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A Collection of Articles in Honour of the Sixtieth Birthday
of Professor Heikki Palva



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taww IN NAJDI ARABIC

The adverbial *taww* may occur as the first term of a construct or attached to a pronominal suffix. In this respect it resembles a genitive or a prepositional construct. Yet, it is different in that it can stand alone, especially in answer to 'when' questions, e.g. *mita rāḥat? taww*: When did she go? Just now, right this minute (cf. *mita tirūh? ha-l-ḥīn*: When will she go? Right now). In a negative answer to a negative question, *taww* takes an appropriate pronominal suffix.

ma jaw? la, tawwuhum.

Haven't they come? No, not yet (it is too early for that).

ma ntalat al-barḳih? la, tawwah.

Hasn't the pool filled up? No, not yet (too much remains for that).

ma addan aḍ-ḍiḥir? la tawwuh.

Hasn't the call to the noonday-prayer been announced? No, not yet.

In answer to such negative questions *taww* and its pronominal suffix are used in the same sense as the other adverbial expression *la, ila ha-l-ḥīn*: no, not till now.

In an affirmative statement, *taww* usually refers to an event which has taken place in the immediate past and has just been completed soon or is still in progress.

tawwi šiftuh.

I just saw him.

tawwina nšūfuh.

We have just seen him.

tawwik šāyfuḥ.

You (s.m.) have just seen him.

tawwiḳ minsadḥih.

You (s.f.) have just lain down.

tawwukum minḳfīn.

You (p.m.) have just come back.

tawwikin mtizā' lāt.

You (p.f.) have just quarrelled with one another.

tawwuh yiftam.

He was just weaned.

tawwah mtijawwzih.

She has just got married.

tawwuhum maḍbūhīn.

They (m.) have just been killed.

tawwihīn yta ‘aṭṭaran.

They (f.) had just put on some perfume.

In the above examples *taww* takes a pronominal suffix which agrees with and stands for the implied subject. No pronominal suffix is added when the subject is explicitly expressed and comes immediately after *taww*.

taww al-bazir maftūm.

The baby has just been weaned.

taww ar-rjāl ḍibbḥaw.

The men had just been killed.

taww ḥinna niġi.

We have just come.

However, if we were to shift the position of the subject in the above three examples or delete it altogether, the pronominal suffix would appear again.

al-bazir tawwuh maftūm.

tawwuhum ḍibbḥaw.

tawwina niġi ḥinna.

Whether the subject is expressed or implied, whether the action is expressed by a participle or by a verb, and whether the verb is in the perfect or the imperfect, in all the above examples there is the unmistakable sense that the event has just taken place and might even be still in progress. This same notion of the immediate past can be expressed by placing *ma* immediately after *taww*. In this case, *taww* takes no pronominal suffix and the item following *taww ma* is a verb in the perfect tense.

taww ma lifēna.

We have just arrived.

taww ma šif.

He has just been seen.

taww ma gāmaw.

They have just got up.

In these three examples, the *ma* of *taww ma* bears some resemblance to *ma* in such classical particles as *ḥinama*, *‘indama*, *ba‘dama*, *ḥālama*, etc. and to such vernacular particles as *‘ala ma*, *‘igib ma*, *gabil ma*, etc. Each of these particles is followed by a verb in the perfect. On the other hand, *taww ma* is different from these other particles in that it is not possible to change the structure and still retain the same meaning by dropping *ma* and changing the perfect to a verbal noun. This suggests that the *ma* of *taww ma* is not a nominalizer as in the case of the other particles mentioned.

If a pronominal suffix is appended to *taww* in the three examples above, the meaning changes in two important respects. First of all, *ma* would change automatically to a negative particle, and consequently the adverbial would not refer to the immediate past but would express a notion usually expressed in English by such adverbials as *still*, *yet*, *not yet*. Examples:

tawwina ma lifēna.

We have not yet arrived.

tawwuh ma šif.

He has not yet been seen.

tawwuhum ma gāmar.

They have not yet got up.

Only in the apodosis of the conditional law would a verb following *taww ma* be in the imperfect, with a subtle shift in the adverbial meaning, e.g.:

law bass awājjuh kān taww ma yīṭib xātri:

If I could just face him, only then would I feel really satisfied.

law ataraššaf riḡah kān taww ma tabra jrūhi.

If I could sip her saliva, only then would my (love) wounds be cured.

When the verb or adjective modifying the object of *taww* signifies a durable quality which extends over an appreciable period of time, the adverbial *taww* is used to indicate that the duration is not yet over.

taww an-nima xaḡar.

The palm fruit is still green (not ripe).

taww al-faras ‘asif.

The mare is still not broken in.

tawwihin banāt.

They (f.) are still virgins.

tawwuh yḡabi.

He is still crawling.

The particle *taww* may be the first term in a construct, the second term of which refers to a time-slot which is a well-defined segment and a recognized part of the day or night. This construct means that the time slot designated by the second term is yet to come.

taww aṣ-ṣiḡḡ.

Dawn is yet to appear.

taww al-‘aṣir.

The late afternoon prayer is yet to come.

taww al-ḡada.

Dinner is yet to be served.

Ambiguity arises when *taww* is the first term in an isolated construct the second term of which is a noun referring to an extended period, a long and well-defined span of time, such as days, nights, seasons, etc. .

taww aš-šta.

- a. Winter is yet to come, or
- b. Much of the winter still remains.

taww an-nahār.

- a. Daylight is yet to appear, or
- b. Much of the day still remains.

Ambiguities such as the above can be eliminated by intonation or contextualization as follows:

a. *taww aš-šta ma ja.*

Winter has not come yet.

b. *taww aš-šta, rayyiḏ.*

Much of the winter is still ahead, a long part of it remains to come.

Ambiguity also arises when the second term of a *taww* construct refers to some enduring event.

tawwah ḥāmil.

a. She has just got pregnant.

b. She is still pregnant.

tawwuh nēm.

a. He just went to sleep.

b. He is still sleeping.

Only intonation or contextualization would disambiguate examples of this sort. When the *taww* statement is in the affirmative and the event or action is expressed by a participle or by a verb in the perfect, the adverbial refers unequivocally to the immediate past. But when the verb is in the imperfect, ambiguity may arise, especially with activities or events which are perceived to stretch over a duration of time.

taww ar-rjāl yta ‘aššōn.

a. The men have just eaten supper.

b. The men are still eating supper.

taww al-‘irrīsih taxaḏḏab.

a. The bride has just dyed her hands with *xḏāb*.

b. The bride is still dying her hands with *xḏāb*.

taww al-faras ti ‘saf.

a. The horse has just been broken in.

b. The horse is still being broken in.

tawwihin ytalabbisan al-ḥarīm.

a. The women have just dressed up.

b. The women are still dressing up.

tawwuh yisti ‘idd.

a. He just got ready.

b. He is still getting ready.

twwina ngalliḏ al-ḡada.

a. We just set dinner before the guests.

b. We are still setting dinner before the guests.

If the ambiguity is not clarified by the context, the intonation may help to indicate whether the speaker intends to say that the event has just finished or whether it is still in progress. In the following examples *taww* is used to signal a turn of events towards a better or anticipated state:

taww ma jat ‘ala l-kēf.

Now things have turned out as one wished.

taww al-li‘b ma zān.

Now playing (music, dancing, singing, etc.) has become good, enjoyable.

tawwuh yibīn aṣ-ṣiġġ.

Now truth has appeared.

taww ma šāfat ġazīr az-zēn ‘ēni.

Only now have my eyes beheld real beauty.

taww ma tibārak al-maḥall yōm ṭabbētūh.

Only now has our abode been blessed as you have set foot in it.