

## Discussion of the Agent of the Circumstantial Accusative in Kitāb Sībawayhi

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The agent of the circumstantial accusative or °āmīlu l-ḥāl is the term used to refer to what governs circumstantial accusative in a sentence. The discussion of the agent of the circumstantial accusative involves, for example, the question whether it is able to govern the circumstantial accusative which precedes it in the same way as it is able to govern it when it comes after it, and whether it may or may not be or must be omitted.

On the basis of the various discussion of the agent of the circumstantial accusative in the Book of Sībawayhi, we find that there are two distinct types of agent. The first is comprised of only a single word and the second is comprised of two or more words which are combined together to form a complete sentence which gives a verbal force to act as an agent.

An obvious first type of agent is the verb. This is singled out clearly by Sībawayhi in an example such as

ضَرَبْتُ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ قَائِمًا

I beat °Abdullah standing up

in which he explains that the circumstantial accusative قَائِمًا is governed by the verb ضَرَبْتُ.<sup>1</sup> The verb as an agent is the most flexible of all. It can govern a circumstantial accusative which follows it, as in the above example, as well as a circumstantial accusative which comes before it as in

رَاكِبًا مَرَّ زَيْدٌ

riding, Zayd passed by<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, where a circumstantial accusative of an adjective or a noun takes the place of a verb, in which case they are treated like the verbal noun, the verb which actually governs the circumstantial accusative in such a case is elided. For example, in the sentences

أَقَائِمًا وَقَدْ قَعَدَ النَّاسُ  
أَتَمِيمًا مَرَّةً وَقَيْسِيًّا أُخْرَى

and

رَاشِدًا مَهْدِيًّا

(go) rightly guided

the adjective “قَائِمًا”, the nouns “تَمِيمًا” and “قَيْسِيًّا” and the adjectives “رَاشِدًا” and “مَهْدِيًّا” are accusative because they are circumstantial accusatives governed by the elision of the hypothetical verbs “أَتَقُومُ”, “أَتَحُولُ”, “رَشِدْتُ” and “هُدَيْتُ”. This is because those circumstantial accusatives replace their verbs in the same way as the verbal noun “سَقِيًّا” replaces “سَقَاكَ” and the noun “تُرْبًا” replace “تَرَبَّتَ” under the heading of the verbal noun (masdar).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, a verb can also be elided when the circumstance in which the action takes place clearly indicates the sense of a verb. For example, if we are told that so-and-so said such and such, or someone recites us a piece of poetry, it is possible for us to reply

صَادِقًا وَاللَّهِ

truthfully, by God

because it is clear from the even that صَادِقًا is governed by the verb قَالَهُ (he has said it). The same explanation is also applied to one’s saying

مَبْرُورًا مَأْجُورًا

(go) (on the pilgrimage) with God’s approval and reward

because the event shows that “مَبْرُورًا” and “مَأْجُورًا” are governed by the verb “إِذْهَبَ” (go).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, in the case where a circumstantial accusative is preceded by “فَ” or “ثُمَّ”, the omission of the verb is no longer optional. For example, in the sentences

أَخَذْتُهُ بِدِرْهَمٍ فَصَاعِدًا

I go it for a dirham or more

and

أَخَذْتُهُ بِدِرْهَمٍ فَزَائِدًا

I got it for a dirham or more

the verb which is the agent of “صَاعِدًا” and “زَائِدًا” is always omitted. This is because, according to Sībawayhi, it is a common and unambiguous expression. The particle “فَ” makes it clear that “صَاعِدٌ” is not governed by ب. It would in the first place be ugly to say

أَخَذْتُهُ بِصَاعِدٍ

because “صَاعِدٌ” is an adjective not a noun. Neither could one say

أَخَذْتُهُ بِدِرْهَمٍ وَصَاعِدٍ

because one does not wish to say that the “دِرْهَمٌ” together with a “صَاعِدٌ” was the price of the thing as in one’s saying

بِدِرْهَمٍ وَزِيَادَةٍ

for a dirham and something more

However, by uttering such a sentence, one wishes to state firstly the lowest price of all and then suggests one amount after another to give different prices.<sup>5</sup>

Other single words which stand as agents of the circumstantial accusative are the verbal noun, participles, verbal adjectives, and the comparative adjective. This can be deduced from the occurrence of the examples

أَمَّا عِلْمًا فَلَا عِلْمَ لَهُ

as for being knowledgeable, he has no knowledge,

أَمَّا عِلْمًا فَعِلْمٌ

as for being knowledgeable he is knowledgeable

أَمَّا سِمْنًا فَسَمِينٌ

as for being fat, he is fat

and

هَذَا بُسْرًا أَطْيَبُ مِنْهُ رُطْبًا

these (dates) are better as unripe dates than as ripe dates

in which Sībawayhi explains that the circumstantial accusatives of the first three of the above examples are governed by what comes after them<sup>6</sup> and the circumstantial accusatives of the fourth example are governed by the comparative adjective “أَطْيَبٌ”.<sup>7</sup>

As for the question of how flexible these agents are, it is obvious from the examples that the verbal noun, participle, and verbal adjective may govern the circumstantial accusative which comes

before them, and the comparative adjective may govern both circumstantial accusatives which come before and after it at the same time. Apart from what we have already mentioned, however, no further explanation concerning these agents is given by Sībawayhi.

The second type of the agent of the circumstantial accusative is a proposition. This proposition consists of a subject and a predicate one of which, or the combination of both of which gives the meaning of a verb. This type of agent can be discussed in two separate discussions. The first discussion includes the proposition in which a demonstrative pronoun or a personal pronoun stands as the subject, and it also includes the interrogative sentence, while the second discussion contains the proposition in which a definite noun is the subject.

The examples of the first discussion are such cases as

هذا عبد الله مُنْطَلِقًا

and

هو زيدٌ مَعْرُوفًا

Sībawayhi explains, regarding these examples, that they are if you say

أُنْظِرْ إِلَيْهِ مُنْطَلِقًا

and

إِنْتَبِهْ إِلِزْمَهُ مَعْرُوفًا

respectively. It is clear from Sībawayhi's explanation that the proposition of this type which consists of a subject and a predicate contains a verbal meaning and therefore governs the circumstantial accusative which comes after it. This is further proved by an occurrence of the example

هذا الرَّجُلُ مُنْطَلِقًا

this is the man departing

in which Sībawayhi explains that "مُنْطَلِقًا" is accusative because the subject "هَذَا" governs what comes after it, which is the predicate "الرَّجُلُ", and gives the meaning of alerting and defining.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, this becomes absolutely clear by the occurrence of the examples

مَا شَأْنُكَ قَائِمًا

what is it with you, standing up?

مَنْ ذَا قَائِمًا بِالْبَابِ

who is that standing by the door?

هُوَ ابْنُ عَمِّي دِينِيًّا

he is the son of my paternal uncle, very close

in which Sibawayhi explicitly says that “قائماً” , of the first example, is governed by “ما شأنك” , that the agent of “قائماً” , of the second, is equivalent to “هَذَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ” and that “دِينِيًّا” , of the third, is governed by the preceding proposition which is “هُوَ ابْنُ عَمِّي” in the same way as “أَنْتَ الرَّجُلُ” governs “عِلْمًا” in

أَنْتَ الرَّجُلُ عِلْمًا

you are the man in knowledge<sup>13</sup>

The example of the second discussion are:

فِيهَا زَيْدٌ قَائِمًا

in it is Zayd standing up

and

لَكَ الشَّاءُ شَاةٌ بِدِرْهَمٍ شَاةٌ بِدِرْهَمٍ

the sheep are for you, at one sheep for a dirham, one sheep for a dirham

Sibawayhi explains that these two examples are equivalent to

إِسْتَقَرَّ زَيْدٌ قَائِمًا

Zayd settled, standing up

and

وَجِبَ الشَّاءُ

the sheep are due

respectively.<sup>14</sup> On this account, it is fairly clear that what contains the verbal meaning is the prepositional constructs “فِيهَا” and “لَكَ” . Furthermore, on one occasion Sibawayhi explains that “فِيهَا” is equivalent to a verb such as “مَرَّ” (he passed).<sup>15</sup> However, should a prepositional genitive construct which is proved to have a verbal meaning independently govern a circumstantial accusative?. To answer this question, Sibawayhi explains that in the example

عَبْدُ اللَّهِ فِيهَا قَائِمًا

‘Abdullāh is in it standing up

“قَائِمًا” is accusative because “فِيهَا” intervenes between the subject “عَبْدُ اللَّهِ” and the circumstantial accusative “قَائِمًا” and “فِيهَا” is required by the subject to form a proposition. Therefore, since “قَائِمًا” is not the predicate of the subject of the sentence, the subject governs it only indirectly in the same way as in

هَذَا زَيْدٌ قَائِمًا

similarly, in the example

فِيهَا زَيْدٌ قَائِمًا فِيهَا

in it is Zayd, standing up in it

“قَائِمًا” is accusative because the first “فِيهَا”, combined with the subject “زَيْدٌ”, forms a complete proposition. The second “فِيهَا” is added only for emphasis and has no governing force.<sup>17</sup>

On the basis of what we have said, it is unlikely that the prepositional constructs “فِيهَا” and “لَكَ” could independently govern the circumstantial accusative. It is, therefore, more probable, as far as Sibawayhi’s view is concerned, that the circumstantial accusative is such a proposition is governed by the combination of both the subject and the predicate. However, the question arises whether a proposition can govern a circumstantial accusative which comes between its subject and its predicate as in

هَذَا قَائِمًا رَجُلٌ

this standing up is a man

or

فِيهَا قَائِمًا رَجُلٌ

in it standing up is a man<sup>18</sup>

Sibawayhi says it is not permissible for a circumstantial accusative to come before its agent if the agent is not a verb. For example, the reason

مَرَرْتُ قَائِمًا بِرَجُلٍ

I passed standing up by a man<sup>19</sup>

is incorrect. According to Sībawayhi, that the circumstantial accusative, “قَائِمًا” comes after its agent, “ب”. Similarly,

قَائِمًا فِيهَا رَجُلٌ

standing up in it is a man

and

قَائِمًا هَذَا رَجُلٌ

are incorrect. It therefore seems that “هَذَا” and “فِيهَا” of the two examples mentioned above independently govern the circumstantial accusative. There are two plausible explanations of this particular problem. Firstly, if we consider that the agents of the circumstantial accusatives of these sentences are the proposition, we may suggest that, on the basis of such occurrences, the circumstantial accusative which is governed by a proposition may intervene between its subject and its predicate but may not precede them both. Secondly, the agents of “قَائِمًا” in the sentences are the words which contain the verbal meaning which are “هَذَا” and “فِيهَا”

In conclusion, Sībawayhi describes the government of a proposition upon a circumstantial accusative as the same as the government of a verb.<sup>22</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Sībawayhi, *al-Kitāb*, Būlāq, 1898, Vol. I, p. 20 II. 14-15, 20-21.
2. Ibid, p. 277, I. 2.
3. Ibid, p. 171, II. 6-8, II-13, p. 173, II. 6-8, p. 137, II. 8-10.
4. Ibid, p. 137, II. 11-16.
5. Ibid, p. 147, II. 1-5.
6. Ibid, p. 192, II. 1-11.
7. Ibid, p. 199, II. 13, 16-17.
8. Ibid, p. 256, I. 15.
9. Ibid, p. 256, I. 24.
10. Ibid, p. 256, II. 19-20.
11. Ibid, p. 257, I. 2.
12. Ibid, p. 260, II. 9, 12-13.
13. Ibid, p. 247, II. 21-24, p. 248, II. 1-2, p. 274, I. 24, p. 275, II. 1-2.
14. Ibid, p. 197, I. 23, p. 198, II. 2-3.
15. Ibid, p. 277, II. 2-3.
16. Ibid, p. 261, II. 5, 17, p. 262, I. 1.
17. Ibid, p. 277, II. 16-17.
18. Ibid, p. 276, II. 8-9.
19. Ibid, p. 277, I. 5.
20. Ibid, p. 277, I. 1.

21. Ibid, p. 277, I. 6.
22. Ibid, p. 197, II. 22-23.

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