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A grammar of Kumzari : a mixed Perso-Arabian language of Oman

Wal Anonby, C.A. van der

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Author: Wal Anonby, Christina van der

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6 Modifier

6.1 Adjectives

Cross-linguistically, adjectives are words designating properties and functioning as attributes (Pustet 2003:10-11). In Kumzari, adjectives follow the noun they modify in a noun phrase, preceding a possessor noun or pronoun.

(323) S51
 sōnty-ē **gap** byār.
 raft -a big bring:2sIMPER
 ‘Bring a **big** raft.’

Syntactically, adjectives function both attributively and predicatively. In predicates, adjectives may appear with the existential enclitic or with the verb *tō’a* ‘become.’

(324) R1220
čēnaḡ =in.
 thirsty =EX:3p
 ‘They are **thirsty**.’

(325) P608
xwaš wābur.
 well become:3sREAL
 ‘She became **well**.’

Adjectives have a less significant role in Kumzari relative to that of other word classes. Expression of attributes relies more heavily on nouns, deverbs, abstract plurals, and verbs, both in lexical resources and in frequency of use. The following four examples illustrate the semantic role of an adjective being fulfilled by a verbal participle, an abstract plural, a deverb, and a noun, respectively.

(326) U181
 ḡāzal -ē **murs-ē**
 gazelle -a die:PERF-3s
 ‘a **dead** gazelle’

(327) N8
ḡātal -an
 storm -PL
 ‘**stormy** [weather]’

(328) G285
ḡawya wābur.
 lost become:3sREAL
 ‘He became **lost**.’

(329) B1260
 bap mē **kōr** būs-ē.
 father 1s blind.person become:PERF-3s

‘My father has become **blind**.’

Like Persian and Baluchi adjectives (Axenov 2006:86), Kumzari adjectives are flexibly able to function as nouns, with only semantic limitations in this regard. The line between nouns and adjectives is thin; adjectives can take nominal suffixes such as definite *-ō*, indefinite *-ē*, and plural *-an*, while nouns can take the adjectival comparative suffix *-tar* and the intensifier *xaylē* ‘very’ and can ‘modify’ another noun. An adjective with nominal inflection can even take on the syntactic role of a noun as an argument in a clause, completing the disguise:

(330) S27 [adjective as subject of clause]

gap -an raft -in xāna ba rōr -an āmō xō.
big -PL go:REAL -3p marriage with child -PL uncle (paternal) REFL
‘**The older ones** [literally: ‘bigs’] married their cousins.’

The general rule for adjectives is that in attributive function, adjectives agree in definiteness/genericness and number with the noun they modify, and in predicative function, they do not.

(331) B425 [attributive adjective]

qiz’an -ō gap -ō
cauldron -the big -the
‘**the** big cauldron’

(332) P1109 [predicative adjective]

šō’ -ō drāz
night -the long
‘**the** night was long’

Another distinction between an adjective’s attributive and predicative functions is syntactic: in the first example below, the adjective is attributive, being part of the noun phrase, while in the second, the adjective is predicative, following the noun phrase.

(333) [attributive adjective]

gōsin gišnağ šan
goat hungry 3p
‘their hungry goat’

(334) [predicative adjective]

gōsin šan gišnağ
goat 3p hungry
‘their goat is hungry’

However, because of the presence of gapped relative clauses, and generic nouns, as well as the zero-realised existential enclitic in the third-person singular, the syntactic function and even word class of a form may be ambiguous.

(335) G147

knār -ē gap
jujube.tree -a big
?‘a big jujube tree’ or

?‘a jujube tree [that is] big’ or
 ?‘a jujube tree, big one’ or
 ?‘a jujube tree is big’

In such cases, context may provide a clue. In the following example, the adjectives *bālağ* ‘ripe’ and *xālal* ‘unripe’ are most likely predicative in gapped relative clauses with the zero-realised third person singular existential enclitic, because ‘a melon [that is] ripe’ contrasts with ‘a melon [that is] unripe’ in the next sentence.

(336) B737

ana **xāyar -ē** **bālağ** fatta tō’ fānd -um yē ba tō ā,
 if melon -a ripe succulent become:3sIMPF send:REAL -1s 3s to 2s SUB

yē mē xāna tāt -um. wa midam **xāyar -ē** **xālal**,
 DEM 1s marriage want:IMPF -1s and otherwise melon -a unripe

ḥasa xāna tāt -um na.
 still marriage want:IMPF -1s NEG

‘If I send you **a ripe, juicy melon**, that means I want to marry. And if on the other hand [I send you] **an unripe melon**, I still do not want to marry.’

The semantic properties of indefinite nouns make them more disposed to modification by gapped relative clauses rather than by attributive functions, since the attributes of a known entity are more likely to also be known.

6.1.1 Adjective types

Kumzari adjectives are typologically scalar, being more noun-like or more adjective-like, according to their morphosyntactic properties. The more noun-like adjectives can function as the argument of a verb and can take nominal suffixes. These include even the cross-linguistically prototypical semantic types of adjectives articulating the properties of age, value, dimension, and colour (Payne 1999:63; cf. Dixon 2004:3-4), such as those in Table 38.

Table 38. Noun-like adjectives by semantic type

age	<i>gap</i> ‘old, big’ <i>čikk</i> ‘young, small’ <i>šēbab</i> ‘young’
value	<i>jwān</i> ‘good’ <i>banj</i> ‘bad’ <i>lawt</i> ‘weak’
dimension	<i>drāz</i> ‘tall’ <i>kōta</i> ‘short’ <i>šēw</i> ‘thin’
colour	<i>širx</i> ‘red’ <i>zraq</i> ‘blue’ <i>šawz</i> ‘green’

Among adjectives that are more adjective-like, some contain the vestigial Persian ending *ağ* and do not have nominal morphosyntax.

Table 39. Adjectives with final *aḡ*

<i>garmaḡ</i> ‘hot’
<i>gišnaḡ</i> ‘hungry’
<i>bālaḡ</i> ‘ripe’
<i>čēnaḡ</i> ‘thirsty’
<i>zindaḡ</i> ‘alive’
<i>xēnaḡ</i> ‘funny’
<i>ka’naḡ</i> ‘old’

Other adjectives have patently Indo-European roots.

Table 40. Adjectives of Indo-European provenance

<i>pāk</i> ‘clean’
<i>nēzik</i> ‘near’
<i>šarm</i> ‘ashamed’
<i>narm</i> ‘soft’
<i>bētar</i> ‘better’
<i>sard</i> ‘cold’
<i>dēr</i> ‘late’

6.1.2 *Derived adjectives*

As described in §4.1, some adjectives are of Semitic provenance and follow the pattern *CaCC* with the trilateral root as a basis.

Table 41. Adjectives derived from deverbs (*CaCC*)

<i>ḡaps</i> ‘bound’
<i>xays</i> ‘filthy’
<i>ḡayb</i> ‘absent’
<i>tarr</i> ‘wet’
<i>tafš</i> ‘rotten’
<i>xabq</i> ‘holey’
<i>lawt</i> ‘weak’

Some adjectives are derived from other constituents, usually nouns, with the suffix *-ī*.

As described in chapter 3, adjectives may be derived from locational or spatial nouns with the addition of the derivational suffix *-ī*.

Table 42. Derived adjectives with the suffix *-ī*

<i>awwēlī</i> ‘first’ (<i>awwal</i> ‘first, firstly’)
<i>wardī</i> ‘pink’ (<i>ward</i> ‘flower’)
<i>zēranī</i> ‘lower’ (from <i>zēran</i> n. ‘bottom’)
<i>rastī</i> ‘right’ (cf. Pers. <i>rāst</i> ‘right’)
<i>imarātī</i> ‘Emirati’ (<i>imarāt</i> ‘The [United Arab] Emirates’)
<i>sangī</i> ‘heavy’ (cf. Pers. <i>sang</i> ‘stone’)

6.2 Demonstratives

Demonstratives indicate deictic reference. They form part of the noun phrase, preceding the noun they modify. Unlike pronouns which may stand alone in place of a noun (see §3.2), demonstratives in Kumzari must be accompanied by a noun and modify it. There are only two demonstratives: proximal *yā* and distal *yē*.⁷⁹

A noun modified by a demonstrative always takes the definite suffix *-ō*.

(337) B228

yē *čāb* *kin*, *yē* *ṣāḥar -ō* *ā?* *gardīdiš* *xō* *ṭēr -ē*.
 3s how do:MIR DEM sorcerer -the INTERR turn.into:3sREAL REFL bird -a
 ‘How did he do it, **that sorcerer**? He turned himself into a bird.’

(338) P394

yā *arḍ -ō* *bar* *mē*.
 DEM land -the belonging.to 1s
 ‘**This land** belongs to me.’

The demonstratives *yē* and *yā* are also used in topicalisation, as noted in §3.3. The syntax of the demonstrative changes when it is used for topicalisation: a topicalised noun that is the subject of the verb takes the demonstrative after the noun it modifies, and a topicalised noun that is the object of the verb takes the demonstrative before the noun it modifies (the topicaliser =*ā* remains after the noun in either case). In a topicalised subject, the demonstrative coalesces with the topicaliser to form *y’=ā*.

(339) A608 [topicalised subject]

šēx -ō *y’=ā*, *ḥayara* *bur* *āqil* *yē*.
 sheikh -the DEM =TOP wracking (brain) become:3sREAL reason 3s
 ‘**This sheikh**, he wracked his brain.’

(340) B766 [topicalised object]

yē *rōk -ō* =*ā*, *tēmiš -in* *yē* *āntē*.
 DEM boy -the TOP see:IMPF -3p 3s there
 ‘**That boy**, they would see him there.’

6.3 Quantifiers

A quantifier in Kumzari modifies a noun to express an amount. Some Kumzari quantifiers are listed in Table 43.

⁷⁹ There are some prefix-like parts of words with demonstrative meaning (*ē-* for proximal and *ān-* for distal), but these do not follow a consistent pattern across sets of words. Instead, they are deemed to be parts of other morphemes in the synchronic analysis.

Table 43. Quantifiers

<i>ay</i>	‘any’
<i>iš</i>	‘none, any’
<i>dasta</i>	‘a number’
<i>nikta</i>	‘a bit’
<i>kam</i>	‘a little’
<i>ḥabba</i>	‘a few’
<i>qadar</i>	‘some’
<i>ammū</i>	‘all’

Like other modified nouns, nouns with quantifiers are marked for number (singular or plural) but not for definiteness. Quantifiers precede the noun they modify:

(341) G139

iš ḡēla na.

any grain NEG

‘There was not **any grain.**’

(342) K48

nikta arma dī’ -in ba mā.

a.bit date give:IMPF -3p to 1p

‘They would give **a bit of dates** to us.’

However, they may be separated from the noun they modify by a prepositional phrase:

(343) S421

iš wā šan martk- -an na.

any with 3p man- -PL NEG

‘There were not **any men with them.**’

Quantifiers may also act as pronouns, replacing a noun rather than modifying it. This is explained in §3.2.

6.4 Ordinal Numerals

Table 44 sets out the ordinal numerals. Ordinals incorporate the count words, plus an adjectivising suffix *-ī*. They follow the noun they modify, and the modified noun carries the definite suffix, e.g. *xānaḡ-ō sitā’ī* ‘the third house’. Ordinals beyond three are simply referred to as *pištū’ī* ‘next’. Different systems of ordinal numerals are applied to days, things, and people, as in the table below.

Table 44. Ordinal numerals

Numeral	Cardinal	Ordinal (days)	Ordinal (non-living)	Ordinal (living)
1	<i>yak</i>	<i>awwal</i> / <i>awwa bārī</i>	<i>awwal</i> / <i>awwa bārī</i>	<i>awwal</i> / <i>awwa bārī</i>
2	<i>dō</i>	<i>dirōzī</i>	<i>ditā 'ī</i>	<i>dikēsī</i>
3	<i>sō</i>	<i>sirōzī</i>	<i>sitā 'ī</i>	<i>sikēsī</i>
4	<i>čār</i>	<i>pištū 'ī</i> ‘next’ (used for all subsequent ordinals)	<i>pištū 'ī</i> ‘next’ (used for all subsequent ordinals)	<i>pištū 'ī</i> ‘next’ (used for all subsequent ordinals)

6.5 Adverbs

There are two morphosyntactically distinct types of adverbs in Kumzari, although they have the same phonological shape, often consisting of only one or two syllables. Post-verbal adverbs modify the verb directly, following the verb. Clause-initial adverbs function on the clause or sentence level rather than simply modifying the verb, since the verb is clause-final.

(344) R860 [post-verbal adverb]
 wa martk- -ō mād **bē**.
 and man -the stay:3sREAL only
 ‘And the man **just** stayed.’

(345) S99 [clause-initial adverb]
balkē mān -um zindaḡ.
 perhaps stay:IRR -1s alive
 ‘**Perhaps** I will stay alive.’

Clause-initial adverbs can be negated separately without negating the verb, whereas post-verbal adverbs cannot be so negated unless the verb they modify is also negated. Considering the syntactic rule that all verbal complements in Kumzari must be negated when their verb is negated, the fact of clause-initial adverbs’ separate negation potential must lead to their analysis as non-complements.

(346) P641
ḥasa na majma gid-ī.
 still NEG speaking do:REAL -2s
 ‘**Still** you have **not** spoken.’

(347) N28
quṭ gōsin mē jīs -ī ā?
 ever goat 1s see:PERF -2s INTERR

quṭ na.
 ever NEG
 —‘Have you **ever** seen my goat?’
 —‘**Never**.’

Clause-initial adverbs are distinct from post-verbal adverbs in their syntax and semantics, but they also differ from other elements in clause-initial position such as discourse particles, preposed adverbial expressions (PAEs), and evidentials (refer to sections***). The latter two form separate clauses and take the subordinator *ā*, which clause-initial adverbs do not. Unlike discourse particles, clause-initial adverbs have semantic content, and they function on

the sentence level rather than in discourse structuring. Discourse particles, PAEs, and evidentials do not vary from their clause-initial position, while adverbs effectively do.

Below are some examples of postverbal adverbs, falling immediately after the verb to modify it directly.

(348) U559

ṭiyar tī'-im šarg.
finished become:IMPF -1p quickly
'We're becoming finished **quickly**.'

(349) R353

ḡāz -an gis -in jāri.
money -PL take:PERF -3p already
'They had **already** taken the money.'

(350) R451

mē č-um indur awwal.
1s go:IMPF -1s inside firstly
'I will go in **first**.'

(351) U382

mē iš gō' -um na. tō gaw bē.
1s any say:IMPER -1s NEG 2s say:2sIMPER only
'I will not say anything. **Only** you say it.'

Adverbial complements, including locatives such as *ēwō* 'here' and *āntē* 'there', are treated in chapter 3.

Following are some examples of clause-initial adverbs, modifying the entire clause or sentence.⁸⁰

(352) R1331

gab twāra wābur ḡuzr-ō.
immediately shelter become:3sREAL depth -the
'**Immediately** he took shelter in the deep [part of the well].'

(353) S99

balkē mān -um zindaḡ.
perhaps stay:IRR -1s alive
'**Perhaps** I will stay alive.'

(354) R428

awwa šām xōr wā mā.
firstly supper eat:2sIMPER with 1p
'**Firstly** eat supper with us.'

⁸⁰ Certain clause-initial adverbs, such as *awwa* 'firstly', *hata* 'even', and *āxur* 'afterward', may function as conjunctions, in which case the subordinator *ā* follows the entire subordinated clause; however, even these neither necessarily nor often act as conjunctions (see §9.4.1.1).

(355) R807

pē qadar dgur ādamī āntē=in.
 also some other person there =EX:3p
 ‘There are **also** some other people there.’

(356) G168

yumkin byāt pi sātē ḥata nwāšam.
 maybe come:3sIRR from now until evening
 ‘**Maybe** he will come between now and evening.’

(357) R1151

āxur rōḥ tō dō’-um ba tō.
 afterward soul 2s give:IMPF -1s to 2s
 ‘**Afterward** I will give you your soul.’

6.5.1 Derived adverbs

As described in §4.1, the derivational suffix *-ītī* is added to a deverb, noun, or adjective to describe manner; that is, it turns a deverb, noun, or adjective into an adverb. These derived adverbs require a verb, and occur in post-verbal position.

(358) U203

kišt-iš yē **ḥalal -ītī** wa šīwī yē gid-iš ba xō.
 kill:REAL-3s 3s ritually.approved -manner and grilling 3s do:REAL-3s for REFL
 ‘He killed it **in the ritually correct way**, and he grilled it for himself.’

(359) N28

ništ -in **kūn -ītī** inda maglēs -ō.
 sit:REAL -3p bottom -manner in sheikh’s court -the
 ‘They sat **on their bottoms** in the sheikh’s court.’

(360) K753

maxluq -an ādamī murd -in **wuxr -ītī**.
 crowd -PL person die:REAL -3p instant -manner
 ‘Crowds of people died **instantly**.’

Languages are commonly referred to using derived adverbs:

(361) N29

majma tk-a **kumzar -ītī**.
 speaking do:IMPF-3s Kumzar -manner
 ‘She is speaking **Kumzari**.’

(362) N30

majma tk-a **arab -ītī**.
 speaking do:IMPF-3s Arab -manner
 ‘He is speaking **Arabic**.’

6.6 Modifiers in poetics

Anaphora of the modifier *qadar* effects composition of the poem ‘the sorcerers’ assembly’ embedded in the tale *Kanēdō*. Its parallelistic structure and translation are provided in the table below.

Table 45. Embedded poem K715 the sorcerers’ assembly

Structure	Kumzari	Translation
all night long , the crowd [of sorcerers] assembled. they had some {sorcerer’s things}, they had some {sorcerer’s things}, and they had some {sorcerer’s things}, and they had some {et cetera}, and they would {do} some {sorcerer’s things}, and they had some {sorcerer’s things}, and they had some {sorcerer’s things}. in any case, this house, it [was so full that] it wouldn’t take any [more].	šaw drāz ā, sūqū būrin maxluqan: qadar qiz’an wā šān, qadar tālim wā šan wa qadar brinz wā šan wa qadar dām čī wā šan na wa qadar matfa bžēn -in, wa... qadar dubbāba wā šan wa qadar tāfaq wā šan. filhāl, xānağ -ō y’ā, iš diga na.	All night long , The crowd [of sorcerers] assembled. They had some cauldrons, They had some platters, and They had some rice, and They had some I-don’t-know-what else, and They would fire some cannons, and They had some tanks, and They had some guns. In any case, this house, it [was so full that] it wouldn’t take any [more].

Modifiers play an essential role in both the structure and the function of the poem. Its frame contains the adjective *drāz* and the demonstrative *yā*, both in topicalised noun phrases, setting off the first and last lines. Semantically, the slight quantifier *qadar* ‘some’ in the list contrasts with the frame of superlatives; the night is *drāz* ‘long’ and the *maxluqan* ‘crowd’ assembles, and the house is so full that it cannot hold any more, yet what it holds is only ‘some’ of this and ‘some’ of that. Linguistically, too, the noun phrases with their minor modifiers in the list add up, line upon line, repeating seven times until the poem is bursting rhetorically with its contents of *qadars*, and must be dammed with a closure discourse particle *filhāl* in the frame.