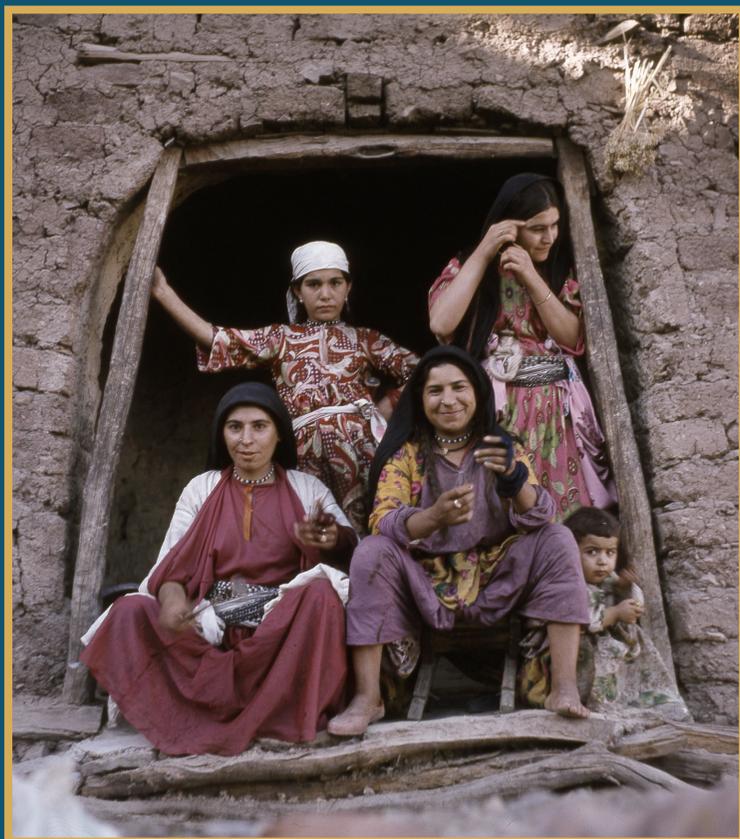


Cambridge Semitic Languages and Cultures

Studies in the Grammar and Lexicon of Neo-Aramaic

EDITED BY GEOFFREY KHAN AND PAUL M. NOORLANDER



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Faculty of Asian and Middle
Eastern Studies



<https://www.openbookpublishers.com>

© 2021 Geoffrey Khan and Paul M. Noorlander. Copyright of individual chapters is maintained by the chapters' authors.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC BY 4.0). This license allows you to share, copy, distribute and transmit the text; to adapt the text and to make commercial use of the text providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). Attribution should include the following information:

Geoffrey Khan and Paul M. Noorlander (eds.), *Studies in the Grammar and Lexicon of Neo-Aramaic*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0209>

In order to access detailed and updated information on the license, please visit, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0209#copyright>

Further details about CC BY licenses are available at, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

All external links were active at the time of publication unless otherwise stated and have been archived via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at <https://archive.org/web>

Updated digital material and resources associated with this volume are available at <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0209#resources>

Every effort has been made to identify and contact copyright holders and any omission or error will be corrected if notification is made to the publisher.

	ISBN Paperback: 978-1-78374-947-8
	ISBN Hardback: 978-1-78374-948-5
Semitic Languages and Cultures 5.	ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-78374-949-2
ISSN (print): 2632-6906	ISBN Digital ebook (epub): 978-1-78374-950-8
ISSN (digital): 2632-6914	ISBN Digital ebook (mobi): 978-1-78374-951-5
	ISBN Digital (XML): 978-1-78374-952-2
	DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0209

Cover image: Women in the village of Harbole, south-eastern Turkey (photograph taken by Brunot Poizat in 1978 before the village's destruction).

Cover design: Anna Gatti

LANGUAGE CONTACT AND ȚUROYO: THE CASE OF THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL CLAUSE

Michael Waltisberg

Introduction

When one studies language contact, especially between closely related languages such as Aramaic and Arabic, grammatical replication, as opposed to, for instance, phonological borrowing, remains problematic.¹ The term ‘grammatical replication’ describes constructions that are reproduced by linguistic means in the borrowing language. Mithun (2012, 15) correctly states:

Speakers replicate categories and patterns with native material. Without the substance, the process can be difficult to detect.

A case in point, which clearly illustrates this problem, is the circumstantial clause in Țuroyo. As I argued in an article published a few years ago, this can be ascribed to Arabic interference (Waltisberg 2013).² This conclusion was not necessarily premature or rash, but I did not discuss the whole spectrum of the problem and all the relevant data. The current article resumes the earlier discussion and summarises the relevant linguistic facts, arriving at a slightly different conclusion.

-
- 1 For introductory literature see, for example, Weinreich (1953); Hickey (2010); Epps et al. (2013).
 - 2 Kurdish seems to be irrelevant to the argument (see Bedir Khan and Lescot 1986 and Chyet 1995).

1. Ṭuroyo

The circumstantial clause in Ṭuroyo (see Waltisberg 2016, 316ff.) is either asyndetic, i.e. without a conjunction, or syndetic, i.e. with the conjunction *w-* ‘and’. It may occur before or after the matrix clause. It usually indicates concomitant states and actions or refers to the narrative background. There is no discernible distinction between the two syntactic options, as the following examples show.

A preposed asyndetic circumstantial clause:³

- (1) *āḥna na‘ime, koṭe l-bol-i,*
 we children it.is.coming to-mind-my
b-i-qriṭo ṭzzawāyna qūṭliwāyna ād-debure
 in-the-village we.used.to.go we.used.to.kill the-wasps

‘When we were children, it occurs to me, we used to go and kill the wasps in the village.’ (R2 456.1)

Here the circumstantial clause is formed with the pronoun *āḥna* ‘we’ and the noun *na‘ime* ‘little ones, children’. There is no copular element.

A circumstantial clause may also occur within matrix clauses:

- (2) *mīlla ... gdoṭe zlam, hāt damixo,*
 she.said he.will.come man you sleeping
gqoṭi^c qār^c-ūx
 he.will.cut.off head-your

3 The transcription of Ṭuroyo used in this paper follows Jastrow (1997) and consistently indicates lax vowels (mostly in closed syllables) with a breve diacritic.

‘She said: a man will come, (and) **while you are asleep**, he will cut your head off.’ (R3 354.47)

Morphosyntactically, syndetic circumstantial clauses are almost identical. They simply introduce the clause with the conjunction *w-*:

- (3) *măşrîn-ne* *w-‘ăyn-i* *măşre* *măwfăqqă-lli*
 they.shackle-them and-eyes-my bound they.led.out-me

m-u-băyt-awo
 from-the-house-that

‘They shackled (my hands). **With my eyes covered**, they led me out of that house.’ (Talay 2004, 76.127)

The next example has the same semantics as (2) above, but is joined to what precedes syndetically:

- (4) *w-kfıxle* *b-feme* *d-Kăyalo*
 and-he.poured.it in-mouth of-Kăyalo

w-hiye *damixo*
 and-he sleeping

‘and he poured (the grease) into Kăyalo’s mouth, **while he was asleep**.’ (R2 574.153)

All the examples cited so far have a non-verbal predicate. It is not entirely certain whether circumstantial clauses with a verbal predicate exist, as such constructions largely overlap with coordinated clauses. Some examples, however, may be interpreted as a circumstantial clause. The present tense form

koroqīd ‘he dances’ in example (5) below serves as the predicate of the circumstantial clause:

- (5) *disane bdele moḥe ʿal i-ʿārbān-ayo*
 again he.began he.beats upon the-timbrel-that
diḏe w-u-māymun koroqīd
 of.his and-the-monkey he.is.dancing

‘He began to beat his timbrel again, **while the monkey was dancing.**’ (Jastrow 1968, 46.54)

The following syntactic features of the circumstantial clause in Ṭuroyo emerge from these examples:

- (6) Features of the circumstantial clause:
- a. It is syndetic or asyndetic (with or without the conjunction *w-* ‘and’).
 - b. A subject pronoun (or noun) stands at the head of the clause and the predicate immediately follows.
 - c. There is no copula, but examples with verbal predicates (in the present tense) possibly occur.

We may thus come to the preliminary conclusion that the circumstantial clause in Ṭuroyo is a perfect replica of the Arabic circumstantial clause (cf., for example, Reckendorf 1921, 447ff.; Brustad 2000, 339ff.; Procházka 2002, 159).

Despite the morphosyntactic and semantic similarities, however, there are some problems with this conclusion:

- (7) Arguments against Arabic interference:
- a. Some dialects of Anatolian Arabic use a copula in non-verbal clauses, even in circumstantial clauses.
 - b. In older Aramaic, especially in Syriac, circumstantial clauses also occur with the conjunction *w-* ‘and’; this is, however, rare, as they mostly involve the conjunction *kaḏ* (Nöldeke 1898, 261 = 1904, 272).
 - c. In Barwar Neo-Aramaic, there are similar clauses which, according to Khan (2008, 22, 849ff.), cannot be assigned to Arabic interference.

Anatolian Arabic

The situation in Anatolian Arabic is significant. The copula of the third person singular masculine and feminine has the following paradigm in the dialect of Hasköy (Kurdish Dêrxas, Muş province, eastern Turkey):

- (8) *ism-i Mḥamma-wa*
 name-my Mḥamma-it.is

‘My name **is** Mḥamma.’ (Talay 2001, 77ff.)

- (9) *Aḷmānya bōš kwīse mī-ya*
 Germany very good not-it.is

‘Germany **is** not that good.’ (ib.)

A copula may also be used in circumstantial clauses, for example in the Mḥallami dialect of Kinderib (Mardin province, south-eastern Turkey), as shown in the two following

examples, which contain the 3fs (-*ye*) and the 3ms (-*we*) copulas respectively:

- (10) *ṭalaʿu* *dáwrəya* *w-əd-dənye* *b-əl-layl-ye*
 they.went.out patrol and-the-world in-the-night-it.is

‘**During the night**, they went out on patrol.’ (Jastrow 2003, 458.3)

- (11) *hal-səwwēqīn* ... *w-hūwe* *qāyām-we* *baqa*
 the-ploughmen and-he standing-he.is INCHOATIVE

yəṭfarrəḡūn

they.look.on

‘The ploughmen began to look on, **while he was standing** (there).’ (Jastrow 2003, 462.31)

If the variety of vernacular Arabic that is the contact language of Ṭuroyo uses a copula, even in circumstantial clauses, the borrowing of this construction from Arabic into Ṭuroyo would be less likely. This is because Ṭuroyo, as we have seen, never uses a copula in non-verbal circumstantial clauses.

There are, however, also circumstantial clauses without the copula in Kinderib, as the following asyndetic example shows:

- (12) *yḥəṭṭū-hu* *rāš-u* *fə* *l-ḡarb* *w-sāqāt-u*
 they.put-it head-his in the-west and-feet-his

lə *ṣawb* *əš-šarq* *hūwe* *ʿa* *n-naʿš*
 to direction.of the-east he on the-bier

‘They put the head (of the body) to the West, and his feet in the direction of the East, **while he was lying on the bier**.’ (Jastrow 2003, 108.40)

There are further instances of circumstantial clauses without copulas in the Mḥallami dialect, such as the following example from Sasse (1971):

- (13) *l-yāwm tatroḥin trāyr rəḥki neyme*
 today you.leave you.see yourself sleeping
ʿa lə-zbale w-čāntət-ki tāḥt ras-ki
 on the-dunghill and-bag-your under head-your

‘(When) you leave today, you will see yourself sleeping on top of the dunghill, **with your bag under your head.**’ (Sasse 1971, 290.5)

Circumstantial clauses without copulas are attested also in some other varieties of Anatolian Arabic, such as the dialect of Āzəx (Şırnak province, SE Turkey):

- (14) *məsku l-ḥabl w-hūwe qāyəm qədda*
 they.took the-rope and-he standing in.front.of
s-səğara
 the-tree

‘They took the rope, **while he was standing in front of the tree.**’ (Wittrich 2001, 160)

Compare this example with the semantically very similar clause in (11) above. The main difference is the use of the copula in Kinderib and its absence in Āzəx.

The evidence from Anatolian Arabic, therefore, does not necessarily contradict the assumption of Arabic influence on the Ṭuroyo circumstantial clause.

3. Other Aramaic Varieties

The situation in older varieties of Aramaic is also important for this issue, for the syntax of the Turoyo circumstantial clause may be the continuation of earlier linguistic usage. Syriac, as stated above, rarely uses the conjunction *w-* ‘and’ in circumstantial clauses, which are normally introduced by *kaḏ*. The following example is from the *Julian Romance* (probably 6th century C.E.), transcribed according to the eastern Syriac tradition:

- (15) *w-lā etmšiw la-mšāwzābu-ennon men*
 and-not they.were.able to-save-them from
- yaqdānā d-nurā aykannā d- paṣy-an*
 immolation of-fire as he.saved-me
- Mšihā w-šāwzb-an men yaqdānā*
 Christ and-he.delivered-me from immolation
- d-nur-āḵ w-‘ayn-ayk ḥāzyān*
 of-fire-your and-eyes-your seeing

‘They could not save them from the fiery immolation, as Christ saved and delivered me from your fiery immolation, **while you were looking on.**’ (Hoffmann 1880, 52.11 = Sokoloff 2017, 111.10)⁴

The interpretation of such clauses may sometimes be somewhat problematic. In the following example, taken from the story about Mar Ma’in, the clause in question, despite its morphosyntactic similarities, may not actually be a circumstantial clause, but rather a sequential clause with a participle in durative function:

4 Sokoloff’s text erroneously gives <’yk> for *aykannā*.

- (16) *hāyḏen npaq nāšā hālēn l-ṭurā*
 then they.went.out people these to-mountain
w-hennon metkarkin b-ē w-ʿal
 and-they moving.about in-it and-they.entered
l-hāy mʿartā w-eškū-y
 into-that cave and-they.found-him

‘Then these men left for the mountains, **and they were walking about**, went into that cave and found him.’
 (Brock 2008, 31.-14)

Despite its rather rare occurrence, this older Aramaic usage may have continued in Ṭuroyo.

Similar clauses can be found in other modern Aramaic varieties such as those of North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA). These are mostly asyndetic, as, for instance, in the Christian dialect of Barwar. Khan (2008, 22, 849ff.) rejects Arabic interference for this variety, presumably on the grounds of a predominantly Kurdish environment. Therefore, these clauses must be an independent development. An asyndetic example reads as follows:

- (17) *yazíwa zràʿaʿ yazíwa xzàdaʿ*
 they.used.to.go cultivating they.used.to.go harvesting
yazíwa mēθóye mándi ta-bèθaʿ
 they.used.to.go bringing something for-house
ʿáni šime.ʿ
 they fasting

‘They would go to cultivate (the fields), go to harvest, go and bring things for the house, **while they were fasting.**’ (Khan 2008, 851)

The syntax of the clause *ʿáni šime* is the same as in the Ṭuroyo examples (1) and (2) above, i.e. *ǎḥna naʿime* and *hāt damixo* respectively. It is not entirely certain what such parallels, apparently independent from each other, mean for the syntax of modern Aramaic in general, as they could well be due to tendencies toward paratactic structures in spoken language (cf. the short remark in Givón 2001, 218).

4. Conclusion

From the evidence presented in this paper, some questions arise:

- a. Is the circumstantial clause in Ṭuroyo an independent development, as presumably it is in NENA, i.e. Christian Barwar?
- b. Can the Ṭuroyo circumstantial clause still be interpreted as the result of Arabic interference, despite the existence of copular circumstantial clauses in Anatolian Arabic (primarily Kinderib)?
- c. How does the evidence of older Aramaic, i.e. Syriac, which rarely uses the conjunction *w-* ‘and’ in such clauses, fit into this picture?
- d. Can the Ṭuroyo circumstantial clause be explained by a so-called trigger effect ‘releasing or accelerating developments which mature independently’ (Weinreich 1953, 25)?

This leads to the following tentative conclusion. The model of Arabic syntax played a part in the Ṭuroyo circumstantial clause, if only in the sense of reinforcing developments already nascent in Ṭuroyo; see the evidence from Syriac and NENA cited earlier. Clues for Arabic interference in the circumstantial clause of Ṭuroyo may be found in the following syntactic features:

- a. Ṭuroyo uses the conjunction *w-* ‘and’ regularly and without exception. Despite the Syriac evidence, this regular feature seems to be dependent on an Arabic prototype.
- b. Ṭuroyo never has a copula in circumstantial clauses, as is the case in most dialects of Anatolian Arabic (see Mḥallamī and Āzəx). There is no apparent reason why Ṭuroyo by itself should not use its own copula in such a conspicuous construction.
- c. In addition, the occurrence of a verbal predicate (present tense) in a circumstantial clause may be due to Arabic influence, but this remains uncertain.

On the whole, therefore, the circumstantial clause in Ṭuroyo is a perfect example of the complex interaction between several internal and external factors in the development of linguistic features. The exact degree of influence of each of these factors is difficult, if not impossible, to determine.

References

- Bedir Khan, Emir Djeladet and Roger Lescot. 1986. *Kurdische Grammatik. Kurmanci-Dialekt*. Disputationes Linguarum Et Cultuum Orbis K 1—Disputationes Linguae Et Cultus Kurdica 1. Bonn: Kurdisches Institut.
- Brock, Sebastian P. 2008. *The History of the Holy Mar Ma'in. With a Guide to the Persian Martyr Acts*. Persian Martyr Acts in Syriac 1. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias.
- Brustad, Kristen E. 2000. *The Syntax of Spoken Arabic. A Comparative Study of Moroccan, Egyptian, Syrian, and Kuwaiti Dialects*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Chyet, Michael L. 1995. ‘Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish. An Interdisciplinary Consideration of their Influence on each other’. *Israel Oriental Studies* 15: 219–52.
- Epps, Patience et al. 2013. ‘Introduction: Contact Among Genetically Related Languages’. *Journal of Language Contact* 6: 209–19.

- Givón, Talmy. 2001. *Syntax. An Introduction*. Volume II. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Hickey, Raymond (ed.). 2010. *The Handbook of Language Contact*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hoffmann, J. Georg E. 1880. *Iulianos der Abtruennige. Syrische Erzählungen*. Leiden: Brill.
- Jastrow, Otto. 1968. 'Ein Märchen im neuaramäischen Dialekt von Miḏin (Ṭūr 'Abdīn)'. *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 118: 29–61.
- . 1997. 'The Neo-Aramaic Languages.' In *The Semitic Languages*, edited by Robert Hetzron. London: Routledge, 334–77.
- . 2003. *Arabische Texte aus Kinderib*. *Semitica Viva* 30. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Khan, Geoffrey. 2008. *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Barwar*. 3 vols. Handbuch der Orientalistik 96. Leiden: Brill.
- Mithun, Marianne. 2012. 'Morphologies in Contact: Form, Meaning, and Use in the Grammar of Reference'. In *Morphologies in Contact*, edited by Martine Vanhove, Thomas Stolz, Aina Urdze and Hitomi Otsuka. *Studia Typologica* 10. Berlin: Akademie, 15–36.
- Nöldeke, Theodor. 1898. *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik*. Anhang: Die handschriftlichen Ergänzungen in dem Handexemplar Theodor Nöldekes und Register der Belegstellen bearbeitet von Anton Schall. 1966. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- . 1904. *Compendious Syriac Grammar*. Translated (with the sanction of the author) from the second and improved German edition by James A. Crichton. London: Williams & Norgate.
- Procházka, Stephan. 2002. *Die arabischen Dialekte der Čukurova (Südtürkei)*. *Semitica Viva* 27. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- R2,3 = Ritter, Hellmut. 1969–1971. *Ṭūrōyo. Die Volkssprache der syrischen Christen des Ṭūr ḫ Abdīn. A: Texte*. Vol. II, III. Wiesbaden: Steiner (Kommission).
- Reckendorf, Hermann. 1921. *Arabische Syntax*. Zweite, unveränderte Auflage. Reprint 1977. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Sasse, Hans-Jürgen. 1971. *Linguistische Analyse des arabischen Dialekts der Mḥallamīye in der Provinz Mardin (Südsttürkei)*. PhD thesis. Munich: University of Munich.

- Sokoloff, Michael. 2017. *The Julian Romance. A New English Translation. Revised Edition*. Texts from Christian Late Antiquity 49. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias.
- Talay, Shabo. 2001. 'Der arabische Dialekt von Hasköy (Dēr-Khāṣ) Ostanatolien. Teil I: Grammatikalische Skizze'. *Zeitschrift für arabische Linguistik* 40: 71–89.
- (ed.). 2004. *Lebendig begraben. Die Entführung des syrisch-orthodoxen Priesters Melki Tok von Midan in der Südosttürkei. Einführung, Aramäischer Text (Turoyo), Übersetzung und Glossar*. Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte 29. Münster: Lit.
- Waltisberg, Michael. 2013. 'Ṭuroyo und Arabisch'. In *Nicht nur mit Engelszungen. Beiträge zur semitischen Dialektologie. Festschrift für Werner Arnold zum 60. Geburtstag*, edited by Renaud Kutay et al. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 353–64.
- . 2016. *Syntax des Ṭuroyo*. *Semitica Viva* 55. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Weinreich, Uriel. 1953. *Languages in Contact. French, German and Romansh in Twentieth-century Switzerland*. 2nd printing 1963. The Hague: Mouton.
- Wittrich, Michaela. 2001. *Der arabische Dialekt von Āzāx*. *Semitica Viva* 25. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

