The Neo-Aramaic dialects are modern vernacular forms of Aramaic, which has a documented history in the Middle East of over 3,000 years. Due to upheavals in the Middle East over the last one hundred years, thousands of speakers of Neo-Aramaic dialects have been forced to migrate from their homes or have perished in massacres. As a result, the dialects are now highly endangered. The dialects exhibit a remarkable diversity of structures. Moreover, the considerable depth of attestation of Aramaic from earlier periods provides evidence for the pathways of change. For these reasons the research of Neo-Aramaic is of importance for more general fields of linguistics, in particular language typology and historical linguistics. The papers in this volume represent the full range of research that is currently being carried out on Neo-Aramaic dialects. They advance the field in numerous ways. In order to allow linguists who are not specialists in Neo-Aramaic to benefit from the papers, the examples are fully glossed.

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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
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. 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 Ṭuroyo. As I argued in an article published a few years ago, this can be ascribed to Arabic interference (Waltisberg 2013). 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.

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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 ṭ- ‘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) ṭhna  naʿime, koṭe  l-bol-i,
   we  children  it.is.coming  to-mind-my
   b-i-qriṭo  Ḣzzawāyna  qūṭlāyāna  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 ṭhna ‘we’ and the noun naʿime ‘little ones, children’. There is no copular element.

A circumstantial clause may also occur within matrix clauses:

(2) mīḷa  ...  gdote  zlām,  hāṭ  damixo,
   she.said  he.will.come  man  you  sleeping
   gqoṭīc  qārī-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)  
\[
\text{māṣrīn-ne } \text{w-‘āyn-i } \text{māṣre } \text{māwfāqqā-lli}
\]
\[
\text{they.shackle-them and-eyes-my bound they.led.out-me}
\]
\[
\text{m-u-bāyt-awo}
\]
\[
\text{from-the-house-that}
\]

‘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)  
\[
\text{w-kfīxle } \text{b-feme } \text{d-Kāyalo}
\]
\[
\text{and-he.poured.it in-mouth of-Kāyalo}
\]
\[
\text{w-hiye } \text{damixo}
\]
\[
\text{and-he sleeping}
\]

‘and he poured (the grease) into Kāyalo’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
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$koroqîd$ ‘he dances’ in example (5) below serves as the predicate of the circumstantial clause:

\[(5)\] disane bdele mohe ‘al i-‘ārban-ayo
again he.began he.beats upon the-timbrel-that

diḏe w-u-māymun koroqîd
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:
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 kad (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 Ḩhamma-wa
name-my Ḩhamma-it.is

‘My name is Ḩhamma.’ (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 dāwraḥa w-ād-danye 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-səwweqin ... w-hūwe qāyam-we baqa
the-ploughmen and-he standing-he.is INCHOATIVE

yətfarraḡūn
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) yḥọttū-hu rāš-u fə l-ğarb w-sāqāt-u
they.put-it head-his in the-west and-feet-his

lə ᶠawb ᵊš-ṣarq hūwe ‘a n-naʾš
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 Mhallami dialect, such as the following example from Sasse (1971):

(13) l-yāwm tātroḥin trāy rāḥki neyme
today you.leave you.see yourself sleeping

‘a ḏ-ezbale w-čānt-ki ṭāḥt 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) masku l-ḥabl w-ḥūwe 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 Ṭuroyo 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 kāḏ. The following example is from the Julian Romance (probably 6th century C.E.), transcribed according to the eastern Syriac tradition:

\[(15) \quad w-lā \quad ᵐtṃṣiw \quad la-mšāwzāḥu-ennon \quad men\]
and-not they.were.able to-save-them from

\[yaqdānā \quad d-nurā \quad aykannā \quad d-\quad pasy-an\]
immolation of-fire as he.saved-me

\[Mšīḥā \quad w-šāwzḇ-an \quad men \quad yaqdānā\]
Christ and-he.delivered-me from immolation

\[d-nur-āk \quad w-‘ayn-ayk \quad ḥazyān\]
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 Maʾin, 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:

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⁴ Sokoloff’s text erroneously gives <ʾyk’> for aykannā.
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:

‘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 ʾáni šîme is the same as in the Ṭuroyo examples (1) and (2) above, i.e. āḥna naʿime and hāṭ 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. Ťuroyo 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. Ťuroyo never has a copula in circumstantial clauses, as is the case in most dialects of Anatolian Arabic (see Mḥallami and Āzəx). There is no apparent reason why Ťuroyo 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 Ťuroyo 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.

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