Discussion of the Agent of the Circumstantial Accusative in Kitāb Sībawayhi

Ab. Rahim Hj. Ismail

The agent of the circumstantial accusative or ēmilu 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

\[
\text{ضَرَّبَتُ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ قَائِمًا}
\]

I beat *Abdullah standing up

in which he explains that the circumstantial accusative قَائِمًا is governed by the verb ضَرَّبَتُ. 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

\[
\text{رَاكِبًا مَّرْزِيدًا}
\]

riding, Zayd passed by.

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
and

(go) rightly guided

the adjective "قاملًا"; the nouns "تَيِيني" and "ذَيَة" and the adjectives "قائمًا" and "مَهْيِي" are accusative because they are circumstantial accusatives governed by the elision of the hypothetical verbs "الْغِيْبُ", "الْغَيْبُ", "الْجَمْعُ", "الْهَيْبَة". This is because those circumstantial accusatives replace their verbs in the same way as the verbal noun "ئَامِنًا" replaces "سُقُطًا" and the noun "نَزِيًا" replace "ثُنَى" under the heading of the verbal noun (masdar). 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

صدقًا وله

truthfully, by God

because it is clear from the even that "صدقًا" is governed by the verb "قال" (he has said). The same explanation is also applied to one's saying

 addUserInput("(go) on the pilgrimage) with God's approval and reward

because the event shows that "موارخ" and "مبارخ" are governed by the verb "اذْهَبُ" (go). Furthermore, in the case where a circumstantial accusative is preceded by "ف" or "لِ" the omission of the verb is no longer optional. For example, in the sentences

أُخْذَتُ بِدِرْهُمْ قَضَاعِدًا

I go it for a dirham or more

and

أُخْذَتُ بِدِرْهُمْ قَضَاعِدًا

I got it for a dirham or more
the verb which is the agent of "صاحبًا" and "صاحبًا" is always omitted. This is because, according to Sibawayhi, it is a common and unambiguous expression. The particle "ف" makes it clear that "صاحب" is not governs by ب. It would in the first place be ugly to say 

أخذته بصاحب

because "صاحب" is an adjective not a noun. Neither could one say 

أخذته بدعوهم وصاحب

because one does not wish to say that the "دعوهم" together with a "صاحب" was the price of the thing as in one's saying 

يدعوه وراية diets

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.

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

أنا علمًا فلا علم له

as for being knowledgeable, he has no knowledge,

أنا علمًا علمُ

as for being knowledgeable he is knowledgeable

أنا سنة فسنين

as for being fat, he is fat

and

هذا برسمًا أطيب منه رطبا

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

in which Sibawayhi explains that the circumstantial accusatives of the first three of the above examples are governed by what comes after them and the circumstantial accusatives of the fourth example are governed by the comparative adjective "أطيب".

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 Sibawayhi.

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

\[
\text{هذا عبد الله منطلقًا}
\]

and

\[
\text{هوزة معروفاً}
\]

Sibawayhi explains, regarding these examples, that they are is if you say

\[
\text{نظر إليه منطلقًا}
\]

and

\[
\text{أتيبه لإرما معروفاً}
\]

respectively. It is clear from Sibawayhi’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

\[
\text{هذا الرجل منطلقًا}
\]

this is the man departing

in which Sibawayhi explains that “منطلقًا” is accusative because the subject “هذا” governs what comes after it, which is the predicate “الرجل”, and gives the meaning of alerting and defining. Furthermore, this becomes absolutely clear by the occurrence of the examples

\[
\text{ما شاكم قانيًا}
\]

what is it with you, standing up?
who is that standing by the door?

he is the son of my paternal uncle, very close

in which Sibawayhi explicitly says that “ما شاء” , of the first example, is governed by “ما شاء” , that the agent of “ما شاء” , of the second, is equivalent to “هنا إبل” and that “هنا إبل” , of the third, is governed by the preceding proposition which is “هو ابن عم” in the same way as “إن الرجل” governs “علم” in

you are the man in knowledge

The example of the second discussion are:

in it is Zayd standing up

and

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

Zayd settled, standing up

and

the sheep are due

respectively. On this account, it is fairly clear that what contains the verbal meaning is the prepositional constructs “فبه” and “الله”. Furthermore, on one occasion Sibawayhi explains that “فبه” is equivalent to a verb such as “مر” (he passed). 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
"Abdullah is in it standing up.

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

هذَا زَيْدٌ قَالَهَا

similarly, in the example

فِيَهَا رَبَّتُ قَالَهَا

in it is Zayd, standing up in it.

"قَالَ" is accusative because the first "قَالَهَا", combined with the subject "زَيْدٌ", forms a complete proposition. The second "قَالَهَا" is added only for emphasis and has no governing force.17

On the basis of what we have said, it is unlikely that the prepositional constructs "فِيَهَا" and "قَالَهَا" 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

هذَا قَالَهَا رَجُلٌ

this standing up is a man

or

فِيَهَا قَالَهَا رَجُلٌ

in it standing up is a man.18

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

مُرَكَّبَ قَالَهَا بِرَجُلٍ

I passed standing up by a man.19
is incorrect. According to Sibawayhi, that the circumstantial accusative, “بَيْنُ” comes after its agent, “بِ”. Similarly,

\[
\text{قَالِبِاً فِيَهَا رَجُلٌ}
\]

standing up in it is a man

and

\[
\text{قَالِبُهُ هَذَا رَجُلٌ}
\]

are incorrect. It therefore seems that “هَذَا” and “يَهَا” 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 “قَالِبُهُ” in the sentences are the words which contain the verbal meaning which are “هَذَا” and “يَهَا”.

In conclusion, Sibawayhi describes the government of a proposition upon a circumstantial accusative as the same as the government of a verb.²²

NOTES

2. Ibid. p. 277, I. 2.
4. Ibid. p. 137, II. 11–16.
5. Ibid. p. 147, II. 1–5.
6. Ibid. p. 192, II. 1–11.
8. Ibid. p. 256, I. 15.
15. Ibid. p. 277, II. 2–3.
18. Ibid. p. 276, II. 8–9.

Jabatan Pengajian Arab & Tamadun Islam
Fakulti Islam
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600 UKM Bangi,
Selangor D.E.