

## THE ORIGIN OF FAROESE *TA*

by Haukur Þorgeirsson – Reykjavík

### *Abstract*

The modern Faroese pronoun form *ta* is unlikely to continue a putative Old Norse *\*þa* variant as suggested by Kroonen (2010). In 19th century Faroese, the form *tá* is found, obviously deriving from Old Norse *þá*. The *ta* form can be explained as a younger analogical formation derived from the identically pronounced neuter *tað*.

Guus Kroonen (2010) has hypothesized that the modern Faroese accusative form of the feminine demonstrative, *ta*, continues an Old Norse variant *\*þa*, with a short vowel, and that this has implications for the development of final syllables in North-West Germanic. I will argue that the Faroese form *ta* is an analogical formation and that it does not continue a putative Old Norse *\*þa*.

The normal inflection of the demonstrative in modern spoken Faroese is as follows (the Faroese genitive has a very marginal status and is not normally present in the spoken language, I will thus exclude it):

	m.	f.	n.
nom.	tann	tann	<b>tað</b>
acc.	<b>tann</b>	ta	<b>tað</b>
dat.	tí	tí	<b>tí</b>

I have bolded the forms that clearly continue the Old Norse paradigm, which is as follows:

	m.	f.	n.
nom.	sá	sú	þat
acc.	þann	þá	þat
dat.	þeim	þeiri	því
gen.	þess	þeirar	þess

The modern Faroese masculine and feminine nominatives and datives must be analogical. The spelling of the feminine accusative is meant

to hint at a connection with Old Norse *þá* but it seems more economical to explain this form as analogically derived from the neuter accusative. The distinction between *ta* and *tað* exists only in the spelling, which is deliberately archaized. The pronunciation is identical in all environments and in every dialect.

In older Faroese sources, especially the ballads, several more forms are found. Hammershaimb (1891:XC-XCI) gives the following:

	m.	f.	n.
nom.	tann/sá	tann/sá	<b>tað</b>
acc.	<b>tann</b>	ta/tá	<b>tað</b>
dat.	tí/ <b>teim</b>	tí/ <b>teirri</b>	<b>tí</b>
gen.	<b>tess</b>	<b>teirrar</b>	<b>tess</b>

I have again bolded the forms that continue the Old Norse paradigm. It is apparent that reflexes of all the forms of the Old Norse paradigm, except the feminine nominative, were preserved in Faroese. This includes the feminine accusative *tá*, which Hammershaimb describes as a form found in Suðuroy.

The most natural explanation of the data is that Faroese had *tá* from Old Norse *þá* and that this was replaced analogically by *ta(ð)* at a fairly late stage as part of a general reorganization of the demonstrative paradigm.

#### References

- Hammershaimb 1891: V.U. Hammershaimb, *Færøsk anthologi. I Tekst samt historisk og grammatisk indledning*. København.  
 Kroonen 2010: Guus Kroonen, “Faroese *ta* and its Relevance to the Germanic Auslautsgesetze”, in: *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 66: 21-28.