

## **Grammatical Functioning in Sibawayh's al-Kitāb: The Compound Proper Noun as a Model**

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### **Abstract**

Among the early Arab grammarians, grammatical composition was based on clarifying grammatical functions, as they perceived meaning at the grammatical level and recognized its major effect on understanding speech. Among the many topics to which the early Arab grammarians devoted attention, and on which many scholars wrote from Sibawayh in the second century AH to al-Suyūfī in the tenth century AH, is the topic of the compound proper noun. Sibawayh's study of the compound proper noun in al-Kitāb was conducted using a precise scientific methodology, in which he analyzed its grammatical functioning, treating it as a grammatical phenomenon subject to inflection, morphology, and construction.

### **Introduction**

Scholars, both ancient and modern, have written on grammar. Among the early scholars who wrote in this field was Sibawayh, and the first book to have reached us in this science is Sibawayh's al-Kitāb, which is considered a model of Basran Arabic grammar and an eminent representative of Basran grammar (al-Ḥabbās, 2023, p. 272).

Muḥammad al-Ḥabbās maintains that Sibawayh, through his unique book, best represented the mature stage of Arabic grammar. At this stage, grammar shifted from preserving the language to analyzing it scientifically, like other independent sciences (al-Ḥabbās, 2023, p. 245).

Sibawayh was one of the scholars of Basra who appeared in the second century AH, and his book, al-Kitāb, is the first source to which researchers in grammar and its principles return. It contains a set of Arabic sciences, such as grammar, morphology, readings, and phonetics; however, the grammatical aspect predominates in the book. For this reason, it has been classified as a grammatical book, and its author has been considered a grammarian of the first rank.

Sibawayh's aim in composing al-Kitāb was to arrive at rules by which the Arabic language could be regulated, and not for an instructional purpose, as was the case among later grammarians. Therefore, he pays little attention to subdivisions, as will become apparent when we present the examples in the book. He confines himself to mentioning some examples

considered original cases and leaves it to the learner and to those who came after him to reason by analogy from those examples. Perhaps Sibawayh's use of the expression "and what resembles that" indicates that he opened the door for grammarians to add what they deemed more worthy of addition and more useful. This is Sibawayh's method in all the issues found in al-Kitāb.

For the early grammarians, the grammatical function represents the meaning or effect performed by the word in the construction through its connection with other words. For each grammatical function, they have an independent chapter, among the grammatical chapters, in which it is presented. Among the grammatical chapters that included the definite noun, we mention, by way of example and not limitation: "The chapter on the course of the adjective of the definite noun with it"; "The chapter on the narrative forms in which nouns are not changed from their state in speech"; "The chapter on annexing to the annexed noun"; "This is the chapter of the two elements, one of which is joined to the other, so that they are made equivalent to one noun, such as 'Idmawr and 'Antarīs"; and "The chapter on apocopation in names in which each name consists of two elements that were separate, then one was joined to the other and they were made one name, equivalent to 'Antarīs and Ḥalakūk" (Sibawayh, al-Kitāb, Vols. 1-2).

The term "definite noun" appeared as a result of the Arab grammarians' division of nouns into definite nouns and indefinite nouns. It may be that Sibawayh was the first to divide the definite noun into five categories, placing the proper noun first among them. This is one of the questions on which opinions have multiplied, and debate has abounded.

### **The Concept of the Proper Noun**

In language, 'alam means a mark, and al-'alam means a long mountain. It has also been said to mean the banner around which soldiers gather, and it has further been said to mean the sign by which guidance is obtained (Ibn Manzūr, p. 314). From these linguistic meanings, the terminological meaning was inferred; thus, it was said that it is a sign of what it names.

Sibawayh made the proper noun the first of the definite nouns. In the chapter "The course of the adjective of the definite noun with it", he says: "The definite nouns are five things: the nouns that are proper names specific [to individuals], and ...".

It appears from what is stated in al-Kitāb that Sibawayh did not define the proper noun by a definition distinguishing it from others, because he did not devote much attention to the question of definition as a research methodology. This is a feature peculiar to Sibawayh, to the extent that his pupil al-Akhfash made frequent use of definition to distinguish himself from his teacher.

The division of the proper noun: The division well known among grammarians is the division based on several considerations:

The proper noun, according to meaning, in which a distinction is made between the proper noun of the individual and the proper noun of the genus, while some have added the proper noun by predominance.

The proper noun, according to form, is one in which a distinction is made between the simple proper noun and the compound proper noun.

The proper noun, according to usage, includes the coined proper noun and the transferred proper noun.

The proper noun, according to the assignment, includes the personal name, the teknonym, and the epithet.

In this article, we shall focus our attention on the compound proper noun and show how Sibawayh employed grammatical functioning in the compound proper noun, and how he studied the compound proper noun as a grammatical phenomenon subject to inflection, morphology, and construction, that is, by treating it inflectionally and structurally.

The compound proper noun is that which is formed of more than one word. It occurs through the blending of two words with one another, whereby this process produces one word that conveys one meaning; this type of composition is called by some “composition of singularisation”, and it is also called blending composition, as in Ba‘labakk. It also occurs through annexing one word to another, which is called genitive composition, and through predicating one word to another, which is called predicative composition, whether nominal or verbal, as in Ta‘abbaṭa Sharran.

### **The Compound Proper Noun as Blending Composition**

For Sibawayh, this refers to two elements, one of which is joined to the other, so that they are made equivalent to one noun. Sibawayh holds that these proper names have been used as a single noun and as two nouns, one of which was annexed to the other through blending.

Their use is equivalent to one noun: Sibawayh treated the compound proper noun of blending composition by employing the idea of placing it in the position of one noun. Thus, he treats the compound as the regular single noun. Sibawayh says: “This is the chapter of the two elements, one of which is joined to the other, so that they are made equivalent to one noun, such as ‘Idmawr and ‘Antarīs.” Among them are Ḥaḍramawt, Ba‘labakk, Rām-Hurmuz, Mār-Sarjis, and Ma‘dīkarib (Sibawayh, al-Kitāb, Vol. 3, p. 296). It is treated as a single word and is diptote because of its proper-name status and composition.

From another perspective, Sibawayh elaborated on the grammatical rulings relating to them. He mentioned diminutivization, apocoptation, attribution, and other grammatical rulings.

About diminutivization, the compound proper noun of blending composition is characterized by being diminutivized through the diminutivization of its first part only, while the second part remains in its original state. Thus, in the diminutive of Ḥaḍramawt, one says Ḥuḍayrimawt, and of Ba‘labakk, Bu‘aylibakk. To this we add the numerical compound when a man is named by it: for Khamsata ‘Ashar, one says Khumaysta ‘Ashar, and for Ithnā ‘Ashar, Thunayyā ‘Ashar (Sibawayh, al-Kitāb, p. 475).

About apocoptation, Sibawayh says in “The chapter on apocoptation in names in which each name consists of two elements that were separate, then one was joined to the other, and they

were made one name, equivalent to ‘Antarīs and Ḥalakūk’: “That is like Ḥaḍramawt and Ma‘dīkarib, like a man whose name is Khamsata ‘Ashar, and like ‘Amrūyah ...”.

He then speaks on the authority of al-Khalīl and says: “Al-Khalīl, may God have mercy on him, claimed that the word joined to the beginning is entirely omitted ...” (Sibawayh, al-Kitāb, p. 267).

Sibawayh says that if you apocopate the name Khamsata ‘Ashar, you say: Yā Khamsata aqbil. As for Ithnā ‘Ashar, you say: Yā Ithn aqbil (p. 269), by omitting ‘Ashar and the alif of Ithnā, because ‘Ashar is equivalent to the nūn in muslimīn and the alif is equivalent to the wāw.

As for attribution, the compound proper noun of blending composition is characterized by taking attribution, and attribution to these names is formed by omitting the second noun and adding the yā’ of attribution to it. Sibawayh says on the authority of al-Khalīl: “I see that when I attribute to the beginning and omit the other part, I say about Ma‘dīkarib: Ma‘dī” (Sibawayh, al-Kitāb, p. 267).

Their use is equivalent to two nouns, one annexed to the other: for example, Ḥaḍramawt was made equivalent to some annexed proper names, such as ‘Amrūyah. Sibawayh says: “‘Amrūyah, for them, is equivalent to Ḥaḍramawt, in that the latter part is joined to the first.”

Other names were also equated with Ḥaḍramawt. Sibawayh says: “All of this, when any part of it becomes a proper name, is inflected and changed, and is made like Ḥaḍramawt” (Sibawayh, al-Kitāb, p. 302). Sibawayh adds to those names other names, namely Qālī Qalā, which is a city among the cities of Khurāsān or Diyār Bakr, and Aydī Sabā. All these names are used as equivalent to Khamsata ‘Ashar in terms of construction, for they are used as one noun and are also used as annexed expressions; tanwīn may enter them, so one says Aydī Sabā and Ma‘dīkarib. He supports this view by citing the verse of Dhū al-Rumma: “O what an abode, whose people bore away / Aydī Sabā after me, and long was their contrivance.”

Bādī Badā is used as equivalent to Khamsata ‘Ashar, for it is not annexed, and no usage has been heard from the Arabs in which it is annexed.

Sibawayh employed the compound proper noun of blending composition in al-Kitāb based on a set of grammatical and semantic rules governing its inflection and construction. Based on the examples that Sibawayh presented, such as Ḥaḍramawt, Ba‘labakk, and Ma‘dīkarib, we note that it is treated as diptote: it is raised with the ḍammah, assigned the accusative with the faṭḥah, and assigned the genitive with the faṭḥah instead of the kasrah, because of the presence of two causes, namely proper-name status and composition.

Sibawayh viewed the compound proper noun of blending composition as one noun resulting from two words, whereby the second word assumes, in relation to the first, the position of the feminine tā’; that is, it becomes an indivisible part of the structure of the noun. Accordingly, the inflectional effect appears only at the end of the second word, with sukūn or faṭḥah at the end of the first word according to its state (Ibn Mālik, Sharḥ al-Alfiyyah, Vol. 11, p. 8).

### **The Compound Proper Noun as Predicative Composition**

Sibawayh says: “Know that you do not dualize these names, nor diminutivize them, nor apocopate them, nor annex them, nor pluralize them.”

It is not apocopated: the reason for not apocopating it is that the quoted form is not apocopated. Sibawayh says: “Know that the quoted form is not apocopated, because you do not intend to apocopate anything other than the vocative.”

It does not change in quotation: Sibawayh says in “The chapter on the narrative forms in which nouns are not changed from their state in speech”: “That is in the Arabs’ saying regarding a man called Ta’abbāṭa Sharran: They said, ‘This is Barqa Naḥruhu,’ and ‘I saw Barqa Naḥruhu.’”

Sibawayh considers that this has not changed from the state it was in before becoming a name. He mentions that we say of a man whose name is Dharā Ḥubban: “This is Dharā Ḥubban.” He supports this view with the saying of a poet from Banū Ṭahiyyah: “Indeed, she has a firm, strong support / as though it were the forehead of Dharā Ḥubban.”

The point of evidence in this verse is that the predicative compound Dharā Ḥubban is left in its quoted wording, because it is a sentence whose parts have operated upon one another.

Sibawayh employed, in relation to the predicative compound proper noun, what is called quotation. The predicative compound here is left in its original wording as heard from the Arabs, as a quoted form, and the inflectional case-vowels, namely nominative, accusative, and genitive, are estimated upon it.

It is not annexed: among the characteristics of the predicative compound proper noun is that it is not annexed. Sibawayh says: “Do not annex it to anything.”

However, Sibawayh excludes one case from this, namely that you say: “This is Ta’abbāṭa Sharran, your companion,” or “his slave.”

It is not diminutivized: Sibawayh says, “Do not diminutivize it, just as you did not diminutivize it before it became a proper name.”

It is neither dualized nor pluralized: Sibawayh says, “Know that if the noun is quoted, it is neither dualized nor pluralized, except that you say: All of them are Ta’abbāṭa Sharran; both of them are Dharā Ḥubban.”

It does not take attribution: Sibawayh calls attribution “annexation”. He says: “If you annex to the quoted form, you omit it and leave the beginning.” Sibawayh adduces as evidence that some Arabs make it singular in annexation.

### **The Compound Proper Noun as Genitive Composition**

As for the compound proper noun of genitive composition, Sibawayh considered it to be composed of two structurally separate parts, but the two are semantically concomitant.

The first part, which is the annexed noun, is the beginning of the word and is treated as an independent noun capable of change.

The second part, which is the annexed-to noun, is the end of the word and remains in one fixed inflectional state.

Sibawayh established analogical rules for treating compound proper nouns of genitive composition when attribution is made to them, when they are diminutivized, or when they are dualized. His method of analysis is based on privileging the logical part. We mention, by way of example, its attribution.

The compound proper noun of genitive composition may take attribution. Sibawayh says in the chapter on annexing to the annexed noun: “Know that one of the two nouns must be omitted in annexation” (Sibawayh, *al-Kitāb*, Vol. 3, p. 375).

Regarding the reason for the necessity of this omission, he says: “Because they are two nouns, one of which has operated upon the other, and you intend only to annex to the first noun” (Sibawayh, *al-Kitāb*, Vol. 3, p. 375).

Based on this specification, we conclude that the proper noun, as long as after attribution to it there is no equivalent in the Arabs’ usage, is subject to ellipsis. This is because attribution to the compound proper noun of genitive composition is by two methods, which Sibawayh summarised in “The chapter on annexing to the annexed noun”. He says: “The annexing element and the annexed element, in annexation, run in their speech according to two methods: one of them is that one of the two nouns is omitted, and from it the first is omitted; and another is that the other noun is omitted. Among what is omitted from is your saying in *Sībawayh*: *Sībī*; whereas in the omission of the other noun, in ‘*Abd al-Qays*, you say ‘*Abdī*” (Sibawayh, *al-Kitāb*, Vol. 3, p. 375).

Sibawayh mentioned that in the compound proper noun of genitive composition, the first part is the beginning of the word; it is treated as an independent noun susceptible to change under the influence of external factors in the sentence, namely, nominative, accusative, and genitive. Its final part changes according to its inflectional position. As for the second part, it is the end of the word and remains in one fixed inflectional state; the grammatical function is assigned to the first part, the annexed noun, according to its position in the sentence, while the second part, the annexed-to noun, is always assigned the genitive.

## **Conclusion**

Sibawayh practiced the procedures of grammatical functioning in a precise and clear manner, without explicitly declaring this. This begins with the chapters that represent various grammatical issues. It was clear through Sibawayh’s expressions and statements, as he addressed the grammatical issue, namely the compound proper noun, elaborated on it, expanded the exemplification of it, and then determined the inflectional role that the word performs within the sentence, in addition to the semantic role performed by the word, as well as the employment of the word according to the state of communication and its context in the text.

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