Hawliyat is the official peer-reviewed journal of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Balamand. It publishes articles from the field of Humanities.

**Journal Name:** Hawliyat

**ISSN:** 1684-6605

**Title:** Ka a Temporal Prefix in Mardini Arabic Derived from the Verb Kana (To Be)

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**To cite this document:**


**Permanent link to this document:** DOI: https://doi.org/10.31377/haw.v9i0.301

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Grammaticalization is usually thought of as that subset of linguistic changes through which a lexical item in certain uses becomes a grammatical item, or through which a grammatical item becomes more grammatical (Hopper-Traugott, 2).

This paper is an attempt to present this phenomenon, showing the results of our investigation on the development of the temporal marker in Mardini Arabic (spoken in Mardin province situated in Southern Turkey) from lexical items (kan-to be) into grammatical prefix (ka). This prefix is attached to the extratemporal forms of the verb (imperfective and perfective).

The verb kana (to be) existent both in standard Arabic and in all the Arabic dialects, has syntactically the role of a temporal marker that changes the temporal situation of a normal sentence (without kana). When the verb kana modifies a verbal sentence, both kana and the verb that follows it, independently take all the marks of conjugation (aspect, mood, person, gender and number). Hence, we realize that kana is not an auxiliary verb and the Arabic language does not have compound tense forms.

A step towards the appearance of such tenses is made in Mardini Arabic, in which the verb kan (to be) is grammaticalized and it becomes, passing through different stages of transformation, a grammatical morpheme (ka).

We can see that, as this lexical item becomes grammaticalized, it loses its semantic content and concomitantly undergoes a phonetic reduction to the minimum (ka) and later fuses with the verb stem. Examine the following sentences:

1) kent fe-merdin // fe-merdin kent.
   I was at Mardin // At Mardin I was.
Ka a temporal prefix in Mardini Arabic derived from the verb kana (to be)

2) l-māktub kan gdid.
   The letter was new.

3) kan nahne we-l-akrad sadqan.
   We and the Kurds were friends.

4) Fatma kan teštegel... // kateštegel...
   Fatma was working...

In the first example, the verb kan is used with its fully semantic value of to be, to exist. As a consequence, in this situation, it is conjugated just like any other verb, having all the usual person and grammatical forms:

āna kentu - I was; ent kent - you were; enti kenti - you were (fem.); huwe kan - he was; hiye kat - she was; nāhne kenna - we were; enten kenten - you were (pl.); henne kanu - they were.

In the second and third examples, kan is used as temporal marker in a nominal sentence (kan gdid and respectively kan sadqan). We notice that, with this function, kan is invariable, it is not conjugate. This is clearly shown in the third sentence, in which kan (in singular) links a plural subject (nahne: personal pronoun in the first person, plural) with a plural predicative (sadqan: masculine noun, in the plural). This invariable kan is used only in the nominal sentence, in order to situate it in the past.

Kan, in the fourth example is used as a temporal marker in a verbal sentence for placing the action expressed by the verb teštegel (she is working) at imperfective in the past.

Kan as a temporal marker for the verbal sentences is situated always in front of the verb. In the other examples (1, 2 and 3) kan is placed:

- before or after the object:
  a) kent fe-merdin. (I was at Mardin.)
  b) fe-merdin kent. (At Mardin I was.)

- before or after the predicative:
  a) l-māktub kan gdid. (The letter was new.)
  b) l-māktub gdid kan. (The letter new was.)

Notice: I remarked that the variant b is more frequently used, probably because of the influence of the similar constructions in Kurdish that has a subject-object-predicate structure:

a) Bi-Merdin bum (At Mardin I was).

Also, in Kurdish and Turkish we found the enclitic link verb that is not specific to the Arabic topic:
b) Kurdish: new bu = Mardini Arabic: gid kan (it was new).

In the fourth example, kan is put before the verb and never appears after it. So, as An-Najjar concludes regarding the verbal system in Kuwaiti Arabic, the verbal elements occur in the following order: tense - mood - aspect - head verb (An-Najjar, 672), as it appears in Mardini Arabic. Therefore, the tense morpheme precedes the verb that already has prefixes and suffixes of aspect.

From the point of view of change, forms do not shift abruptly from one category to another, but go through a series of transitions, named cline (Halliday, apud. Hooper-Traugott, 6). For instance, the cline of grammaticality of ka in Mardini Arabic is, in our opinion, the following:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Kan} & \rightarrow \text{kan} & \rightarrow \text{ka} \\
(\text{content item}) & (\text{clitic}) & (\text{inflectional affix})
\end{align*}
\]

Kan, as content item, appears in the first example, with its fully semantical meaning and also fully conjugable as any other verb as it was shown before.

Kan, as clitic - clitics may be thought of as forms that are half-way between autonomous word and affixes (Hopper-Traugott, 6) - appears in the second and the third examples.

When a form undergoes grammaticalization from a lexical to a grammatical form, however, it tends to lose the morphological and syntactic properties that would identify it as a full member of a major grammatical category such as the verb kan (fully conjugable) which passes into a minor grammatical category, the clitic kan (inconjugable), and after that, passes into the inflectional affix ka.

In standard Arabic, the verb kana is used also as a temporal marker, but is always conjugated. It appears with an invariable form kan in several idioms in Iraq (Christian Arabic idiom in Mosul, Jewish Arabic idiom in Baghdad, etc.). Its reduction to ka takes place only in several subdialects of Mardini Arabic. The various stages of grammaticalization of kan and its reduction to the ka coexist in Mardini Arabic in its different subdialects:

a) For instance, only the invariable form kan is used as a temporal marker in the subdialect of the Town of Mardin:
   kan yiroh le-l-mäktāb. (He was going to the office)

b) In the Savur and Estel districts, situated in the North of the Mardin province, kan is used interchangeably with its shorter allomorph ka:
   kan yiroh le-l-mäktāb = kayiroh le-l-mäktāb. (He was going to the office)
c) In the the Mhalammi subdialect there is only the form ka:
\[ \text{ka yi roh le}-l-māktāb. } \text{(He was going to the office)} \]

Thus, the apparition of ka in Mardini Arabic from kana seems to have passed through the following stages: first, the final short vowel a was dropped as happened in any Vernacular Arabic, then the medial long vowel aa was shortened, and finally the alveolar nasal n was deleted. It has been proposed that the reduction of kan to ka had been based on the fact that the *Verba Mediae Radicalis* (C1VC2), in Mhalammi subdialect, dropped the third radical consonant in third person, feminine, singular, perfective (Sasse, Hans-Jurgen, 265). Such examples are quite frequent:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{sa} (\text{he became}) & \quad \text{sa} (\text{she became}) \\
\text{qa} (\text{he said}) & \quad \text{qa} (\text{she said}) \\
\text{ka} (\text{he was}) & \quad \text{ka} (\text{she was})
\end{align*}
\]

Therefore, it is supposed that the ka form is the result of rebuilding the masculine form, starting from the feminine one and deleting its desinence:

\[ \text{ka} < \text{kat} \]

But the apparition of the ka form is undoubtedly due to the erosion of kan by way of its frequent use which led to its complete emptying of its semantic meaning and to its generalization. Within the frame of this natural process of forming and transforming of the language, any semantic change is paralleled by phonetic erosion (Bybee apud. An-Najjar, 665). It should be noticed that in examples 2 and 3, as copula nuance, kan, which is not completely emptied of its meaning (to be), is not reduced to ka. As a support to this opinion, there also comes the fact that the other *Verba Mediae Radicalis* have not at the third person, singular, masculine, perfective, forms like CV as it was sa instead of sar, or qa instead of qal.

Therefore, the lexical morpheme ka has lost its entire semantic content and a part of its phonetical corpus in a specific circumstance, before verbs only, but kan has retained (fully or partly) its lexical meaning and phonetical corpus before nouns.

**The use of the ka particle:**

I - The most usual value introduced by the ka particle is that of situation in the past of a verbal action. Therefore, it is attached to the extratemporal verbal
forms (imperfective and perfective) which acquire temporal values as it was:

1) expressing the imperfect:

*Ka* + the verb in imperfective aspect, that is an unfinished action placed in past time.

Examples:

a) *lbent katergef kama lwārāq...*  
(The girl was shaking like a leaf...)

b) *kella bi-hak-l-qāhwe katenweged*  
(All of them were in that café)

Remark:

If we have a succession of verbs, all in the same tense which is introduced by the *ka* particle, we may place the *ka* only at the first verb, its sense extending over the other verbs:

*w-hak-s-saltan kaye'bed, ysum, ysalley*  
(That sultan was praising, was fasting and was praying.)

If the verbs are separated by other parts of speech, the *ka* particle appears at each and every verb:

*kanešrāb qahwe we kanel'āb kaged...*  
(We were drinking coffee and were playing cards...)

2) expressing the past in the past (the equivalent of Past Perfect):

*ka* + the verb at perfective. For instance:

*Lamma wasalu, 'ali karah*  
(When they arrived, Ali had gone away)

3) expressing past tense for the prepositional constructions of possession. The fact that these constructions are attached to the preverbal particle *ka* - specific only to the verb, as we have seen before, in order to place them in the past - made some specialists name them pseudo-verbs (Sasse, Hans-Jurgen, 178).

Possession in Mardini Arabic can be expressed with the help of three prepositions: *li, 'anda, ma',* which are also present in almost all the Arabic dialects, as well as in Standard Arabic. To put such constructions in the past is to use the particle *ka* which precedes them always. For instance, the forms of possessive construction with preposition *li* in the past are the following:
Also, for the other two prepositions, the rule is the same: *ka'ändi* (I had),
*ka'ändek* (you had) or *kama'i* (I had), *kama'ek* (you had) etc.

As we have seen when discussing the verb, the particle *ka* forms a unity,
together with the preposition followed by an affix pronoun; nothing else can be
introduced between them.

At negative form, *ka* coexists with *kan*: *maka'änd'i* (I had not) or *makan'*
'ändi* (I had not); *makali* (I had not) or *makan li* (I had not) etc. I remarked while
having talks with Mardini Arabs that the form *makan* is much more used by
elder persons, while the youth uses almost exclusively *maka*.

*Kan*, unlike *ka*, does not form an indivisible unity with the prepositional
construction:

a) *makan mäktub lahu = makan lahu mäktub* (He did not have a letter)
b) *makalhu mäktub* (He did not have a letter)

As has been mentioned before, in the first example, the subject (*mäktub*,
letter), can be introduced between *kan* and the prepositional construction. In the
second example, such a thing is not possible which proves that the particle *ka*
cannot exist independently, as has been concluded from the former examples:
being completely grammaticalized, it is organically linked to the determined
verb.

II - Besides the temporal value indicated above, the particle *ka* together with
the particle *te* expresses also a modal value, namely the conditional-optative
mood. The future in Mardini Arabic is formed from the imperfective form, to
which agglutinate the preverbal particle *te*, for example: *teyešrāb* (he will drink).
This is not understood only as future tense, but also as desire and intentional
mood. So, by linking the particle *ka* to a future verbal form, the intention is
placed in the past; it does not come true due to certain reasons or conditions
which have not been fulfilled, but it remains at the intentional, desire phase. I
think that \textit{te} expresses here the intention due to the order of the two particles, first \textit{ka} as a particle which expresses the tense, then \textit{te} as the particle which expresses both the tense and the mood. The particle \textit{te} indicates, as previously mentioned, future action and intentional mood, and the particle \textit{ka} indicates past tense. So, the scheme proposed by An-Najjar concerning the verbal elements which occur in the following order: tense - mood - aspect-head verb is fully applied in this case, too. For instance:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Nuri kateyedūb lay 'ali be-l-hāngār, bass haf.}
\end{quote}

(Nuri would have struck Ali with the sword, but he was afraid.)

\section*{Evolution Tendencies of the particle \textit{ka}}

In rapid speech, in front of the vowel \textit{ā} (in the situations in which it appears, like the verbs in the first person, singular, imperfective aspect) or of the vowel \textit{a} (at verbs having \textit{a} as first consonant, at the perfective aspect), \textit{ka} becomes \textit{k}, for instance: \textit{kalāb} (I was playing) < \textit{kaal'āb}.

Hence, we can assume that, in the future, the particle \textit{ka} may be reduced to \textit{k}. A favorable circumstance may be the fact that Mardini Arabic allows the presence of consonantal groups at the beginning of the words.

\section*{BIBLIOGRAPHY}


