The Impact of Contact Languages on the Degrammaticalization of the Hebrew Definite Article

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Abstract

The Hebrew article *ha-* is apparently undergoing a process of degrammaticalization within Modern Hebrew. Its distribution has been changing in a particular direction that is unexpected from the point of view of historical linguistics. Whereas in Classical Hebrew it was found with a limited number of lexical items, it now attaches to a variety of phrases. This change is indicative of a change in its morpho-syntactic category: it is becoming more a clitic than an affix. The morpho-syntactic change is accompanied by a semantic change; its function is to mark the definiteness of the phrase it attaches to, rather than being part of the Classical Hebrew state system. We propose that the change has its roots in a language-internal change that affected the periphrastic genitive construction of Mishnaic Hebrew and was enhanced through several phases of language contact such as the contact of Medieval Hebrew with Arabic and the contact of nineteenth-century Hasidic Hebrew with Yiddish.

Keywords

definiteness, emphatic state, construct state, degrammaticalization, language contact

Introduction

In Classical Hebrew (including Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew), the article *ha-* is an inflectional affix marking the *emphatic state* of nouns and adjectives. As an inflectional affix, it attaches to these two types of lexical items, not to phrases or even compounds. In colloquial Modern Hebrew, the distribution and semantics of the article is dramatically changed. Though it is still a bound item, it is no longer an affix but is becoming a clitic, with increased autonomy and an expanded distribution. It has changed from a morphological marker of state inflection, which only indirectly contributes to definiteness, into a clitic, which contributes the meaning of definiteness. Details of the change are given in Meir & Doron (2013). The present paper traces the beginnings of this change, which we attribute to a combination of internal change and language contact.

The Origins of Definiteness within the Semitic *State* System

Nouns and adjectives in the Semitic languages are historically inflected for the category of *state*, in addition to more familiar inflectional categories such as *gender* and *number*. Three different states are distinguished in the Classical Hebrew inflectional system, as described by traditional Hebraists as early as the Renaissance (e.g., Reuchlin 1506; Buxtorf 1651): the *absolute state*, the *construct state* (CS), and the *emphatic state*.[1]

(1)　　Classical Hebrew
　　　　a. absolute state　　　e.g. *śimla*　　　　'gown.F.SG'
　　　　b. construct state　　　e.g. *śimlat-*　　　'gown.F.SG.CS'
　　　　c. emphatic state　　　e.g. *ha-śśimla*　　'the-gown.F.SG'

A noun inflected in the construct state is a bound form and must be attached to another constituent called the *annex* (possessor). The construction consisting of the construct-state head and the annex is known as the *construct*. Semantically, it expresses a variety of relations, typically possession (cf. Doron & Meir 2013 for a partial summary of the vast literature on this topic). The *emphatic state* is marked by prefixation with the article *ha-*;[2] it forms the basis for definiteness, yet it is not strictly speaking interpreted as definite, since definiteness is a value assigned to phrases, not to lexical items.

　　　　The tripartite state system survived intact throughout Classical Hebrew. In Modern Hebrew, we find the state system converting into a binary absolute vs. construct opposition, with the article *ha-* reanalyzed as a phrasal clitic divorced from the state system and marking definiteness. The change is prevalent in colloquial Modern Hebrew, and is spreading through Modern Hebrew as a whole, gradually invading the more formal registers.

The Change in the Distribution of the Article *ha-*

Consider the following contrasts in the distribution of the article *ha-*.

Classical Hebrew		Modern Hebrew[3] (colloquial)	
(2)a. לֻחֹת הָאֶבֶן (שמות כד, יב)		b. הלוחות-אבן	
luḥōṯ	*hā-ʾɛḇɛn*	*ha-luḥot*	*even*
tablets.CS	**the**-stone	**the**-tablets.CS	stone
'the stone tablets' (Exodus 24:12)		'the stone tablets'	

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[1] The morphological term *emphatic* is a Semiticist's term marking a particular value of the inflectional *state* of a noun and is unrelated both to the phonological term *emphatic* in the sense of *stressed* and to the phonetic term *emphatic* in the sense of *pharyngealized*. The term *emphatic state* is commonly used with respect to the Aramaic *-a* suffix but for some reason has not been used for the Hebrew *ha-* prefix in the philological literature. However, the function of both affixes is parallel in the two classical languages, and in general in the Central Semitic languages. We explain below why the Classical Hebrew *ha-* is best treated as a word-level prefix marking state inflection rather than definiteness, which is a phrase-level category. Our approach favors the morphological origin of these Central Semitic affixes as the Proto-Semitic presentative adnominal affix *hā/han/hal* (Hasselbach 2007; Pat-El 2009), but is also compatible with the view that these are original demonstrative pronouns that underwent a process of grammaticalization (Rubin 2005:65-90 and references cited therein).

[2] We uniformly transcribe the Hebrew article as *ha-*, which is accurate for Modern Hebrew, though in Classical Hebrew the article includes a consonant that typically assimilates to the following consonant; e.g. *ha-śśimla* in (1c) would be strictly represented as *haś-śimla.*

[3] All examples in Modern Hebrew are attested examples from the internet.

(3)a. (א ,א חלה ירושלמי) חמשת-המינין   b. החמש מינים
    ḥamešet **ha-**mminin   **ha-** ḥameš minim
    five.CS   **the-**kinds   **the-**five   kinds
    'the five kinds'   'the five kinds'
    (Palestinian Talmud, Ḥalla 1:1)

(4)a. (יד ,כג יהושע) הַדְּבָרִים הַטּוֹבִים   b. הדברים טובים
    ha-ddəbārim **ha-**ṭṭōḇīm   **ha-**dvarim   tovim
    the-things   **the-**good   **the-**things good
    'the good things' (Joshua   'the candies'
    23:14)

(5)a. משנתו שאינה סדורה   b. משנתו הלא סדורה
    (ב ,ז תענית בבלי)
    mišnat-o *še-ʾena* *sedura*   *mišnat-o* **ha-**lo   *sdura*
    study-his   that-NEG   orderly   doctrine-his **the-**NEG coherent
    'his confused study'   'his incoherent doctrine'
    (Babylonian Talmud, Taʿanit 7.2)

In Classical Hebrew, the article *ha-* inflects lexical items, e.g. the nouns *stone* in (2a) and *kinds* in (3a), and the adjective *good* in (4a). It does not attach to the full constructs in (2a) and (3a), the attributive construction in (4a), or the phrasal modifier in (5a). Moreover, a noun that it inflects is not necessarily interpreted as definite. In (2a), *stone* is a predicate that denotes material constitution or the type of objects counted. In (4a), *things* is in no way definite, it is *good things* that is definite. The emphatic marking of nouns does not make them definite, but it makes the noun phrase as a whole definite.

The corresponding (b) examples are all prevalent in colloquial Modern Hebrew. The article *ha-* attaches to compounds in (2b) and (4b), to a noun phrase consisting of a noun specified by a numeral in (3b), and to an adjective phrase consisting of a negated adjective in (5b). Semantically, the article marks definiteness (or agreement in definiteness, for adjective phrases).

Another aspect of the change in the distribution of the article is its association with a variety of word classes that were not historically inflected for state, such as prepositions (6), adverbs (7), various degree words (8), and infinitival verbs (9).

(6) הקבוצה המקומית מהמקום **הלפני** אחרון בטבלה
    ha-kvuca   *ha-mekomit* *me-ha-makom*   **ha-lifne**
    the-group   the-local   from-the-place **the-before**.CS
    ʔaḥaron   *b-a-tavla*
    last   in-the-table
    'the local team from the one-but-last place in the league table'
    (http://doublepass.sport5.co.il/story.php?id=12109, accessed
    March 29, 2015)

הפינה **הלפעמים** שבועית של בן שש וחצי

(7) *ha-pina*   **ha-lifʕamim**   *švuʕit*   *šel*   *ben-*
    the-radio.show **the-sometimes** weekly   of   belonging.to

šeš   va-ħeci
six   and-half
'the sometimes weekly radio show of a six and a half year old'
(http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=386404761383
534&id=122441177783528, accessed March 26, 2015)

(8) מה זה הדבר **הממש** טעים הזה שיש במטבח?
ma   ze   ha-davar   **ha-mamaš**   taʕim   ha-ze   še-yeš
what this the-thing   **the-really** tasty   the-this that-is
b-a-mitbaħ
in-the-kitchen
'What is this really tasty something in the kitchen?'
(H. Tzur, age 18, private conversation, July 25, 2003)

(9) אני אוהב את זה.... את הייצור, את **הלקחת** כלום ולעשות ממנו משהו.
ʔani   ʔohev   ʔet   ze…   ʔet   ha-yicur,   ʔet
I   love   ACC   this… ACC   the-production   ACC
ha-la-kaħat   klum   ve-la-ʕasot   mi-menu   mašehu
 the-to-take nothing and-to-make   from-it   something
'I love this . . . the production, taking nothing and making it into
something.'
(Avirama Golan, *The Ravens*, 2004:31)

The Direction of Change from Affix to Clitic: Degrammaticalization?

The changes in the distribution of the article *ha-* affected its morpho-syntactic status. While in Classical Hebrew it was an inflectional affix, in Modern Hebrew it exhibits more clitic properties than affix properties (cf. Zwicky & Pullum 1983): it attaches to phrases, often only cliticizing to the first element of the phrase, and is less choosy regarding the lexical category of its host. Furthermore, it has more systematic semantic interpretation, i.e. definiteness, and in some cases it does not participate in agreement processes, as in example (4b) above (Meir & Doron 2013). Such a direction of change runs counter to the much more widespread process of language change, namely *grammaticalization*, a term coined by Meillet (1912), which refers to a change from a less grammatical to a more grammatical element. The change in the status of the article goes in the opposite direction: from more grammatical (an affix) to less grammatical (a clitic). The latter type of change has been referred to as *de-grammaticalization*. Based on criteria developed by Norde (2009, 2010) to identify de-grammaticalization processes, we have argued (Meir & Doron 2013) that the change in the status of *ha-* in Modern Hebrew is an instance of de-grammaticalization. The article has become less bound to its host. It is no longer part of the category of *state*, which originally distinguished between the absolute, construct, and emphatic states. In Modern Hebrew, the original system is no longer operative, as is evidenced by the fact that the article can attach to a noun in the construct state, as in (2b) above. In the original system, there was no way to doubly inflect the same noun in both the construct state and the emphatic state.

Tracing Back the Origins of the Change

The change from an inflectional prefix to a phrasal clitic thus dramatically modifies the morpho-syntax of Hebrew noun phrases, and their semantic interface. When and how did this

change take place? We suggest that the change has its roots in a language-internal change that affected the periphrastic genitive construction of Mishnaic Hebrew and was enhanced through the contact of Medieval Hebrew and Arabic, and the contact of 19th-century Hasidic Hebrew and Yiddish. The change was initiated in particular constructions. One is the periphrastic genitive construction, and another is the construct, including compounds and numeric specifiers; yet another one is the superlative phrase consisting of *yoter* 'more' together with an adjective. These constructions are independent of each other and different in nature. The first two relate to the structure of the noun phrase, and the third to the structure of the adjective phrase. Yet, all three have a similar effect on the distribution of the article. All result in the loosening of its attachment to lexical items and its reanalysis as a proclitic attached to a phrasal constituent. The combined effect of the change within the three constructions gave rise to a much wider change in the morpho-syntactic status of the article in Modern Hebrew, as it spread to other constructions as well. Crucially, though the change originates in a language-internal development within the periphrastic genitive construction, it was facilitated by the change in the superlative construction and in the construct under the influence of contact languages.

The Rise of the Periphrastic Genitive Construction

In the Biblical genitive construct shown in (2a) above, the head of the construction is in the construct state and must be adjacent to the annex. The definiteness of this construction is determined by the attachment of the article to the annex. Mishnaic Hebrew saw the rise of the periphrastic genitive construction (called סמיכות פרודה *smixut pruda* in Hebrew), where the head is in the absolute state, and is separated from the annex by the genitive preposition של *šel* 'of' as in (10) below. In the periphrastic genitive construction, the definiteness of the phrase is determined by the attachment of the article to the head, not the annex, unlike in the construct.

(10) הזנב של לטאה שהיא מפרכסת (משנה אוהלות א, ז)
      ***ha*-zzanaḇ**   šel   leṭaʾa   še-hi   meṗarkeset
      the-tail   of   lizard   that-she   twitches
      'the tail of a twitching lizard'
      (Mishnah, Ohalot 1:7)

Yet originally, the article was prefixed both to the head and the annex in the definite periphrastic genitive. The annex was originally introduced by the dative prefixal preposition *le-* 'to,' subordinated to the head of the structure by the prefixal complementizer *še-*. When these two prefixes were attached to an annex already prefixed with the article *ha-*, a portmanteau prefix was formed: *še-ll(e)-a* 'that-to-the.' The portmanteau prefix *šella-* 'that.to.the' was spelled as part of the annex, as can still be seen in the Kaufmann manuscript (10th/11th century). In later non-vocalized editions, the prefix *šella-* lost both its final vowel and its status as a bound morpheme. Thus was born the free preposition *šel* 'of,' and, concomitantly, the article was lost.[4] The example in (11a) shows the spelling found in the Kaufmann manuscript, and (11b), the spelling in contemporary printed editions of the

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[4] As pointed out to us by Chanan Ariel, in Judean Desert documents of the second century CE, *šel* already occurs as a free form. We speculate that, unlike the Galilean dialect that underlies Mishnaic Hebrew (Rensdburg 1992), the Judean Hebrew dialect lacked the portmanteau prefix *šella-* 'that.to.the,' perhaps because its speakers actually pronounced the *h-* onset of the article *ha-* and therefore only used a portmanteau prefix *šelle-* 'that.to' that did not include the article. This speculation is supported by the finding (Mor, in press, §2.10.3 and references cited therein) that in Judean Hebrew, unlike in the Mishnah, *šel* may precede an annex marked by the article *ha-*. Since the Judean dialect did not develop into subsequent stages of Hebrew, we do not discuss it further.

Mishnah. The only article remaining in (11b) within the entire genitive structure is the one originally attached to the head noun (הקיתון *ha-kkiton*, 'the ewer'), now interpreted as marking the definiteness of the entire phrase.[5]

(11) a. לעולם כהן גדול מקדש ידיו ורגליו מן הקיתון שֶׁלַזֹהָב
(משנה יומא ד, ה)

leʿolam	*kohen*	*gadol*	*meqaddeš*	*yad-av*	*ve-ragl-av*
always	priest	high	sanctifies	hands-his	and-feet-his

min	**ha**-*kkiton*	**šella**-*zzahaḇ*
from	**the**-ewer	that.to.the-gold

'The high priest always sanctifies his hands and feet from the ewer [made] of gold.'
(Mishnah, Yoma 4:5)

b. הקיתון של זהב

ha-*kkiton*	**šel**	*zahaḇ*
the-ewer	of	gold

'the ewer of gold'

The interpretation of the phrase-initial article as marking the definiteness of the phrase as a whole prevailed in subsequent stages of Hebrew. It can be illustrated by the following example from Mendele Mokher Sforim (Maskilic Hebrew). The first occurrence of the noun phrase containing *šel* in this example is indefinite, with both head and annex indefinite. The second occurrence of the same noun phrase is definite, as is to be expected. Yet definiteness is expressed by a single article, attached to the phrase as a whole:

(12) עִזּוֹ של יהודי קפצה ואכלה **גג של תבן חדש** ....ומה גבורתו של היהודי
ושל העז **והגג של תבן**?

iz-o	**šel**	*yehudi*	*qafca*	*ve-ʔaxla*	**gag**	**šel**
goat-his	of	man	jumped	and-ate	roof	of

teven	**ħadaš**…	*u-ma*	*gvurat-o*	*šel*	*ha-yehudi*
straw	new	and-what	bravery-his	of	the-man

ve-	*šel*	*ha-ʕez*	*ve-***ha-gag**	**šel**	**teven**
and-of	the-goat		and-the-roof	of	straw

'A man's goat jumped and ate **a new roof of straw . . . .** And what is the bravery of the man and the goat and **the roof of straw**?'
(Mendele Mokher Sforim, *Travels of Benjamin the Third,* chapter 1, 1878)

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[5] Though examples of the prefix *šella*- abound in the Kaufmann manuscript (Birnbaum 2008), examples of the prefix *šelle*- can be found as well, attached, as expected, to an annex lacking the article *ha*-, whether indefinite (i) or definite (ii):

(i) ורובו שֶׁלְּאחד (משנה חולין ב, א)

we-rubb-o	*šelle-ʾeḥad*
and-most-POSS.3MSG	that.to-one

'and most of one' (Mishnah, Hullin 2:1)

(ii) מסמר שֶׁלְּאבן השעות (משנה עדויות ג, ח)

masmer	*šelle-ʾeḇen*	*ha-šša'ot*
nail	that.to-stone.CS	the-hours

'the style of the sundial' (Mishnah, Eduyyot 3:8)

Both *šelle*- (in Mishnah, Shekalim 6:1) *and šella*- (in Mishnah, Kelim 12:5) are found in the Kaufmann manuscript separated from the annex by a line break, which shows that these prefixes were considered all along a separate morpheme.

The Change within the Superlative Construction

As shown in Reshef (2015, this issue), the attachment of the article to a phrase is found in the comparative/ superlative construction of Medieval Hebrew, under the influence of Arabic. Since adjectives in Hebrew do not have a special comparative form, and since the need for such a form was probably felt because it existed in Arabic, a phrase came to be used in Medieval Hebrew for the comparative, where the adjective is modified by *yoter* 'more,' for example יותר גדול *yoter gadol* 'more big' (Goshen-Gottstein 2006:95-96). Moreover, for the purpose of superlative formation, Hebrew attaches the article to the comparative adjective, and this was extended to the phrasal comparative as well, yielding the superlative phrase היותר גדול *ha-yoter gadol* 'the more big,' interpreted as 'the biggest.'

The Medieval Hebrew examples in (13) below are taken from two different Hebrew translations of the same phrase from Maimonides's *Treatise on the Art of Logic*, ca. 1158, published by Israel Efros in 1938.[6] (13a) is the original Arabic phrase, spelled by Maimonides in Arabicized Hebrew script. The comparative adjectives are in the construct state and are interpreted as superlative because of the article/pronoun in the annex. The Hebrew translation in (b) is by Moshe ben Shmuel Ibn Tibbon of Provence, written ca. 1250, and the translation in (c) is by Ahituv ben Isaac of Palermo, known as "Ahituv the physician," written ca. 1280. Each translator uses both the innovative phrasal and the traditional lexical comparative (though not for the same adjective). Similarly to Arabic, the comparative is interpreted as superlative because of the presence of the article.

(13) a.   אכמל אלשׁיאׁין אפצׄלהמא

     ʔakmal   *ʔaš-šayʔ-ayni*   *ʔafḏal-humā*

     more.perfect.CS   the-thing-DUAL.GEN   more.honored.CS-3M.DUAL

     Chapter 12, p. 33 of the Efros edition, 1938, New York: American Academy for Jewish Research)

   b.   **היותר שלם** משני הדברים והנכבד משניהם

     ha-yyoter   **šalem**   *mi-ššene*   *ha-ddeḇarim*

     the-more   **perfect**   from-two.CS   the-things

     we-ha-nnikḇad   *mi-ššene-hem*

     and-the-honored   from-both-them

     (p. 54 of the Efros edition, 1938, New York: American Academy for Jewish Research)

   c.   השלם שבשני הדברים **והיותר משובח**

     ha-ššalem   *še-bbi-šene*   *ha-ddeḇarim*   *we-**ha-yyoter***

     the-perfect   that-in-two.CS   the-things   and-**the-more**

     mešubbaḥ

     praised

     (p. 91 of the Efros edition, 1938, New York: American Academy for Jewish Research)

     all three: 'the best and most honored of the two things'

The phrasal attachment of the article was carried on into the *Haskalah* literature of Early Modern Hebrew, where this construction was the most prevalent way of expressing the superlative (additional examples in Reshef 2015, this issue):

(14)   הצווי הוא המילה **היותר קצרה** בין מילות הפועל.

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ha-civuy	hu	ha-mila	**ha-yoter**	**kcara**
the-imperative	PRON	the-word	**the-more**	**short**
ben	*milot*	*ha-poʕal*		
among	words.CS	the-verb		

'The imperative is the shortest form of the verb.'
(Samuel David Luzzatto, introduction to the 1855 edition of
Sefer Ha-Rikma 'Book of the Many-Coloured Flower Beds'
by Jonah Ibn Janaḥ)

The superlative in Modern Hebrew is phrasal as well. Yet its form has changed. The Modern Hebrew superlative consists of the adjective either preceded or followed by an adverb meaning *the most*: הכי *haxi* or ביותר *beyoter* (Reshef 2015, this issue). The construction [*ha-yoter* ADJ] is now interpreted compositionally, i.e., as the definite form of the comparative:

(15) כמה שאלות למשתמשים **היותר צעירים** בינינו (עד גיל 16)

kama	*šeʔelot*	*l-a-mištamšim*	**ha-yoter**	**ceʕirim**	*ben-enu*
a.few	question	to-the-users	**the-more**	**young**	among-us
(*ʕad*	*gil*	*16*)			
(till	age	16)			

'a few questions to the younger users among us (up to the age of sixteen)'
(http://whatsup.org.il/index.php?name=PNphpBB2&file=viewtopic&t=902
8, accessed March 26, 2015)

It is possible that the change in the superlative construction paved the way to a broader change in the distribution of the article, namely, the possibility of attaching it to additional adverbials and degree words in the initial position of an adjective phrase, as in (8) above.

The Change within the Construct (Both Compounds and Numeric Constructs)

An additional construction in which the change in the distribution of the article was initiated was the construct. Originally, the article was prefixed to the annex of the construct. The change consisted in the attachment of the article to the noun phrase as a whole rather than to the annex, and it occurred both in compounds and in phrasal constructs with numeric specifiers.

As in the case of the superlative, these changes are found in the Medieval Hebrew translations from Arabic (Goshen-Gottstein 2006:88-90; 107-109). The following examples too are from the Ahituv translation of the *Treatise on the Art of Logic*:

(16) **הבעל חיים** קודם לאדם בטבע.

ha-bbaʕal	**ḥayyim**	*qodem*	*l-a-ʾadam*	*b-a-ṭṭebaʕ*
the-possessor.CS	**life**	precedes	to-the-man	in-the-nature

'The animal is prior to Man in nature.'
(Chapter 12, p. 91 of the Efros edition)

(17) **השני הפכים** שאין ביניהם אמצעי

ha-ššene	**hapaḵim**	*še-ʾen*	*bene-hem*	*ʾemṣaʕi*
the-two.CS	**contraries**	that-NEG	between-them	intermediate

'the two contraries with no intermediate'
(Chapter 11, p. 91 of the Efros edition)

In Arabic, *animal* is monomorphemic, rather than compound as in Hebrew, and was therefore preceded in the Arabic original of (16) by the definite article: *ʔal-ḥayawān*. As for noun phrases with numeric specifiers, such as (17), Wright (1896, book 3, §107[d]) mentions the construction in Classical Arabic corresponding to the Hebrew *ha-ḥamiša kfarim* 'the-five villages' alongside the construction that corresponds to the Classical Hebrew *ḥamešet ha-kefarim* 'five.CS the-villages' as in (3a). In some cases, where the counted noun is singular, the former construction is obligatory, as it is in Hebrew: *ha-tišʕim ʔiš/ * tišʕim ha-ʔiš* 'the-ninety man' (= the ninety men).[7]

The attachment of the article to the noun phrase in Medieval Hebrew is not restricted to Arabic translations, but can be found in the Hebrew writings of Abraham Ibn Ezra, David Kimhi ("Radak"), Maimonides, and others:

(18) כי **החמש אותיות** הכפולות הם לסוף המילה
      *ki **he-ḥameš** ʾotiyyot ha-kkefulot hem le-soṗ ha-mmilla*
      for **the-five letters** the-double PRON to-end the-word
      'For the five double letters are because of the end of the word.'
      (Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Diqduq*, ca. 1145, 1984 edition by N. Aloni, p. 90)

(19) ואלו הן **הארבעה שומרין**
      *we- ʾellu hen **ha-ʾarbaʿa šomerin***
      and-these PRON **the-four bailees**
      'and these are the four bailees'
      (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, ca. 1180, Hilkhot Skhirut 1:1)

The attachment of the article to the noun phrase is already found in the writings of the Geʾonim (Early Medieval Hebrew), probably influenced by Arabic,[8] but is found also in Rashi's commentary on the Talmud.[9] As pointed out by Avineri regarding Rashi's writings (1985:92), most of these examples are of compounds (what he calls *cerufim qevuʕim* 'permanent collocations'), which are probably expressed by single words in French.

It thus seems that the change in the distribution of the article goes back at least to the 11th century. It was enhanced in Eastern Europe several centuries later, through language contact with Yiddish. Kahn (2013a, b) notices Hebrew compounds borrowed into Yiddish in Hasidic writings, and then modified for definiteness with the Yiddish definite article attached to the compound (20a). This construction is reflected in the parallel 19th-century Hasidic Hebrew construction (20b), from Kahn (2013b:175).

(20) a. דער ראש ישיבה (Yiddish)
          der roš yešive
      b. הראש ישיבה (Hasidic Hebrew)
          ha-roš yešiḇa
          the-head.CS Yeshiva
          both: 'the head of the Yeshiva'

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[7] In Arabic *ʔal-xamsu qurān* and *xamsu l-qurā* 'the five villages'; *ʔat-tisʕūna raǧulān* vs. **tisʕūna r-raǧulā* 'the ninety man' (Wright, ibid.)

[8] For example, in a letter written by Elhanan ben Shemarya from the early 11th century, we find *ha-ššne triyyim* 'the-two Triyyim (a specific coin)'(p. 122, Cambridge, University Library, T-S Collection, 13J 16, 11).

[9] Rashi lived in Provence in the 11th century, where there was probably no Arabic influence. We thank Ora Schwarzwald for bringing the Rashi examples to our attention.

It is very possible that this construction found its way into early Modern Hebrew.[10] Such constructions are cited in descriptions of Modern Hebrew as early as the 1930s (Garbell 1930; Rosén 1957; Berman 1978; and many others since). It is also possible that lexicalized compounds were perceived by the speakers as a single lexeme (as suggested by Berman 1978:250), perhaps by analogy to blends such as הכדורגל *ha-kaduregel* 'the football' (ball+foot) or המחזמר *ha-maħazemer* 'the musical' (play+music).

Moreover, Kahn (2015:140) cites many examples from Hasidic tales from the 1900s of phrasal constructions with numeric specifiers in which the article precedes the noun phrase as a whole rather than inflecting the annex (cf. 17 above). These too reflect Yiddish structure:[11]

(21) a.   די אכט טעג (Yiddish)
          di acht teg

      b.   השמונה ימים (Hasidic Hebrew)
          ha-ššmona   yamim
          the-eight   days
          both: 'the eight days'

(22) a.   די זיבן מענטשן (Yiddish)
          di zibn mentchn

      b.   השבעה אנשים (Hasidic Hebrew)
          ha-ššiḇʕa   ʔanašim
          the-seven   men
          both: 'the seven people'

It thus appears that contact both with Arabic and with Yiddish triggered similar changes in the Hebrew construct, and that the similar effects from the two languages enhanced the entrenchment of the change in Hebrew in its revival stage.

In Modern Hebrew, the construct became a very productive device for creating compounds (Nir 1993; Ornan 2003; Schwarzwald 2001), while the periphrastic genitive construction became the main construction for expressing possessive relations (Rosén 1957; Berman 1978; Schlesinger & Ravid 1998). The attachment of the article to both types of structures continued into Modern Hebrew. It seems, then, that there are (at least) three possible factors contributing to the change of the position of the article: the increased use of the periphrastic genitive for expressing possession, the use of the construct for compounding, and the influence of Arabic and Yiddish. We hypothesize that the reanalysis of the Mishnaic Hebrew periphrastic genitive created a structure in which the article was interpreted as a phrasal clitic, paving the road to the constructions influenced by Yiddish and Arabic.

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[10] Examples which also survive in Modern Hebrew are Hasidic Hebrew examples in which the article attaches to both the annex and the head, such as הבעל הבית *ha-baʕal ha-bayit* 'the-owner.CS the-house' (the house owner, Yiddish *der balabos*), הבית הכנסת *ha-bet ha-kneset* 'the-house.CS the-gathering' (the synagogue), cf. Kahn (2015:62).

[11] We are grateful to Dov Faust for the Yiddish translations.

The Change within Noun+Adjective Compounds

In compounds consisting of N+A, attachment of the article to the compound as a whole replaces its traditional attachment to both the head and the adjective.[12] This was illustrated in (4b) above, and again in (23) here:

(23) הכנתי טוסט לאחי ונגמרה **הגבינה צהובה.**

    hexanti   *tost*   *le-ʔaħ-i*   *ve-nigmera*

    I-prepared   toast   to-brother-mine   and-got-finished

    ha-gvina   ***cehuba***

    the-cheese   **yellow**

    'I made a toast for my brother and we ran out of yellow cheese.'

    (http://www.stips.co.il/singleask.asp?stipid=806656, accessed

    March 26, 2015)

This is an example of a change that might have been facilitated by the lack of strict agreement in the emphatic marking of nouns and adjectives in Mishnaic Hebrew, but was strongly influenced and enhanced by contact with Yiddish many centuries later, which paved its way into Modern Hebrew. The examples in (24a-b) are from Kahn (2013b:175).

(24) a. דוא חיות רעות   (Yiddish)

         di xayes roes

    b. החיות רעות   (Hasidic Hebrew)

        ha-ħayot   *raʕot*

        the-animals   bad

        both: 'the wild animals.'

Conclusion

We have argued that the de-grammaticalization of the Hebrew article was initiated both by internal developments within Hebrew and by constructions that were introduced into Hebrew through contact with other languages, first with Arabic, and then with Yiddish. These constructions include periphrastic genitives, superlatives, compounds, and noun phrases with numeric specifiers. The cliticization of the article to whole phrases within these constructions was present in the language in its revival stage, and it expanded the morpho-syntactic environments in which the article could occur. The new environments contributed to the loosening of the bond between the article and its nominal hosts, and to the increase of the article's independence, characteristic of de-grammaticalization processes. The change did not stop in these constructions and spread to other phrasal constituents. The change in the status of the article constitutes an instance of a de-grammaticalization change that was possibly triggered or enhanced by language contact, providing us with the opportunity to study the contribution of language contact to changed grammaticalization.

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[12] Compounds consisting of N+A differ from phrases consisting of N+A in being far less compositional. The meaning of the compound is typically not compositionally constructed from the combination of the attributive meaning of the adjective with that of the noun. The adjective in a compound usually categorizes the head rather than modifying it; for example, גבינה צהובה ('yellow cheese' in (23)) is not necessarily a cheese that is yellow but rather a particular type of cheese.

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