CHAPTER 12

Simultaneity with a Reference Point in the Past

Introductory Remarks

The situations dealt with in this chapter imply two reference points, the first one is the speech time, the second one is located in the past. As seen above (chapter 7), a temporal verb form in main clauses can orientate itself by the speech time only, but apart from this, the verb forms can orientate themselves by the speech time or by the second reference point in the past. According to rules 1 and 4, simultaneity with a reference point is incompatible with perfections, punctuality and telicness. The situation that is simultaneous with a reference point in the past can be actional or non-actional. In the former case and with orientation by the second reference point, the verb form that expresses it must be specified as imperfective (if aspectual) or simultaneous (if temporal), in the latter case as non-aspectual or simultaneous. When orientated by the speech time, the verb form is specified as anterior and imperfective or as simply anterior respectively.

A comparison between the signum that designates simultaneity in the past and the one for anteriority to the speech time (chapter 10) might help decide whether the verb forms in question are to be considered as aspectual or temporal. In the former case, there should be available two different signa for the intenta in question, in the latter case, they may be expressed by one and the same signum (cf. above, chapt. 7).

The reference point a situation is simultaneous with can be a point in time, e.g. at six o’clock, or a period of time that may be referred to in the dialect of Beirut by bwut’a or b-hayda l-wa’t ‘at or during that time’. There are different situations that may be simultaneous with a reference point in the past. The speaker can intend to stress that the situation had not been finished yet when the reference point intervened (still-situations), he can emphasize its beginning (since-situations) or simply state that it was simultaneous with its reference point. I will start with situations that are simply simultaneous with a point in or a period of time.
12.1 Simple Simultaneity

12.1.1 Main Clauses
The informants were asked in German or English: *What were you / was he doing at that moment / at six o’clock? In the answers kān ‘amyiqṭul and, with states, kān AP were used. When kān ‘amyiqṭul is combined with punctuality, the resulting sentence is either ungrammatical (type II):

a. *kint ‘amlâ’i bêt
   ‘*I was finding a house.’

b. *kân ‘amyûṣal ‘ala l-qâhira
   ‘*He was arriving at Cairo’

or complex:

c. b-hayda l-wa’t kânit ktîr ‘ālam ‘ambitmût biż-žnûb (Text IV, 3)
   ‘In those days many people died / were dying in the south’

or atelic:

d. kint ‘amfût ‘al-maktab taba’i
   ‘I was just entering / about to enter my office.’

The same holds true for telic situations:

e. kint ‘ambidfun kalbi
   ‘I was just interring my dog.’ (telic > atelic)

The other actional categories remain unchanged:

atelic

f. kint ‘ambitmašša bil-madîni
   ‘I was just having a walk in the town.’

g. ṣârit fi ḥarb kamân b-libnân, kân ‘amyiṣṭiqil w žarraḥu l-ʾannâṣ1
   ‘There was war again in Lebanon. He was working and a marksman injured him.’

1 From an unpublished text by Ali Serhan.