

Circumstantial qualifiers in the Arabic dialect of Kinderib (East Turkey)

BO ISAKSSON – Uppsala

Introduction

The new standard grammar of modern written Arabic by El-Said Badawi, Michael Carter and Adrian Gully defines the *circumstantial qualifier* as clauses or phrases that describe “the state or condition of the antecedent”.¹ According to them, “circumstantial qualifier” is equivalent to the traditional Arabic concept of *ḥāl*. This supposition is premature. The *ḥāl* concept is defined within the framework of a normative grammatical tradition. We do not expect to discover hitherto unrecognized *ḥāl* constructions in classical Arabic texts. What is not called “ḥāl” in the standard Arabic grammars cannot without protests be classified as *ḥāl* in a linguistic investigation. This is why we prefer to use the English linguistic term “circumstantial qualifier”. It is a term that can be applied to Arabic texts without normative pretensions. If an investigation of the various *ḥāl* constructions in Arabic would shed light on hitherto unrecognized syntactical features, you could easily be accused of mistreating the *ḥāl* concept. The concept of circumstantial qualifier on the other hand is purely linguistically defined, open to whatever circumstantial constructions you might discover in various strata of the Arabic language.

The commonly accepted *ḥāl* expressions in written Arabic occur on two linguistic levels.² As is well known, the most common *ḥāl*-construction on *the phrase level* is an active participle in the accusative, but other noun phrases in the accusative case may be used as well, such as verbal nouns, adjectives, and even common nouns. On *the sentence level* things are more complicated. A rich variety of clauses may serve as circumstantial qualifiers, they may be nominal or verbal, asyndetic or syndetic. This article is not the place to give an account for the possible varieties of *ḥāl*-clauses in standard Arabic,³ it is sufficient to point out that circumstantial expressions often – because of their general nature –

¹ Badawi, Carter, Gully 2004, 579.

² There are reasons to consider the discourse level as well, but this topic will not be discussed in the present article.

³ A brief survey of syndetic and asyndetic circumstantial clauses is given in Badawi, Carter, Gully 2004, 580-87.

express nuances of purpose or finality: *ʔinṭalaqat fī l-šārīʔi tabḥatu ʿan-i l-ʔatfāli* “she went into the street to look for the children”.⁴

In the present article, our aim is to begin investigating a modern Arabic dialect in order to discern in what ways the dialect expresses circumstantial information, and also – as a contrast – how the dialect forms the main narrative chain. We have chosen the dialect of Kinderib in the district of Midyat of south-eastern Turkey. The texts are published by Otto Jastrow.⁵ The vernacular is locally called Mḥallami, a subgroup of the Mardin dialect group of the Anatolian dialect type. Our study is a preliminary account based on three narrative texts from Kinderib, the so-called “Schatzgeschichten” in Jastrow’s edition.

The foreground narrative in Kinderib

Let us begin with one example of a narrative syntax:

ənnawb qām, ṭalaʿu dáwrəya. ṭalaʿu dáwrəya, w əddənye b-əllayl-ye
“then they went on patrol **while it was night**” (14.1.3)

The sentence is introduced by the exceedingly common particle *ənnawb*, “then, now”,⁶ which in a narrative context often but not always marks a new event in the story. *qām* is a frequent particle for the beginning of an action. As can be seen from the example, *qām* is not inflected, and most often there is no need to translate it. The verbal action is introduced asyndetically by a perfect, *ṭalaʿu*, followed by a substantive with adverbial function *dáwrəya* “on patrol”. Finally, there is a nominal clause introduced by *w*, with the function of a circumstantial qualifier, informing of the time of the action, “it was at night”. The classical conjunction *fa-* does not exist in the dialect. The function of classical *fa-* as a foreground marker is filled by other syntactical particles, like *ənnawbe* or *ənnawb*, *qām* and other fossilized particles. The repetition of the clause *ṭalaʿu dáwrəya* is a feature of the spoken narrative. The last clause in the example is a classical nominal clause, except that an enclitic particle is used: *-ye* in the phrase *b-əllayl-ye*. It refers back to the feminine *əddənye*. This enclitic particle is a characteristic feature of all Anatolian Arabic dialects. Another sentence introduced by *ənnawb* with a perfect is:

ənnawb fātu mayyalu l-əddēʿa
“then they went in, turned aside to the village” (14.1.5)
[Jastrow: Sie bogen zum Dorf hin ab]

The perfect *mayyalu* “they turned aside” – asyndetically appended after the first perfect *fātu* – is striking. Such asyndetic perfects often form chains in the narrative texts of Kinderib. What do they express? The first perfect is a rather general verb of motion, *fātu* “they entered” and the next perfect is seemingly more specific, *mayyalu* “they turned aside”. They seem to express different phases in

⁴ Badawi, Carter, Gully 2004, 581. I have changed the translation from “looking for” to “to look for” to emphasize the final nuance of the circumstantial clause. In a pilot study we discussed circumstantial qualifiers in classical Arabic at the *Nordic-Arab Research Conference on Arabic Literature and Linguistics, Alexandria, 13-15 April 2005*, published in *The Professorship of Semitic Languages 2007*.

⁵ Jastrow 2003, reviewed in Isaksson and Lahdo 2005. Recently Jastrow has published an excellent glossary to the texts (2005).

⁶ MSA *nawba* “change; case”.

one and the same action. If one verb is not enough, another verb is appended to achieve a more precise expression. Such a chain of asyndetically appended perfects is found also in

daqqu lbāb ʔalaʔ zalame fataḥ-lən əlbāb

“they knocked on the door, a man came out, he opened the door” (14.1.5)

Asyndetically joined finite verb forms are extremely frequent in Kinderib. One more example is

ʕtarālu dīk dawwaḥ bayn əḍḍēʔa mən hawn lə-hawne qaḥḥālu dīk bala nūšān

“he bought a cock: went around in the village and searched for himself a cock without markings” (14.2.10)

Here three asyndetically appended perfects are used, the first one, *ʕtarā-lu*, being introductory and anticipating the whole the action. The rest of the sentence beginning with *dawwaḥ* explicates the first proleptic verb by telling the different moments in the process of buying a cock. It seems that the normal foreground narrative in Kinderib is expressed by perfects, frequently asyndetically joined:

w rəḥtu-zəd nabaʕtu ʔalāya ʔalaʔət əḡḡarḥa fārḡa

“and I went also and digged for it (but) the pitcher turned out (to be) empty” (14.2.19)

We conclude that asyndesis is a natural unmarked way of forming a narrative. The use of the conjunction *w* seems to be facultative and often occurs before the last verb form in a sequence of actions.

Foreground narrative can also be expressed by imperfects with the meaning of an historical present:

yḡīb rəmmān yqaššəḥ əḥḥəmmān w yḥaʔ ʔamu nnawb ḥabb rəmmān

“he fetches a pomegranate, peels the pomegranate and feeds it with pomegranate corns” (14.2.12)

In this example, three imperfects, the last one appended by *w*, give the listener the feeling of being present in the moment of action. But also imperatives may occur in chains of a type similar to hendiadys, as in

xalliyən xrəḡən ʔala wlādək

“leave them behind and give them to the children” (14.3.22)

qūm ʔlaʔ ʕtarīli-we

“enter and buy it to me!” (14.3.17)

In the last example we encounter three asyndetically joined imperatives, the first imperative of which functions as an exhortatory particle which must often be left untranslated.

After these introducing samples of foreground syntax in Kinderib, we shall begin examining circumstantial qualifiers on the phrase level. In a second step, we will examine the sentence level.

Phrase level circumstantial qualifiers

Substantive in the adverbial case

We have already seen an example of a substantive in the accusative case expressing an adverbial qualification:

ənnawb qām, ʔalaʕu dāwrəya
 “then they went on patrol” (14.1.3)

The substantive *dāwrəya* means “patrol”, but we are forced to translate it adverbially “on patrol”. We cannot from the form alone see that it is in the accusative case, but the analogy with classical Arabic, allows us to conclude that it is accusative, or simply in the dependent case.

Participle in the accusative

As with other nouns in the accusative, the case of participles must be concluded from their functions.

tātətən baqaw qyēm
 “the three (of them) remained standing” (14.1.52)

Here we might find an example of the thesis in Dahlgren’s *Word order in Arabic* that the unmarked word order in Anatolian Arabic is SVO. In any case we encounter after the perfect *baqaw*, a participle in the plural, *qyēm* “standing”, which qualifies the action that they remained in the place.

Adjective in the accusative

Adverbial adjectives are infrequent in Standard Arabic and there is only one example in our small corpus from Kinderib:

ašqad lə-yəğ mənnək vərr-u bʕīd
 “as far as possible throw it away from you far away!” (14.1.43)

The adjective *bʕīd* functions here as an adverbial adjunct to the verb *vərr* and/or to the 3ms object suffix *-u*.

Sentence level circumstantial qualifiers

Nominal clause with enclitic copula

On the sentence level the most simple circumstantial qualifier is an equational nominal clause, in Kinderib always containing an enclitic copula. We have already mentioned the short temporal qualifier *w əddənye b-əllayl-ye* “while it was night” (14.1.3). Here *əddənye* is the determined subject, *b-əllayl* is the predicate. In the following example an asyndetic circumstantial clause informs of the nationality of a certain person:

ənnawb tmarḥabət fiyən, mən ayn-əntən, wəḥəd mənn-ən tərki-we
 “she greeted them: ‘Where are you from?’ – **one of them was Turk**” – (14.1.7)

Also a participle may occur as a predicate in an equational nominal clause expressing background information:

ənnawb halsəwwəqin lənnə ʕəndu, w hūwe qāyəm-we baqa yətfarrağūn
 “the plowmen beside him, **while he was standing there**, began to observe” (14.1.31)

It is worth observing that the nominal clause – except for the enclitic copula – syntactically conforms to the nominal clause in standard Arabic. The participle agrees with the subject *hūwe* as to number and gender, and after the nominal clause the main sentence is resumed with a finite verb in the plural,

yətfarrağūn. The equational clause is introduced by the conjunction *w*, which is important to observe in a dialect where asyndetic annexation is frequent. When *w* is used at all in Kinderib, it is usually in order to introduce a nominal equational sentence. We can also observe the *baqa* modifier, formally a perfect verb form, but in some positions petrified to an inchoative particle succeeded by an imperfect.

Nominal clause with a finite verb

Nominal clauses may also be complex, containing a finite verb:

ənnawb nabašu fīyu əşşəfāye šwayye tala‘ət ‘amiqa ‘əndən

“so they digged there, **the stone ground coming forth rather deep**” (14.3.2)

In this sentence there are two levels of circumstantial qualifiers. On the phrase level *‘amiqa* has the same function as a classical *‘amiqatan* “in that it was deep; being deep”. On the sentence level we encounter a complex nominal clause expressing background information about the digging activity.

The finite verb in a complex nominal clause can also be an imperfect as in:

ənnawb hənne yənbəšūn, aṛaw ‘əğəl

“**while they digged** they caught sight of a calf”

The circumstantial clause *hənne yənbəšūn* consisting of subject pronoun and an imperfect precedes the narrative thread which is taken up again with the perfect *aṛaw*. As can be seen a circumstantial clause may express the background of the *following* action.

The verbal clause as circumstantial qualifier

With the imperfect

The asyndetic imperfect introducing a circumstantial clause is found in Kinderib as in Standard Arabic:

ḥawk-zəde ġaw tṇayn lə-‘əndu, tṇayn tātē, yətfarrağūn ‘alāyu

“Also those two men came to him, two or three, **in order to have a look at him**” (14.1.27)

In this example the verb in the main sentence is a perfect, *ğaw*, while the asyndetically introduced imperfect, *yətfarrağūn*, is a circumstantial that comes close to expressing a final nuance, “in order to”. An example of an imperfect expressing the reason for the preceding statement is found in

... *‘ala qawlu lā yəldāğu. yəfza‘ mənnu*

“... in order that it should not sting him, **because he was afraid of it**” (14.1.32)

The imperfect here gives the reason, the background, of the preceding sentence. The man wanted to avoid being stung by a hornet, because he was afraid of it. As pointed out above, finite verb forms are frequently joined asyndetically in chains, and this is often the case also with circumstantial imperfections, with complicated references, as in:

ḥawk-zəde baqa yṛōḥ ‘alay-ən ḥəbēbi, yəltəmūwən. yəltəmūwən ywaqq‘ūwən

“even those ploughmen: single hornets came against them, **whereby (the ploughmen) smashed them, smashed them and brought them down**” (14.1.30)

The utterance begins with a leftdislocation *ḥawk-zəde*, anaphorically referred to by the suffix of *‘alay-ən*. The subsequent abrupt change of subject – from hornets to ploughmen – is possibly a feature of the living speech situation. As many other *ḥāl*-constructions, the imperfect in circumstantial position often expresses finality, and this can be emphasized by the use of the prefixed future particle *tə-*. In the following example the imperfect *yəštəri* is prefixed by the future particle *tə-* and affixed by an indirect reflexive suffix *-lu*:

rāḥ lə-Mədyād tištəriḥ ‘ətra

“he went to Midyat to buy commodities” (14.3.13)

With the perfect

Also perfects may occur in circumstantial qualifiers in Kinderib, but instead of a *waqad* as in the Standard language a verbal modifier *kūt-* may be utilized:⁷

w zawǧ-a kūt-ənqatal f-əssafar

“and her husband was killed in the war” (14.1.6)

A perfect can also be appended asyndetically to the main clause as in:

ḥāk xbayz lə-f-īdāk, rǧif sāǧ-we w rǧif kasartu saytu šətfətayn

that piece of bread in your hand – one slice is whole and one have you broken
in that you made it two pieces – (14.1.17)

Here, the perfect *saytu* (with object suffix *-u*) of the verb *sawa* expresses an adverbial complement. The same function of a perfect can be seen in:

w waraqāyāta ḥīye ḥaṭṭa bāšqa ‘arāfən mən ba‘ḍən sawā-lu fīyən nišān

“but her piece of paper he placed separately in that he discerned the two, having made for himself a mark on them” (14.1.22)

The attached perfects in this example may be regarded as circumstantial expressions. *waraqāyāta* “her piece of paper” is a leftdislocation.

Verbs in symbiosis: verbal hendiadys, or what?

The frequency of asyndetically attached finite verbs in Kinderib is conspicuous. A limited number of such verbs recurs again and again with asyndesis in formulaic renderings. Those are the verbs *rāḥ* “go, travel”, *ṭalla* “look at”, *qām* “stand up” and *ǧā* “come; go”. The two perfects in *w qām ǧā* “he went away” (14.1.22) and even more the three perfects in *qām tnāwal tarēqu w rāḥ* “he went away” (14.1.24) are used to describe one and the same action, and in such cases the last verb sometimes bears a facultative initial *w*. In *ənnawb qām radd* “then he returned” (14.1.40) we may compare with classical Hebrew in which such pairs of verbs are quite common, even asyndetically attached.⁸ We may call this type of expression *hendiadys*. Hendiadys means that a complex concept or a complex action is described by two co-ordinated but semantically distinct expressions (“one by two”). Another example with *ǧā* shows how the second verb gives the description a nuance of liveliness. In this example the perfect *ǧā* is succeeded by the perfect *wəṣəl*: *īda ǧīt wəṣəlt laya* “when you reach it” (14.1.45). Such asyndetic hendiadys-constructions are most frequent with perfects, but also imperfects are attached in this way, as in *lā yəǧawn yəlḥaqūni*

⁷ Jastrow 2003, 16. According to Jastrow *kūt-* with the perfect expresses the resultative.

⁸ H. S. Nyberg, *Hebreisk grammatik*, Uppsala, § 97v.

“otherwise they will catch me up” (14.1.51).⁹ In the example the real meaning of the action is expressed by the second verb *yalḥaqūni*, while the first verb at the most gives the expression a little more emphasis and fulfils an adverbial purpose. The verbal hendiadys is a linguistic tool for the expression of adverbial connotations with the help of finite verbs. It is usually the first verb in the pair that adds the adverbial qualification of the action, while the second expresses the semantic content of the action.¹⁰ It is characteristic of the hendiadys constructions in Kinderib that the first and second verbs always have the same tense form. Perfects follow perfects, imperfects follow imperfects, and imperatives imperatives: *qəmma ʔaddayna ʔəḥna lə-ʿandu* “we went back to him” (14.3.37). Cases such as this with three asyndetic finite verbs in a hendiadys where two verbs contribute with adverbial nuances are not uncommon in Kinderib. The real action verb is the last one (*ʔəḥna*) whereas *qəmma* is inchoative and *ʔaddayna* adds the meaning of “opposite direction” to the same action.

Summary

The examples given should be sufficient to show that circumstantial qualifiers in Kinderib both departs from the classical usage and conforms to it. Noteworthy in the foregrounding constructions is the frequent usage of asyndetically attached perfects. Frequent are also chains of verb hendiadys where the first verb component contributes with an adverbial qualification to the action.

References

- Badawi, Elsaid, Michael G. Carter and Adrian Gully (2004): *Modern Written Arabic: A comprehensive grammar*. London: Routledge.
- Dahlgren, Sven-Olof (1998): *Word Order in Arabic*. *Orientalia Gothoburgensia* 12. Göteborg.
- Dahlgren, Sven-Olof (2005): *Arabisk högspråklig grammatik*. Göteborg: Anatole Media.
- Isaksson, Bo and Ablahad Lahdo (2005): Review of *Arabische Texte aus Kinderib*, by Otto Jastrow, in: *Orientalia Suecana* 54 (2005), 222-223.
- Isaksson, Bo (2007): “Circumstantial qualifiers in Arabic. Some syntactic reflections on the text of Taʔabbaḥa Šarran in a comparative perspective”, in: *The Professorship of Semitic Languages at Uppsala University 400 years. Jubilee Volume from the Symposium held at the University Hall 21-23 September 2005*, 145-162. *Studia Semitica Upsaliensia* 24. Uppsala.
- Isaksson, Bo (2007): “The syntax of narrative discourse in Qohelet”, in: P. Van Hecke (ed.): *The Language of Qohelet in its Context: Essays in honour of Prof. A. Schoors*. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*. Leuven, 35-46.
- Isaksson, Bo (2008): “Circumstantial qualifiers in Qumran Hebrew: Reflections on adjunct expressions in The Manual of Discipline (1QS)”, in: J. Joosten (ed.): *Conservatism and innovation in the Hebrew language of the Hellenistic period*, 79-91 (*Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah* 73). Leiden, Brill.

⁹ The introductory *lā* in this sentence is a reflex of Classical Arabic ʔillā.

¹⁰ The corresponding constructions in standard Arabic must take the second verb in the imperfect as in ʔaxaḏū yabkūna “they began to weep” (fossilized *ḥāl*-constructions).

- Jastrow, Otto (1974): "Der Schatz in der Zisterne. Arabische Texte in der Mḥallami-Mundart von Kəndērib (Vilayet Mardin, Südosttürkei)", in: R. Gramlich (ed.): *Islamwissenschaftliche Abhandlungen, Fritz Meier zum 60. Geburtstag*. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 129-151.
- Jastrow, Otto (1978): *Die mesopotamisch-arabischen qəltu-Dialekte*. Vol. 1, *Phonologie und Morphologie*. Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 43:4. Wiesbaden: Steiner.
- Jastrow, Otto (1999): "Verbformen und ihre Funktionen im arabischen Dialekt von Kəndērib (Südostanatolien)", in: N. Nebes (ed.): *Tempus und Aspekt in den semitischen Sprachen. Jenaer Kolloquium zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Jastrow, Otto (2003): *Arabische Texte aus Kinderib*. *Semitica Viva* 30. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Jastrow, Otto (2005): *Glossar zu Kinderib (Anatolisches Arabisch)*. *Semitica Viva* 36. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.