THIRD PERSON MASCULINE SINGULAR PRONOMINAL SUFFIX *-HNE* (*-HNI*) IN SYRIAN ARABIC DIALECTS AND ITS HYPOTHETICAL ORIGINS

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Abstract: The third person singular pronominal suffix *-hne* (*-hni*) was registered in the Arabic dialects of Latakia (Syria), Antakya and Samandağ (both of which are in the Turkish province Hatay). This rare suffix is primarily attached to words ending with vowels, and its appearance is marginal. This paper presents the pronominal suffixes of the dialect of Latakia attached to words ending with consonants and vowels, along with the pronominal suffix *-hne* (*-hni*), and all registered words which contain it. In conclusion I will discuss the possible origin of the suffix and *-hne* (*-hni*) and Werner Arnold's hypothesis concerning the origin of the pronominal suffix *-hne* (*-hni*) in light of a synchronic interpretation based on the research data gathered by the author in Latakia.

Keywords: *Syrian Arabic, pronominal suffix, Latakia, Antiochia Arabic.*

This article discusses the suffix *-hne* (*-hni*),[1] which is used in several Syrian Arabic dialects as a third person masculine singular pronominal suffix. So far, it has been registered in the Arabic dialect of Latakia (Klimiuk 2011) and in some of the Christian Arabic dialects in the Turkish province Hatay (Arnold 1998: 102-103). The pronominal suffix *-hne* most likely also occurs in the Alawite dialects of Syria, however, this cannot be currently determined in view of limited language data and (previously) recorded materials.[2] The article presents pronominal suffixes in the dialect of Latakia, the use of *-hne*, its limited occurrence, and its hypothetical origins. Werner Arnold's theory on the pronominal suffix *-hni* in the Christian dialects of Hatay (Arnold 1998: 102-103) will be confronted here with examples from the dialect of Latakia.

The Arabic dialect of Latakia is used by Sunni Muslims and Christians in Latakia – a large port city located on the Syrian coast. The city was home to about 400,000 people until the outbreak of the Syrian war. Current statistics on the number of inhabitants are unknown. Apart from Sunni Muslims and Christians, Alawites also live in Latakia, who use different dialects in everyday life, and who only began to move to the city from the surrounding villages in the early twentieth century. It must be stressed that there is no one common dialect of Alawites in the city. The Arabic dialect of Latakia belongs to the group of Syro-Palestinian dialects, more precisely the Lebanese-Central Syrian Dialects. Peter Behnstedt presents a slightly more accurate classification of these dialects in his *Sprachatlas von Syrien*, and includes the Arabic dialect of Latakia in the Coastal Dialects group with other dialects, such as: Mḥardi (Maḥarda), Banyās (Bāniyās), and Ṭarṭūs (Behnstedt 1997: 1002-1003). So far, only two dialects of this group have been described – Latakia (Klimiuk 2011) and Mḥardi (Yoseph 2012).

Pronominal suffixes in the dialect of Latakia

The pronominal suffixes have two forms: (1) pronominal suffixes of words ending with a consonant – -C, and (2) pronominal suffixes of words ending with a vowel – -CV, while V can be one of three

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[1] I note both forms due to the fact that in Latakia is used the suffix *-hne* and in the Christian dialects of Hatay the suffix *-hni*.

[2] I found the pronominal suffix *-hne* even in Žable (Ğabla), a coastal town north of Latakia.

vowels: *-a*, *-u* or *-i* which influences the value of the pronominal suffix. The following table shows all the possible pronominal suffixes in the Arabic dialect of Latakia:

		-C	-C*a*	-C*u*	-C*i*
Singular					
1st		*-i, -ni*	*-āyi, -āni*	*-uwwi, -ūni*	*-iyyi, -īni*
2nd	m.	*-ak*	*-āk*	*-ūk*	*-īk*
	f.	*-ek*	*-āki*	*-ūki*	*-īki*
3rd	m.	*-u*	*-ā / -ā^h*	*-ō / -ō^h*	*-ā / -ā^h*
	f.	*-a*	*-āha*	*-uwwa*	*-iyya*
Plural					
1st		*-na*	*-āna*	*-ūna*	*-īna*
2nd		*-kon*	*-ākon*	*-ūkon*	*-īkon*
3rd		*-on*	*-āhon*	*-uwwon*	*-iyyon*

The basic form of the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix is *-u* when words end with a consonant: *mád^{ə}rse* / *madárse*[3] + *-u* > *madráʰstu* 'his school', *bēt* + *-u* > *bētu* 'his house'. However the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix in Damascene Arabic has a form *-o*, therefore: *madrase* + *-o* > *madrasto* 'his school', *bēt* + *-o* > *bēto* 'his house'.

There is also a difference between the dialects regarding words ending with vowels. In Damascene Arabic it appears exclusively as a lengthening of the final vowel: *-a*, *-u*, and *-i*, which becomes a stressed vowel: *-ā́*, *-ú*, and *-í*, while the Arabic dialect of Latakia is characterized by peculiar rules involving, in two cases, not only the lengthening of the final vowel, but also the replacement of it: the pronominal suffix with words ending with vowels *-a* and *-i* has a form *-ā / -ā^h*, and with a vowel *-u* has a form *-ō / -ō^h*. Thus, only in words ending with *-a* the vowel in the coda is preserved.

	-C	-C*a*	-C*u*	-C*i*
Damascus	*-o*	*-ā́*	*-ú*	*-í*
Latakia	*-u*	*-ā́ / -ā́^{h}*	*-ó / -ó^h*	*-ā́ / -ā́^{h}*

Therefore, the difference between the pronominal suffixes in these two dialects appears in words ending with *-u*, *-i* and also with -C. It can be seen, for example, in the form of the pseudoverb *fī* 'there is' – in Damascene Arabic: *fi* + *-o* > *fī* 'there is'. However in the Arabic dialect of Latakia this pseudoverb has a form *fā* according to the rule: *fi* + *-u* > *fā* 'there is', e.g. *mā fā šī* 'there is nothing'.

Pronominal suffix *-hne* (*-hni*)

Apart from the commonly used third person masculine singular pronominal suffix *-u*, the Arabic dialect of Latakia has developed a supplementary suffix *-hne*. It refers, as the suffix *-u*, only to the third person masculine singular. The same suffix is mentioned in Werner Arnold's grammatical description of Arabic dialects of the Turkish district Hatay, known as Antiochia Arabic (Arnold 2006a). Werner Arnold observed this pronominal suffix in Christian dialects of two cities: Antakya and Samandağ in the form of *-hni*, and only with verbs that end with one of three vowels: *-a*, *-u* or *-i* (Arnold 1998: 102). In other cases the pronominal suffix in these two dialects assumes the form of *-u* (Arnold 1998: 102). However, in the Chrisitan dialect of Altınözü there is another pronominal suffix *-ni*, which occurs only in verbs in the imperfect form ending with the vowel *-u*.

The sufix *-hne* was ascribed to Latakia also by Peter Behnstedt in his *Sprachatlas von Syrien* (Behnstedt 1997). The information found on Behnstedt's map is based on the negation expressed in

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[3] Words with the prefix *ma-* and the female ending *-a* / *-e* appear in two patterns in the dialect of Latakia: *máC^{ə}CCa* or *maCə́CCe*.

the phrase 'there is no', where apart from *mā fā* in the dialect of Latakia there is an equivalent in the form of *mā fáhne* (Behnstedt 1997: 452-453). It is worth noting that the pseudoverb *fā* in the negated form *mā fā* is transcribed by Peter Behnstedt in the pausal form as *fā > fā# / fē#*. However, the expression 'there is' in Latakia appears in the *Sprachatlas von Syrien* only as *fā*, and not in the pausal form *fā* as marked on the previously discussed map, and without the form *fáhne* (Behnstedt 1997: 732-733).

The pronominal suffix -*hne* registered in the Arabic dialect of Latakia occurs along with: (1) the pseudoverb *fā*: *fáhne* 'there is', (2) the verb 'to talk' in the imperative mode: *staḥkáhne* 'talk (m. sing., f. sing.) to him!', *staḥkóhne* 'talk (pl.) to him!', and (3) the verb 'to see' in the second person singular and plural of the past tense in questions: *šəftáhne* 'have you (m. sing., f. sing.) seen him?', *šəftóhne* 'have you (pl.) seen him?'. For this discussion no other examples of words with which the pronominal suffix -*hne* could be combined were found. In particular, there is no example of a verb in the imperfect form with -*hne* as in the Christian dialects of Hatay. It is important to mention that the presented examples of words with the pronominal suffix -*hne* were used mostly by the older residents of Latakia, especially in the Ṣləybe district.

Among the six examples of words combined in the Arabic dialect of Latakia with the pronominal suffix -*hne*, five end with the vowels -*i* or -*u*. None of the examples contain words ending with the vowel -*a*. The formation of words with the pronominal suffix -*hne* is related to the last vowel of the word to which the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix -*u* is attached, and then the suffix -*hne*. Therefore, using this rule, in the words ending in a vowel -*i* (-C*i*) the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix -*u* is attached first, and as a result the final vowel -*i* becomes the long stressed vowel -*ā* (-C*i* + -*u* > -C*ǽ*), to which the pronominal suffix -*hne* (-C*ǽ* + -*hne* > **-Cāhne*) is then attached. The last closed syllable, the long vowel *ā* (**Cāhne*) is shortened to (-C*áhne*): -C*i* + -*u* > -C*ǽ* + -*hne* > **-Cāhne* > -C*áhne*.

The following examples show words ending with the vowel -*i* to which the pronominal suffix -*hne* is attached:

fi + -*u* (3 m. sing.) > *fā* + -*hne* > **fāhne* > *fáhne* 'there is'

staḥki (imperative mood m. sing., f. sing.) + -*u* (3 m. sing.) > *staḥkā* + -*hne* > **staḥkāhne* > *staḥkáhne* 'talk (m. sing., f. sing.) to him!'

šəfti (2nd pers. f. sing.) + -*u* (3 m. sing.) > *šəftā* + -*hne* > **šəftāhne* > *šəftáhne* 'have you (f. sing.) seen him?'

Suffixation in the case of words ending with the vowel -*u* (-C*u*) proceeds in a parallel manner to words ending with the vowel -*i*. When the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix -*u* is attached, the final vowel -*u* turns into a long stressed vowel -*ō* (-C*u* + -*u* > -C*ő*), which is shortened by attaching the pronominal suffix -*hne* (-C*óhne*): -C*u* + -*u* > -C*ő* + -*hne* > **-Cōhne* > -C*óhne*. This happens in the Arabic dialect of Latakia in two instances:

staḥku (imperative mood pl.) + -*u* (3 m. sing.) > *staḥkō* + -*hne* > **staḥkōhne* > *staḥkóhne* 'talk (pl.) to him!'

šəftu (2nd pers. pl.) + -*u* (3 m. sing.) > *šəftō* + -*hne* > **šəftōhne* > *šəftóhne* 'have you (pl.) seen him?'

The last and perhaps the most interesting example is the word *šəft* – the second person masculine singular of the verb 'to see' in the past tense. It ends with a consonant -C, unlike the previous examples. Probably the form *šəftáhne* with the pronominal suffix -*hne* can be explained as a result of a hypothetical diachronic structure of this word – **šəfta*. The vowel -*a* in the last open syllable can be understood as a verb ending of the second person masculine singular in the past tense. Hypothetically, the pronominal suffix -*hne* is attached to *šəft* as follows:

šǝf°t (2nd pers. m. sing.) > **šǝfta* + *-u* (3 m. sing.) > *šǝftā* + *-hne* > **šǝftāhne* > *šǝftáhne* 'have you (m. sing.) seen him?'

The following table presents the pronominal suffix *-hne* (*-hni*) occurrences after long vowels in the Arabic dialect of Latakia and Christian dialects of Antakya, Samandağ and Altınözü:

	-C	-Ca	-Cu	-Ci
Latakia	-u	*-ahne[4]	-ohne	-ahne
Antakya	-u	-āhni	-ūhni	-īhni
Samandağ	-u	-āhni	-āhni	-īhni
Altınözü	-u	-ā	-ū -āni[5]	-ī

The pronominal suffix with words ending in a consonant (-C) appears in the form of *-u* in the four dialects presented here. With regards to the pronominal suffix *-hne* with words ending in a vowel, first the pronominal suffix *-u*, which alters the quality of the final vowel, is attached and then *-hne*. This can also be interpreted as an addition of the suffix *-uhne* (*-uhni* in Antakya and Samandağ), in which the vowel *-u* undergoes certain alterations as in the Arabic dialect of Latakia. The lengthening of the final vowels occurs in the Christian dialect of Antakya with words ending with one of the three vowels: *-a*, *-i*, *-u*, but in the Christian dialect of Samandağ only two vowels; *-a* and *-i* alter. In words ending with a vowel *-u* there is no lengthening of this vowel, but rather a transformation into the long vowel *-ā*: *-Cu* + *-u* > *-Cā* + *-hni* > *-Cāhni*. The same principle applies to the Arabic dialect of Altınözü: *-Cu* + *-u* > *-Cā* + *-ni* > *-Cāni*. It is worth noting that Werner Arnold does not register the shortening of the vowel before the pronominal suffix *-hni* (*-ni* in Altınözü) (Arnold 1998: 102) in the Christian Arabic dialects of Hatay, as it appears in the case of the dialect of Latakia: *-Ca* + *-hne* > **-Cāhne* > *-Cahne*, *-Cu* + *-hne* > **-Cōhne* > *-Cohne*, *-Ci* + *-hne* > **-Cāhne* > *-Cahne*.

Hypothetical origins of the pronominal suffix *-hne* (*-hni*)

The origin of the pronominal suffix *-hne* is not entirely clear. Werner Arnold sees it in Aramaic which, in his opinion, was the longest preserved language among Christians in Antakya, Samandağ, and Altınözü (Arnold 1998: 102). From his point of view, the religious factor – in this case Christianity – implies the presence of the pronominal suffix *-hni* in the three Christian dialects in Hatay. However the language data from Latakia contradicts Werner Arnold's hypothesis, because the pronominal suffix *-hne* in Latakia is used by Sunni Muslims. Of course it could be explained as a borrowing from Christian dialects, though that is probably a too far-reaching interpretation.

The pronominal suffix *-hni* in verbs ending with vowel suffixes in Christian dialects of Antakya, Samandağ, and Altınözü (here only *-ni* with the imperfect form ending with a vowel *-u*) is a result of contamination of the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix *-h*, which occurs in Alawite dialects in the Turkish province Hatay (*yiqtilūh* 'they (m., f.) kill him', *tiqtilīh* 'you (f.) kill him') with Aramaic/Western Neo-Aramaic endings: *-inne*, *-unne* (in Baxʿa also *-unni*), and *-anni* (Arnold 1998: 102, Arnold 1990, Arnold 2006b). Perhaps, according to Werner Arnold, this was due to the period of Arabic-Aramaic bilingualism among the inhabitants of the region. This has led to the emergence of forms of the third person masculine singular pronominal suffix *-hni*, and later also to the

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[4] The hypothetical form.
[5] Only with the imperfect form.

disappearance of the consonant -*h*- in the pronominal suffix in the Christian dialect of Altınözü.[6] The processes are illustrated by the following examples (Arnold 1998: 102):

Arabic	Aramaic	Christian Antiochia Arabic	
yiqtilūh	*yquṭlunni*	*yiqtilūhni*	
'they (m., f.) kill him'	'they (m.) kill him'	'they (m., f.) kill him'	

Arabic	Aramaic	Samandağ	Altınözü
yiqtilūh	*yquṭlanni*	*yiqtilāhni*	*yiqtilāni*
'they (m., f.) kill him'	'they (f.) kill him'	'they (m., f.) kill him'	'they (m., f.) kill him'

Werner Arnold also notes that the long vowel -*ā*- in the imperfect forms in the dialects of Samandağ and Altınözü had to be adopted from Aramaic, in which the long vowel -*ā*- occurs in the verb ending of the third person feminine plural.

The above interpretation of the origin of the pronominal suffix -*hne* cannot be applied to the Arabic dialect of Latakia. Firstly, as previously discussed, the dialect of Latakia is spoken mainly by Sunni Muslim, and -*hne* is still spoken in the oldest district of Latakia, especially by older men. Therefore, the argument that this pronominal suffix appears only in the Christian dialects is ineffective. Secondly, the pronominal suffix -*hne* was not found in verbs in the imperfect forms, as in the Christian dialects of Hatay. Its registered occurrence is quite marginal. In my opinion there might be a different explanation: the pronominal suffix is a grammaticalized form of the adverb 'here', which in the Arabic dialect of Latakia has a form *hōne*, and goes back to the Classical Arabic form *hā-hunā/*a* (Fischer 1959: 118). Perhaps within certain words (eg. verbs of perception, a pseudoverb *fī*) the adverb 'here' changed its function and became a third person masculine singular pronominal suffix. What also seems possible is that the pronominal suffix -*hne* comes from the Classical Arabic *hunā/*a* and not *hā-hunā/*a*. However, these are still questions which, without gathering more data, will remain unanswered.

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[6] This is not completely consistent with the material registered by me in Samandağ in March 2015. In recorded texts of Christians appears a pseudoverb *fāni* 'there is': *fī* + -*u* > *fā* + -*ni* > *fāni*. The pronominal suffix with a long vowel has in this case a form -*āni*, and not -*īhni*.

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