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Title

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Journal

Dotawo: A Journal of Nubian Studies, 2(1)

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Publication Date

2015-06-01

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The Verbal Plural Marker in Nobiin (Nile Nubian)

Mohamed K. Khalil

1. Introduction

This paper is concerned with the verbal suffix *-j*. In his book, *Grammatik des Nobiin*, Werner uses the term “Pluralobjekt-Erweiterung,” i.e. plural object extension.¹ But this term is not quite precise because, apart from marking the plural object in the transitive clause, *-j* has additional functions including the marking of the plural subject of intransitive verbs as well as the marking of repeated or intensive actions. The suffix also has cultural connotations. Therefore, in order not to limit its function, the simple term “*j*-suffix” is used instead of plural object extension. This paper is arranged in six sections. In the second section, I discuss the phonological changes and I investigate how the pronunciation of *-j* is modified due to the assimilation of the adjacent consonants. In the third section I consider how the *j*-suffix is used to mark participant plurality in both transitive and intransitive clauses. In the fourth section I describe how the *j*-suffix is used to mark event plurality on verbs. In the fifth section, specific functions of the *j*-suffix, related to the inherited cultural aspects, are investigated. Finally a summary of findings is added in the last section.

This paper is devoted to the suffixation of *-j* focusing on the dialect of Mahas which is spoken in the Nile Valley of northern Sudan in an area that begins approximately forty-five kilometres north of the contemporary city of Dongola and covers all the way northward until about sixty-five kilometres downstream the third cataract. Other Nobiin dialects, i.e. Sokkot and Halfa, are also mentioned in the second section to provide some illustrations of the dialectal differences in the Nobiin language which are related to the phonological changes triggered by the *j*-suffix.

1 WERNER, *Grammatik des Nobiin*, p. 173.

2. The phonological changes caused by the *j*-suffix

Werner presented a valuable remark when he noticed that the morpheme *-j* changes phonologically the first singular preterite 1 verbal suffix *-is* to *-š* in the transitive clause, as he illustrated this in ex. 1.² This example is taken from the Sökkot dialect.³

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- 1 *ay mug-rii-ga tur-iš*
 1SG dog-PL-ACC chase-*j*.PT1.1SG
 “I chased the dogs away”

It must be noted that this preterite 1 form [*turiš*], which is the realization of **tur-j-is*, is found in the dialects of Sökkot and Halfa but not in the dialect of Mahas, in which only the form *tur-j-is* is used.

Following Werner’s discovery of the phonological change produced by the suffixation of *-j* in the first singular preterite 1 form, another assimilatory phonological change is found in the dialects of Halfa and Sökkot when *-j* is suffixed to the third person plural verb form of the verb *toog*, as demonstrated in ex. 2. The form [*toogiššan*] is a realization of **toog-ij-s-an* but this preterite 1 form is barely used in the dialect of Mahas.

- 2 *ter assar-ii-g toog-iš-š-an*
 3PL child-PL-ACC beat-*j*-PT1-3PL
 “‘They beat the children”

For further illustration, the simplified table 1 is developed to demonstrate how these phonological changes may occur when the *j*-suffix is attached to the verb root in these two specific preterite 1 forms, i.e. the first singular preterite 1, and the third plural preterite 1, according to the different dialects of Nobiin.

Table 1.
Phonological
change produced
by *-j* in 1SG and
3PL PT1 forms

verb	<i>-j</i> -PT1.1SG Halfa/ Sökkot	<i>-j</i> -PT1.1SG Mahas	<i>-j</i> -PT1-3PL Halfa/ Sökkot	<i>-j</i> -PT1-3PL Mahas
<i>tur</i> “chase out”	<i>tur-iš</i>	<i>tur-j-is</i>	<i>tur-iš-š-an</i>	<i>tur-j-is-an</i>
<i>doog</i> “ride”	<i>doog-iš</i>	<i>doog-j-is</i>	<i>doog-iš-š-an</i>	<i>doog-j-is-an</i>

2 Ibid., p. 302.

3 Abbreviations: * - unattested; 1, 2, 3 - 1st, 2nd, 3rd person; a - the *a*-suffix; ACC - accusative; AFF - affirmative; CAUS - causative; COMPL - completive aspect; CONT - continuous; EMP - emphasizer; FUT - future; GEN - genitive; HAB - habitual; IMP - imperative; *j* - the *j*-suffix; LOC - locative; NEG - negation; PL - plural; PRS - present; PT1 - preterite 1; SG - singular.

verb	-j-PT1.1SG Halfa/ Sokkot	-j-PT1.1SG Mahas	-j-PT1-3PL Halfa/ Sokkot	-j-PT1-3PL Mahas
moon “refuse”	moon-iš	moon-j-is	moon-iš-š-an	moon-j-is-an
dijŋ “fight”	dijŋ-iš	dijŋ-ic-is	dijŋ-iš-š-an	dijŋ-ic-s-an

Table 1 demonstrates that the suffixation of *-j* in these two specific preterite forms renders similar assimilatory changes according to the dialects of Halfa and Sokkot. This assimilatory change is not seen in the dialect of Mahas, which is the dialect of interest in this paper. However, according to the dialect of Mahas, a different type of phonological change can be observed. The *j*-suffix is realized as [ic] when it follows two specific root-final consonants, i.e. /ŋŋ/ as in the case of *dijŋ* “fight.” As shown in table 1, the first singular preterite 1 form and third plural preterite 1 form of the root verb *dijŋ* are realized as [dijŋicis] and [dijŋicisan], respectively. Now this phonological change is conditioned by the sequence of the two root-final consonants and the *j*-suffix and one of these two inflectional preterite 1 suffixes, *-is* and *-is-an*. Subsequently, more information about this specific assimilatory change is found by performing a simple phonological experiment demonstrated in table 2. In this table, the *j*-suffix is tested with all possible root-final consonants, that is, the voiceless stops /t, c, k/, the voiced stops /b, d, j, g/, the voiceless fricatives /f, s, š/, the nasals /m, ñ, ŋ/, the liquids /l/ and /r/, and finally with the approximants /w/ and /y/. Although the glottal fricative /h/ belongs to the consonant inventory of Nobiin, /h/ is not attested in root-final position. Also in this experiment, there is evidence of tone playing a role in the phonological behavior of the *j*-suffix. As illustrated in table 2, it is noticed that when the *j*-suffix is attached to a high-tone verb root, whose root ends in /ir/, it is realized as [j], for example, *wíir-j-is-an*, which represents the third plural preterite 1 form of *wíir* “be away,” and *míir-j-is-an*, which is the third plural preterite 1 form of *míir* “block or “prevent from movement.” In contrast, when the *j*-suffix is attached to a low-tone verb root whose root ends in /ir/, the *j*-suffix and the root-final /r/ undergo a reciprocal assimilation and are realized as [cc], for example, *tír* plus *-j* “give” is realized as [tíccisan] in its third plural preterite 1 form.

consonant	verb	-j-PT1.1SG	-j-PT1-3PL
/t/	<i>eriit</i> “dirt, soot the body”	<i>eriit-j-is</i>	<i>eriit-j-is-an</i>

Table 2. Phonological changes triggered by the *j*-suffix

consonant	verb	-j-PT1.1SG	-j-PT1-3PL
/c/	wicc “throw the fishhook for casting”	wicc-ij-is → wiccicis	wicc-ij-s-an → wiccisan
/k/	šaak “hew, stab”	šaak-j-is	šaak-j-is-an
/b/	jaab “rub on something”	jaab-j-is	jaab-j-is-an
/d/	kud “stuff, fill with a padding”	kud-j-is	kud-j-is-an
/j/	faaj “divorce”	faaj-j-is → faaccis	faaj-j-s-an → faaccisan
/g/	mug “leave”	mug-j-is	mug-j-is-an
/f/	guf “buff”	guf-j-is	guf-j-is-an
/s/	kus “untie, unleash”	kus-j-is	kus-j-is-an
/š/	tuš “stray”	tuš-j-is	tuš-j-is-an
/m/	gum “evaporate, steam”	gum-j-is	gum-j-is-an
/n/	moon “refuse”	moon-j-is	moon-j-is-an
/ñ/	dooñ “raise a child”	dooñ-j-is	dooñ-j-is-an
/ɲ/	soɲ “wash clothes with hands”	soɲ-j-is → soɲcis	soɲ-j-is-an → soɲcisan
/l/	jaal “snub, get it in the neck”	jaal-j-is	jaal-j-is-an
/r/ preceded by a high-tone verb root	mīir “prevent from movement, block”	mīir-j-is	mīir-j-is-an
/r/ preceded by a low-tone verb root	tīr “give”	tīr-j-is → tīccis	tīr-j-is-an → tīccisan
/w/	iīw “breed animal”	iīw-j-is	iīw-j-is-an
/y/	kaay “make”	kaay-j-is	kaay-j-is-an

The test suggests that -j is realized as voiceless plosive [c] when preceded by one of the three root-final consonants: the voiceless plosive

/c/, e.g. *wicc-ic-s-an*, the voiced plosive /j/, e.g. *faac-c-is*, and the velar nasal /ŋ/, e.g. in *soŋ-c-is*. The remaining root-final consonants are found to be phonetically insensitive to -j. Furthermore, from this experiment it may be noticed that the phonological behavior of the j-suffix does not depend only on the root final-consonant but also on the tone of the preceding verb root. The reciprocal assimilation illustrated in table 2, which occurs when -j is attached to a low-tone verb root is not restricted to roots ending in /ir/. In fact, it may occur with a verb root that ends with /ar/, e.g. *kâr* which is the plural form of *kir* “come.” When the j-suffix is attached to the root *kâr* it is realized as [kâcc], as observed in its third plural preterite 1 form *kâc-c-is-an*. This increases the probability that this type of reciprocal assimilation can also occur with other low-tone verb roots, e.g. roots ending in /er/, /or/, or /ur/. Therefore, the phonological behavior of the j-suffix requires a more thorough investigation in the future.

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In addition, the conditioned variants of -j, i.e. the allomorphs -ij and -ic are required to prevent the co-occurrence of more than two consecutive consonants. An example of this case is the verb root *dumm* “take” and the verb root *dijj* “fight” whose roots end in two consonants. That when they are used with the j-suffix and the two preterite 1 forms, they take the allomorphs -ij and -ic, respectively. These two verb roots are realized as [dummijis] and [dijjicis] in the first singular preterite 1 form and as [dummijisan] and [dijjicisan] in the third plural preterite 1 form, respectively.

3. The j-suffix marks the plurality of participants

Unless one of the two applicative extensions, -tir and -deen, or the causative extension -kir are attached to the verb root, the j-suffix and its allomorphs -ij, -ic, and -c are always attached directly to the verb root preceding other verbal suffixes such as the person, tense, and number inflectional suffixes. When an applicative or a causative suffix is present then -j or its allomorphs -ij, -ic, and -c appear after the applicative or causative extension and before the inflectional suffixes.

In the following sections, it is shown that -j is used to mark the plurality of the object of a transitive clause, or the plurality of the indirect object of a ditransitive clause, or the plurality of the subject of an intransitive clause.

3.1 The j-suffix in the transitive clause

The function of the j-suffix in the transitive clause is to indicate the plurality of the object. This is clearly elucidated in the following

exx. 3 and 4. When the object *tii* of ex. 3 becomes plural, i.e. *tii-guu* in ex. 4, then the *j*-suffix is required in the transitive clause.

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- 3 *ay tii-ga aag jurr-il*
 1SG COW-ACC CONT milk-PRS.1SG
 “I am milking the cow”
- 4 *ay tii-guu-ga aag jurr-ij-il*
 1SG COW-PL-ACC CONT milk-j-PRS.1SG
 “I am milking the cows”

3.2 *The j-suffix in the ditransitive clause*

Ditransitive verbs in Nobiin are formed by suffixing the applicative extensions *tir* and *deen* or the causative extension *kir* to the verb root. Furthermore, in ditransitive clauses the *j*-suffix only indicates the plurality of the indirect object, while the plurality of the direct object is not reflected by the suffixation of *-j*, as observed when comparing exx. 5, 6, and 7, where *torbar* and *torbar-ii* represent the indirect objects in the three examples while *aṅṅaree* and *aṅṅaree-ñci* represent the direct objects, respectively.

- 5 *ay torbar-ka aṅṅaree-g kaay-a-tis⁴*
 1SG farmer-ACC bed-ACC make-a-APPL.PT1.1SG
 “I made the farmer a bed.”
- 6 *ay torbar-ii-ga aṅṅaree-g kaay-a-tic-c-is*
 1SG farmer-PL-ACC bed-ACC make-a-APPL-j-PT1.1SG
 “I made the farmers a bed.”
- 7 *ay torbar-ka aṅṅaree-ñci-ga kaay-a-tis*
 1SG farmer-ACC bed-PL-ACC make-a-APPL.PT1.1SG
 “I made the farmer beds.”

Ex. 8 demonstrates a ditransitive clause which is formed by adding the causative suffix *-kir*. It may be noticed that due to the suffixation of *-j* the causative suffix is realized as [ikac].

- 8 *ay assar-ii-ga nobiin-ṅa kull-ikac-c-is*
 1SG child-PL-ACC Nobiin-ACC learn-CAUS-j-PT1.1SG
 “I taught the children the Nobiin language.”

4 The function of the suffix *-a* attested on the clause-final verbs in exx. 5, 6, 7, 15, and 26 is not yet known. For this reason, it is simply glossed as *-a*.

The causative extension *kir* and the two applicative extensions *tir* and *deen* always show the *j*-suffix in their plural inflectional forms when they are used as independent verbs, as illustrated in the exx. 9, 10 and 11.

<p><i>ter balee-la kac-c-is-an</i> 3PL wedding-LOC come-j-PT1-3PL “They came to the wedding.”</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>65</p>
<p><i>ter uu-ga kabak-ka deen-c-is-an</i> 3PL 1PL-ACC food-ACC give-j-PT1-3PL “They gave us food.”</p>	<p>10</p>	
<p><i>ter uk-ka agrees-ka tic-c-is-an</i> 3PL 2PL-ACC blessing-ACC give-j-PT1-3PL “They gave you (PL) blessing.”</p>	<p>11</p>	

3.3 Optional *-j* in the transitive and ditransitive clauses

In the transitive clause, as illustrated in exx. 12, 13, 14, when the object noun phrase is modified by a numeral or a quantifier such as *mallee* or *minkellee*, the plural marker on the object noun phrase becomes optional and subsequently the suffixation of *-j* becomes optional, too. Similarly, *-j* becomes optional in the ditransitive clause, when the indirect object noun phrase is modified by a numeral or a quantifier, as shown in ex. 15. However the appearance of *-j* is not affected by the use of a quantifier or a numeral in the intransitive clause, as shown in ex. 16.

<p><i>ay tii uwo-g aag jurr-il</i> 1SG cow two-ACC CONT milk-PRS.1SG “I am milking two cows.”</p>	<p>12</p>
<p><i>ay tii mallee-kka aag jurr-il</i> 1SG cow all-ACC CONT milk-PRS.1SG “I am milking all the cows.”</p>	<p>13</p>
<p><i>ir kaj minkellee-kka kun-i</i> 2SG donkey how.many-ACC have-PRS.2SG “How many donkeys do you have?”</p>	<p>14</p>
<p><i>ay torbar uwo-g anjaree-ñci-ga kaay-a-tis</i> 1SG farmer two-ACC bed-PL-ACC make-a-APPL.PT1.1SG “I made two farmers beds.”</p>	<p>15</p>

- 16 *ideen mallee maar-ra-toonfac-ci-s-an*
 woman all village-LOC-from come out-j-PRET1-3PL
 “All the women came out from the village.”

3.4 The *j*-suffix in the intransitive clause

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In contrast to transitive and ditransitive clauses, the *j*-suffix appears sporadically in the intransitive clause. For this reason, and in order to predict with ease its appearance in the intransitive clause, intransitive verb roots with different syllabic structures are examined below in table 3. In this table I attempt to determine with which verb roots *-j* is expected to appear. This does not mean that the cause of *-j* appearance in the transitive and ditransitive clause only depends on the syllabic structure of the verb root.

Generally, the *j*-suffix is more likely to appear in intransitive verbs with monosyllabic verb roots. By contrast, the *j*-suffix hardly ever appears in intransitive verbs with disyllable root verbs.

Table 3. Possibility of appearance of *-j* with intransitive verbs.

verb	PT1.3PL	syllabic structure	appearance of <i>-j</i>
<i>aag</i> “sit”	<i>aag-j-is-an</i>	VC/VVC	possible
<i>err</i> “be angry”	<i>err-ij-s-an</i>	VCC	possible
<i>dii</i> “die”	<i>dii-j-is-an</i>	CV/CVW	obligatory
<i>fal</i> “exit”	<i>fac-c-is-an</i>	CVC	obligatory
<i>tiig</i> “sit”	<i>tiig-j-is-an</i>	CVVC	rarely
<i>daff</i> “finish, get lost”	<i>daff-ij-s-an</i>	CVCC	rarely
<i>bajbaj</i> “drip loudly”	<i>bajbaj-s-an</i>	CVCCVC	never
<i>bardakk</i> “run disorderly”	<i>bardakk-is-an</i>	CVCCVCC	never

4 The *j*-suffix marks event plurality

The *j*-suffix can also be used to mark the plurality of events. It functions as a marker for the plurality of actions when it is combined with a habitual event marker *-ken*.

4.1 The *j*-suffix marking repetitive events

Both Werner⁵ and Bechhaus-Gerst⁶ state that the function of the suffix *-j* is to mark repetitive events, as Werner illustrated, see ex. 17.

- 17 *ay neer-j-ir*
 1SG sleep-j-PRS.1SG
 “I sleep several times”

5 WERNER, *Grammatik des Nobiin*, p.173

6 BECHHAUS-GERST, *The (Hi)story of Nobiin*, p.116

Examining this use of the *j*-suffix as a repetitive event marker in the Mahas Nobiin dialect, I found that special adverbs are required to be present to signify the plurality or the repetitiousness of actions, e.g. *diigid-ta*, *diyyak-ka*, as illustrated in 18 and 19.

<i>ay aman-ga diigid-ta nii-j-is</i>	18	67
1SG water-ACC many-ACC drink-j-PT1.1SG		
“I drank water many times”		

<i>eliin ay illee-g diiya-kka deeg-j-is</i>	19
today 1SG wheat-ACC many-ACC water-j-PT1.1SG	
“Today I watered the wheat many times”	

4.2 The *j*-suffix marking habitual events

The *j*-suffix functions as a habitual event marker when it is followed by the habitual aspect marker *-ken* in the same preterite verbal phrase. It may also be observed in exx. 20 and 21 that the *j*-suffix precedes *-ken*. Furthermore, *-ken* has the allomorph *-kes* when it is followed by the preterite 1 suffix *-s*, as in the case of *tiig-j-ikes-so* in ex. 20. This preterite form [tiigjikesso] is a realization of **tiig-j-iken-s-o*. Finally, it may be noted that the aspect marker *-ken* has an allomorph, *-iken*, as seen in ex. 21. This allomorph is selected to avoid unadmitted consonant sequences.

<i>hiddo ur tiig-j-ikes-so</i>	20
where 2PL sit-j-HAB-PT1.2PL	
“Where did you (PL) use to sit?”	

<i>shoob-la tar noog diigid-ta kun-j-iken-o</i>	21
past.time-LOC 3SG house many-ACC have-j-HAB-PT1.3SG	
“In the past time, he used to have many houses”	

5 The *j*-suffix marks special cultural aspects

5.1 The use of *-j* to reflect politeness or adoration

The *j*-suffix is often attached to the second plural imperative verbs in the dialect of Mahas to emphasize politeness, personal respect, or to reflect feelings of adoration towards the addressee. To illustrate the use of *-j* with imperative forms, table 4 shows three different second plural imperative inflectional forms which are based on the verb root *tiig* “sit.”

Table 4. 2PL imperative forms according to the Mahas Nobiin dialect

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verb	IMP.2PL	comment
<i>tiig</i>	<i>tiig-an</i>	This imperative form implies a direct order to a group of people. It is considered the simplest 2pl imperative form.
<i>tiig</i>	<i>tiig-j-an</i>	This imperative form implies a direct order to a group of people, as the speaker likes to emphasize politeness in his or her order.
<i>tiig</i>	<i>tiig-oo-j-an</i>	This imperative form implies a very polite request rather than an order to a group of people or to a single person, as the speaker likes to emphasize respect, or love emotions in his or her request.

Additionally four exx. 22, 23, 24, 25 are provided below to illustrate this special use of the *j*-suffix. In ex. 22, *-j* is attached to the second plural imperative verb form to address a group of people respectfully. It may also be noticed from exx. 22 and 24 that the final /n/ of the second plural imperative suffix *-an* is usually dropped in daily speech, so the suffix is realized as [a]. In ex. 23, the *j*-suffix is attached to a second plural imperative form to address a single person as the irregular imperative form *nee* is followed by *-j* and then followed by the affirmative suffix *-imi/-mi* to emphasize more politeness. Note that there is vowel alternation in the verb root of *nee-j-imi*, as compared to the singular form *nii-mi* “drink!” which is the form used to address a single person. In ex. 24, the *j*-suffix appears in a quite complex imperative form following the completive aspect suffix *-oo* to show more respect to the addressee as a single person, i.e. in this case the second person singular is addressed.

- 22 *menj-imeen-an* *irki-n* *dawwi-la nog-j-a*
 stop-NEG-IMP.2PL homeland-GEN road-LOC go-j-IMP.2PL
 “Never stop! Go to the road of the homeland!”
- 23 *kir* *uu-dan* *abree-ga nee-j-imi*
 come.IMP.2SG 1PL-with *abree-ACC* drink-IMP.2PL-j-AFF
 “Come close! Drink *abree* with us!”
- 24 *faddall-oo-j-a* *awwo kir*
 welcome-COMPL-J-IMP.2PL inside come:IMP.2SG
tiig-oo-j-a
 sit-COMPL-j-IMP.2PL
 “Welcome! Come inside and sit!”

Moreover, the *j*-suffix may be used in the same complex imperative form addressing a single person, i.e. the second person singular to persuade a lover to do something for the sake of love and tenderness, as elucidated in ex. 25, which is a section of a contemporary Nobiin song. It may also be noted that this particular use is common in poetic expressions and folk songs.

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ir ay-ga jill-imun wala ay-dogo 25
 2SG 1SG-ACC remember-PRS.2SG.NEG OR 1SG-to
 wiid-mun kir nal-oo-j-a
 return-PRS.2SG.NEG come.IMP.2SG greet-COMPL-j-IMP.2PL
 nalti-l min daaf-i
 greeting-LOC what be.inside-PRS.3SG
 “You don’t remember me or return to me, please come greet me,
 dear! What’s wrong with a greeting?”

5.2 The use of *-j* to reflect divinity and sacredness

The *j*-suffix can also be attached to second singular forms of verbs to reflect sacredness when the divinity or the mighty God is addressed in the speech. This use is repetitively expressed in the folk Nobiin hymn *salla*, as shown in ex. 26.

woo noor wiyyan ik-ka 26
 oh Lord always 2SG-ACC
 fedd-ij-l-ee ir ay-ga-m
 request-j-PRS.1SG-EMP 2SG 1SG-ACC-AFF
 dell-ikir-a deen-c-ee'
 increase-CAUS-a give-j-PRS.2SG
 “Oh Lord, I always ask you to give me. You give me in abundance.”

5.3 The use of the *j*-suffix to express figurative semantics

An unusual use for *-j*, as illustrated in ex. 27, is also found in the language when the speaker intends to express figurative meanings in the sentence for poetic and the artistic purposes.

maañ-ii-l jakki fa dii-j-in 27
 eye-PL-LOC fear FUT die-j-PRS.3SG
 nuuba-g gurumme fa mug-j-in
 Nubia-ACC darkness FUT leave-j-PRS.3SG
 “The fear will die in the eyes. The darkness will leave Nubia.”

7 As per the dialect of Mahas, the proper inflectional suffix expected to be used in this case is for *-in* or its simplified allomorph *-i*. The appearance of the long vowel *ee* instead is most probably due to keeping the poetic rhyme. However, once this morpheme *-ee* functions as a second personal inflectional suffix, it is considered as an allomorph of *-in*.

6. Conclusions

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To sum up, in Mahas Nobiin the *j*-suffix is realized as [c] when it is attached to verb roots, which either end in the plosive /c/ or the voiced plosive /j/ or the velar nasal /ŋ/. Also it is discovered that tone plays a role in the phonological behavior of the *j*-suffix: When -*j* is attached to a low-tone verb root which ends in /ir/ or /ar/ (and possibly with other root vowels), the *j*-suffix and the root-final /r/ undergo a reciprocal assimilation and are realized as [cc]. Therefore, a thorough investigation of the phonological behavior is required in the future. The allomorphs of the *j*-suffix, i.e. -*ij* and -*ic* are required in order to avoid unadmitted sequences of more than two consonants. The *j*-suffix marks the plurality of participants in transitive, ditransitive, and intransitive clauses. It appears frequently in transitive and ditransitive clauses and occasionally in intransitive clauses. The occurrence of numerals and quantifiers after the object noun phrase renders its presence. But the occurrence of numerals and quantifiers after the subject noun phrase in intransitive clauses does not affect the appearance of -*j*. As shown in tables 1, 2, and 3, the *j*-suffix is widely attested on monosyllabic verb roots but on disyllabic verb roots it does not occur. In addition, the *j*-suffix is used to indicate the plurality of actions, that is, repeated events and to express - in combination with the habitual suffix -*ken* and the preterite 1 - habitual events. Lastly, the *j*-suffix occurs in polite requests and poetic language to express certain meanings related to Nobiin culture.

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