-u* is possibly due to the analogy of *aštu*.

I am indebted to Professor Simo Parpola for drawing my attention to this point.

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