

## HOW TO DEAL WITH CONTRADICTORY CHAPTERS IN SĪBWAYH'S *KITĀB*?

*Compound numerals from “eleven” to “nineteen”  
(chapters 314, 336 and 412 of the Kitāb)*

by

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### Introduction\*

My article is quite far from Emilio's personal and academic centres of interest. However, I learned from him that one should not judge from one's first impression, and this is what this article is about: entering the inner logic of the *Kitāb* instead of imposing one's logic to it.

Reading the *Kitāb* of Sībawayh (d. ca 180/796) is not an easy task for many centuries have passed since it was first taught and its logic is not always obvious at first glance. And if one believes later historiographers, many later grammarians already described it as a book of an insurmountable difficulty, just like al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898) who refused to teach it because it was as impossible a task as crossing the sea on the back of a horse<sup>1</sup>.

I would like in this paper to focus on one particular issue, on which Sībawayh seems to hesitate and even contradict himself. To put it in a nutshell, the problematic issue at stake here is the status of *-‘ashara* (“-teen”, masc) and *-‘ash(i)rata* (“-teen”, fem.) in the compound numerals from “eleven” to “nineteen”: Is it syntactically similar to a *mudāf ʿilayh* as in the compound

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1. See CARTER, “Les origines de la grammaire arabe”, *Revue des études islamiques* 40 (1972), pp. 78–79, quoting AS-SĪRĀFĪ, *ʿAkhbār an-naḥwiyyīn*, ed. F. Krenkow (Paris, and Beyrouth, 1936), p. 50. See BAALBAKI, *The legacy of the Kitāb* (Leiden, and Boston: Brill, 2008) for an in-depth understanding of the *Kitāb* as a whole and of Sībawayh's analytical method. Unless stated differently, I will use Baalbaki's translation for the grammatical terminology.

*Ma'dī-karibin*, or to a *tā' marbūṭah* as in the proper name *Ṭalḥatu*, or to the compensatory *nūn* in *ithnāni* and *muslimūna*?

This issue is dealt with in three chapters of the *Kitāb*, chapters 314, 336 and 412, and contradictory solutions seem to be proposed by Sībawayh. A detailed reading shows that these contradictions can be solved and that there even seem to be textual markers on which the reader can rely in order to avoid misunderstandings.

More deeply, it is both the status of the text and the logic at stake in it that is questioned here<sup>2</sup>.

## I. Compound numerals in chapter 314

Chapter 314 (*Kitāb* II, 45–51) is devoted to compound substantives in general, and Sībawayh explores the different syntactic schemes that could explain their specific behaviour, as well as the special case of the compound numerals from eleven to nineteen. Sībawayh knows two different kinds of coalescence that involves two nouns: the *'idāfah* and the “two things that are made one noun” (*shay'āni ju'ilā sman wāḥidan*). These two kinds of nominal coalescence will be called by the later grammarians *tarkīb 'idāfiyy* and *tarkīb mazjiyy*<sup>3</sup>.

In this chapter — as well as in the whole *Kitāb* in general — Sībawayh is not presenting a prescriptive vision of grammar, but his interpretation of what is found in the language of the Arabs, as well as the divergent interpretations of other grammarians. Thus, in more than one case, he quotes a few variants and gives an interpretation for each, either his own interpretation or others', and it is not immediately clear which interpretation he endorses. A good example is the proper name *Ma'dī-karib* that was heard by him in the independent case as *Ma'dī-karibu*, *Ma'dī-kariba*, and *Ma'dī-karibin*; another example is a substantive referring to a small flea, that was heard as follows: *al-khāzi-bāzi*, *al-khizbāzu*, *al-khāzi-bā'u*, *al-khāza-bāza*, *khāzu-bāzin*, and *al-khāza-bāzu*. In all these cases, Sībawayh presents a few grammatical interpretations, either within the frame of the *'idāfah* (the later *tarkīb 'idāfiyy*) or within the frame of the “two things that are made one noun” (the

2. The topic of this article is part of my doctoral research project on the syntax of numerals in Arabic, which I prepare at the Radboud University in Nijmegen under the supervision of Professor Kees Versteegh.

3. There are other kinds of coalescence but they do not relate to our topic. See BAALBAKI, “Coalescence as a grammatical tool in Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*”, *Arabic grammar and linguistics*, ed. Y. Suleiman (London, and New York: Routledge, 2003) 94; *The legacy of the Kitāb*, 229–230.

later *tarkīb mazjiyy*). And at the end of the chapter, it is not obvious what interpretation he prefers, if any.

Reading this chapter of the *Kitāb*, one can try to classify the compounds into the following semantic categories: *i.* proper names, like *Ḥaḍra-mawt*, *Ba'la-bakk*, *Rāma-hurmuz*, *Māra-Sarjis*, *Ma'dī-karib* or *'Amra-wayh*; *ii.* compounds whose origin (*'aṣl*) is a conjoined construction (*'atf*), like *khamsata-ashara*, *ḥayṣa-bayṣa*; *iii.* compounds whose origin is an *'iḍāfah* construction, like *ḥādiya-ashara* or *thālitha-ashara*; *iv.* compound nouns in the vocative, like *yā bna-'ammin*; *v.* adverbs (*zurūf*) and circumstantial accusatives (*ḥāl*), like *ḥīna-ḥīn*, *yawma-yawma*, *ṣabāḥa-masā'a*; *vi.* proper names of the verbs (*'asmā' fi'l*), like *hay-hāt* or *ḥayya-hal*; and *vii.* substantives, like *'ayḍa-mūz*, *'anta-rīs*, *khāzi-bāz*, *khīzbāz* or *khāzi-bā'*.

Once the semantic category to which a compound belongs has been identified, the grammarians have to interpret its syntactic behaviour. Once more, there seem to be a limited numeral of patterns according to which compound nouns behave syntactically: Either 1. they behave like an *'iḍāfah*, or 2. they behave like a “one word compound”. In *'iḍāfah*-like compounds, the first term is a *muḍāf* and the second one is a *muḍāf 'ilayh*. Things are not so simple for the “one word compounds”, since there are many possible patterns to explain their behaviour: 2a. some compounds behave as a whole like a diptote proper name ending with a *tā' marbūṭah*, of the type of *Ṭalḥah*; 2b. some behave like *khamsata-ashara*, which seems to form here a category of its own; 2c. some behave like a mere onomatopoeia, of the type of *ghāqin*, which is a useful category because it includes everything that is out of pattern; 2d. some behave like the proper name of the verb (*ism fi'l*), of the type of *jayri*; 2e. some behave like a quadriliteral, of the type of *sirbāl*, *qāṣi'a* or *nāfiqā'*; 2f. some behave like invariable nouns, as in *'ayna*; and lastly, 2g. some behave like a masculine external plural or a dual, bearing a compensatory *nūn*, of the type of *muslimūna* and *ithnāni*. More details on this last pattern will be given later.

Ideally, one should be able to assign one syntactic behaviour (frames 1 to 2g) to one given semantic category of compounds (from *i* to *vii*). But things are not this simple and not all grammarians agree on how to interpret the syntactic behaviour of compound nouns. For example, some grammarians will interpret the proper name *Ma'dī-karib* (category *i*) in the frame of an *'iḍāfah* (frame 1), whereas others will interpret it in the frame of a diptote proper name ending with a *tā' marbūṭah* (frame 2a).

### 1.1. The *'iḍāfah*-like compounds

As for the compounds that behave like an *'iḍāfah* (frame 1), things are rather simple (*Kitāb* II, 46.10–18). The first term is declinable (*mu'rab*) and

is annexed to the second term which is indefinite. Both *Maʿdī-karibin* and *Maʿdī-kariba* (category *i*) can be interpreted in this frame: Here, the first term ends with a root semivowel, explaining why the declension does not show, and as far as the second term is concerned, if it ends with a *tanwīn*, it must be interpreted as a fully declinable noun (*mutamakkin*)<sup>4</sup>, and if it ends with a single *fathah*, it has to be interpreted as a proper name — and as such a non fully declinable noun (*ghayr mutamakkin*) — to which the first term is *muḍāf*. The declension of *Maʿdī-karib* would either be *Maʿdī-karibin*, *Maʿdī-karibin*, *Maʿdī-karibin* or *Maʿdī-kariba*, *Maʿdī-kariba*, *Maʿdī-kariba*.

## 1.2. The “two things that are made one noun”

As for the “two things that are made one noun” (frames 2a to 2g), things are not so simple, and Sībawayh presents many possible cases in this chapter (*Kitāb* II, 46.18 till the end of the chapter, 51.10). The common features to these compounds are: As a whole, the compound has the same status (*bi-manzilah*) as one single noun; this new noun is not fully declinable (*ghayr mutamakkin*, it does not take the syntactic *tanwīn at-tamkīn*). On the other hand, these compounds behave variably concerning declension (*ʿirāb*): Some are declinable (diptote declension, because they are *ghayr mutamakkinah*); and some are invariable (*mabniyyah*) and end in a vowel or in a *tanwīn* (which is not the *tanwīn at-tamkīn*). For example, the proper name *Maʿdī-karib* (category *i*) has also been heard by Sībawayh in the independent case pronounced *Maʿdī-karibu*. In this case, it can be interpreted as “one single noun”, declinable and diptote, and not any more as a *muḍāf* and a *muḍāf ʿilayh*. Compound nouns “that are made one noun” are *ghayr mutamakkinah* because, being compounds, they are “heavy”, or in other words, it would be too heavy to add the *tanwīn at-tamkīn* to a noun to which a first noun has already be annexed (*Kitāb* II, 47.13). Here, the declension of *Maʿdī-karib* in all three cases would be *Maʿdī-karibu*, *Maʿdī-kariba*, *Maʿdī-kariba* (frame 2a).

### 1.2.1. Proper names

In the case of some proper names (*Kitāb* II, 46.18–47.7), Sībawayh, quoting Yūnus (b. Habīb, d. 183/799–800), analytically interprets their coalescence type as the addition of a *tāʾ marbūṭah*<sup>5</sup> to the noun (frame 2a), forming

4. The account of *tamakkun* and *ʿadam tamakkun* in BAALBAKI, *The legacy of the Kitāb*, p. 113 and 118–119, is maybe not as clear as that of CHAIRET, “*Hiffa, ṭiqal et tamakkun: régime d’incidence et classes de mots*”, *Langues et littératures du Monde arabe 1: “Linguistique arabe et sémitique 1”*, 216–217, who insists more on its gradient nature in the *Kitāb*.

5. The *tāʾ marbūṭah* is referred to by Sībawayh as *hāʾ at-taʿnīth* or simply as *hāʾ*.

with it a new single noun. If the noun is a proper name (*'alam*) it becomes a diptote, as is *Ṭalḥah* and any proper name ending with a *tā'* *marbūṭah*, masculine or feminine<sup>6</sup>. Sībawayh simply says that the second term of the compound is “a ‘word’ like the feminine *hā'*” (*kalimah ka-hā' at-ta'nīth*). In other words, *Ma'dī-karibu* is “like” *Ṭalḥatu*, or to be more precise, *Ma'dī-* is “like” *Ṭalḥa-* and *-karibu* is “like” *-tu*. This term to term morphological analogy between a compound proper name and a proper name ending with a *tā'* *marbūṭah* can be represented as follows: *Ma'dī-karib-u* // *Ṭalḥa-t-u*, emphasizing the parallel between the two analytical parts of both proper names *Ma'dī-karib* and *Ṭalḥa-h*, hence the declension of *Ma'dī-karibu*, like *Ṭalḥatu*, *Ṭalḥata*, *Ṭalḥata*. Henceforth we shall call this interpretation the *tā'* *marbūṭah*-like *tarkīb mazjiyy*.

### 1.2.2. Compound numerals

In the case of the compound numerals (*Kitāb* II, 47.7–19), cardinals and ordinals, the semantic frame in which to interpret them is different: Compound cardinals are originally *'atf*-constructions (category *ii*), like *khamsata-ashara* originating from *khamsatun wa-asharatun*; whereas compound ordinals are originally *'idāfah*-constructions (category *iii*), like *khāmisa-ashara* originating from *khāmisu khamsata-ashara*. However, both cardinals and ordinals are syntactically interpreted alike (frame 2b), explicitly for the sake of consistency (*Kitāb* II, 47.10–11): These compounds are syntactically “one single noun” and as such not fully declinable (*ghayr mutamakkin*). On the other hand, Sībawayh is not very explicit here about the declension of these compounds. He only says that compound numerals do not take the *tanwīn* because they have already been provided with a second term.

The explicit reason why the ordinals are treated like the cardinals, although their origin are different (*'atf* and *'idāfah*) is that both are “unspecified<sup>7</sup> and can apply to any other thing” (*'idh kāna [ḥādiya-ashara] muwāfiqan la-hu [khamsata-ashara] fī 'anna-hu mubhamun yaqa'u 'alā kulli shay'in*; *Kitāb* II, 47.11), which is exactly the definition given by Sībawayh for

6. This fits the canonical theory of the *mawānī' aṣ-ṣarf* which states that whenever two factors are combined in one noun it becomes diptotic. Among the factors are for instance: the addition of the *tā'* *marbūṭah*, being a proper name, being feminine, being a foreign noun... The first explicit mention of this theory is probably found in IBN AS-SARRĀJ, *'Uṣūl* II, 80–93.

7. BAALBAKI, *The legacy of the Kitāb*, p. 229, translates *mubham* by “undefined”, whereas TROUPEAU, *Lexique-index du Kitāb de Sībawayhi* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1976), p. 42, translates it by “imprécisé”. I prefer “unspecified” because in most cases these nouns are in need of another noun that “specifies” them (*yumayyiz, yufassir*); they do not need to be “defined”.

*al-ʿasmāʿ al-mubhamah* (*Kitāb* II, 38.17). This explanation is extremely interesting, because numerals are otherwise not explicitly listed by Sībawayh with the “unspecified nouns” and are therefore not included in the reflection on their grammatical possibilities and limits<sup>8</sup>.

Since nothing is said by Sībawayh concerning the syntactic behaviour of compound numerals (frame 2b), and since they come just after the category of the proper names ending with a *tāʿ marbūṭah* (frame 2a), one could infer that they also behave according to the *tāʿ marbūṭah*-like *tarkīb mazjiyy*. However, nothing is said here. There are other nouns that Sībawayh compares to compound numerals, in terms of syntactic behaviour (frame 2b): the adverbial phrase *ḥayṣa–bayṣa* “confusion” (category *v*) (*Kitāb* II, 47.14) as well as two tribe names quoted later in the chapter, *ʿAyādī–Sabā*, and *Qālī–Qalā*, (category *i*) and the adverbial phrase *bādī–badā* “first” (category *v*) (*Kitāb* II, 50.1). He also mentions that not all Arabs nor poets pronounce these nouns the same way, indicating different underlying grammatical interpretations (*Kitāb* II, 50.1–11). Lastly, Sībawayh clearly disagrees with Yūnus who interprets the adverbial phrase *kaffah–kaffah* (category *v*; *Kitāb* II, 49.22) in the frame of compound numerals (frame 2b; *kaffata–kaffata*), whereas he prefers to interpret it in the frame of an *ʿidāfah* (frame 1; *kaffatu–kaffatin* or *kaffatu–kaffata* depending on the declension of the second term).

Since in all these cases *khamsata–ʿashara* is always the reference used by Sībawayh to interpret these compounds, it can be considered to be a syntactic frame of its own (frame 2b), different from the *tāʿ marbūṭah*-like *tarkīb mazjiyy* (frame 2a). But this is a tentative supposition that needs more investigation.

### 1.2.3. Other compounds

Among the other syntactic patterns used by Sībawayh (*Kitāb* II, 47.19–51.4) to interpret the compound nouns, are onomatopoeia (*ʿaṣwāt*; frame 2c), the proper names of the verbs (*ʿasmāʿ fiʿl*; frame 2d), quadrilaterals (frame 2e), and invariable nouns (frame 2f). We will not discuss these patterns here, since they are not relevant to the interpretation of the compound numerals.

More generally, the issue at stake is the choice between the two types of interpretation, the *tarkīb ʿidāfiyy* (frame 1) versus the *tarkīb mazjiyy* (frames 2a–g): Some grammarians chose to limit the *tarkīb mazjiyy* to adverbial and state complements (*ẓarf* and *ḥāl*, category *v*), and analyze other

8. See MOSEL, “*Die syntaktische Terminologie bei Sibawaih*” (PhD thesis, Philosophische Fakultät der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 1975), pp. 122–125 & 321–322. For a historical overview of the term *mubham*, see VERSTEEGH, *Arabic grammar and Qurʾānic exegesis in early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1993) p. 158.

compounds (proper and common nouns, categories *i* and *vii*) as *tarkīb 'idāfiyy* (*Kitāb* II, 49.12–16). This is the position of Yūnus and “some Arabs”. Sībawayh does not take position in this issue, all the more that his interpretation for the compound numerals does not fit this usage: Numerals are neither *ẓarf* nor *ḥāl*, and yet, Sībawayh interprets them as *tarkīb mazjiyy*, and not as *tarkīb 'idāfiyy*.

#### 1.2.4. The special case of “twelve”

At the very end of this chapter (*Kitāb* II, 51.4–9), Sībawayh quotes al-Khalīl's (b. Aḥmad, d. at the latest 175/791–2) interpretation of the compound cardinal *ithnā-‘ashara* (category *ii*). According to Sībawayh, al-Khalīl develops an analogy between the compensatory *nūn*<sup>9</sup> in *muslimūna* and the *tarkīb mazjiyy* of *ithnā-‘ashara*. This analogy (frame 2g) can be graphically represented as follows: *ithnā-‘ashar-a* // *muslimū-n-a*, where *-‘ashara-* has the same status (*bi-manzilah*) as the compensatory *nūn* (*-n-* in *muslimū-n-a*). As was the case for the *tā' marbūṭah*, this compensatory *nūn* is added to the noun. Both analogies are parallel, the *tā' marbūṭah*-like *tarkīb mazjiyy* (frame 2a) and the compensatory *nūn*-like *tarkīb mazjiyy* (frame 2g). However, their behaviour is quite different, since the declension is added *after* the part that is similar to a *tā' marbūṭah*, but *before* the part that is similar to the compensatory *nūn*.

As is now clear, Sībawayh presents here no perfect solution, completely consistent, that would account for the construction of all compound numerals, cardinals (category *ii*) and ordinals (category *iii*). This lack of consistency is due to the peculiar behaviour of *ithnā-‘ashara* which alone is internally modified by the declension, as well as the fact that in other compound numerals, both parts are *mabniyyah* on a *fathah*, at all cases.

#### 1.2.5. Special issues in chapter 314

Sībawayh mentions two problematic expressions (*Kitāb* II, 47.17–19) that are however widespread in the language. The first one is *al-khamsata-‘ashara*, i.e., the addition of the article to the compound cardinals (is this also true of ordinals?) Sībawayh argues that there are indeed other expressions in the language which he considers exceptions and on which no further analogy can be built, such as the expressions *iḍrib 'ayyuhum 'afḍalu* and *al-'āna*,

9. In chapter 2, (*Kitāb* I, 3.17–18; 22–23) Sībawayh defines this *nūn*, which he calls *nūn al-ithnayni wa-l-jamī'* as follows: *wa-takūnu z-zā'idatu th-thāniyatu nūnan ka-'annahā 'iwaḍun li-mā muni'a min al-ḥarakati wa-t-tanwīni*. “The second appendix is a *nūn*, as if it were a compensation for what has been forbidden [to bear] a vowel or a *tanwīn*.”

whose pertinence here is not straightforward. However, these two expressions were dealt with before, in chapter 222 (*Kitāb* I, 350–352).

The second problematic expression is the genitive annexion of a cardinal compound numeral (is this also true of ordinals?), like *khamsata-‘asharu-ka* “your fifteen”, *Sībawayh* does not tolerate it syntactically, and qualifies it as “bad use” (*lughah radi‘ah*), without giving any further explanation at this point<sup>10</sup>. This issue is dealt with again at the end of chapter 314, where *Sībawayh* quotes *al-Khalīl*’s interpretation of the special case of twelve (*Kitāb* II, 51.6–7). Here, the interdiction to annex the compound numeral fits the compensatory *nūn*-like *tarkīb mazjiyy* analytical pattern used for twelve, since, according to *al-Khalīl*, the *nūn* should be suppressed before the genitive annexion, as in *muslimū l-madīnati* “the Muslims of the city”. The only difference with the regular rule is that in the case of *ithnā-‘ashara*, if the *nūn* is suppressed (i.e., if *-‘ashara* is suppressed), then a confusion can happen (“your twelve” would become identical to “your two”), and this is the reason why “twelve” cannot be annexed (and possibly other compound numerals as well).

### 1.3. Findings in chapter 314

In order to proceed systematically and carefully I propose to summarize here the findings and consequences concerning the compound numerals that we can draw from the reading of this chapter 314 of the *Kitāb*:

**(314a)** *Sībawayh* considers that the compound cardinals are semantically *‘atf*-constructions (category *ii*) (*Kitāb* II, 47.8–9).

**(314b)** He considers that the compound ordinals are semantically *‘idāfah*-constructions (category *iii*) (*Kitāb* II, 47.9–10).

**(314c)** *Sībawayh* nevertheless interprets both cardinal and ordinal compound numerals in the same syntactic frame: “the two things that are made one noun” (the later *tarkīb mazjiyy*) (*Kitāb* II, 47.8) and this, for the sake of consistency, justifying his choice by saying that both are *‘asmā’ mubhamah* (“unspecified nouns”; *Kitāb* II, 47.10–11).

**(314d)** Like all compounds “that are made one noun” (frames 2a–g), compound numerals are not fully declinable (*ghayr mutamakkin*): They do not take the *tanwīn* of *tamkīn* (*Kitāb* II, 47.12). The explanation quoted from *Yūnus* at the beginning of the chapter is stated here anew by *Sībawayh*: since the second term of the compound is already added (*zā’idah*) to the first term, a *tanwīn* cannot be added to it (*Kitāb* II, 47.12), it would be too heavy.

10. See BAALBAKI, *The legacy of the Kitāb*, pp. 157–158, for *al-Mubarrad*’s commentary on this point elliptically dealt with in the *Kitāb*.



(314e) According to Sībawayh, al-Khalīl has “claimed” (*za‘ama*) that *ithnā-‘ashara* is different from all other compound numerals, since it is modified by declension (*Kitāb* II, 51.4–6). Al-Khalīl interprets *ithnā-‘ashara* in the frame of a *tarkīb mazjiyy*, where the second term would have the same status (*bi-manzilah*) as the compensatory *nūn* (*Kitāb* II, 51.6). We will call this interpretation the compensatory *nūn*-like *tarkīb mazjiyy* (frame 2g). Sībawayh does not express here his own view explicitly.

(314f) Sībawayh dislikes a common usage among the Arabs, the addition of the definite article to compound numerals (*al-khamsata-‘ashara*), but he admits that there are other exceptions in the language where linguistic use prevails (*Kitāb* II, 47.17–18).

(314g) Sībawayh rejects another common usage, the annexion of a compound numeral to a pronoun (*\*khamsata-‘asharu-ka*), and gives no explanation at this point (*Kitāb* II, 47.19). Later in the chapter, he quotes al-Khalīl who rejects the annexion of *ithnā-‘ashara*. According to Sībawayh, the reason given by al-Khalīl is that, since *-‘ashara* is similar to the compensatory *nūn*, it should be deleted before the annexion, just like it is deleted in *muslimūna* before the annexion. But in the case of *ithnā-‘ashara*, the deletion of *-‘ashara* would create a confusion between *ithnā[-‘ashara]* and *ithnā[-ni]* (*Kitāb* II, 51.4–8).

#### 1.4. Open issues in chapter 314

Among other questions that raised my interest in this chapter are the following: Sībawayh says (*Kitāb* II, 51.4) that al-Khalīl “claimed” (*za‘ama*) that “twelve” is not syntactically similar to “fifteen”. And then, Sībawayh quotes al-Khalīl’s analysis without opposing any argument. Rather, he seems to adopt al-Khalīl’s interpretation. Even more, he writes a few pages earlier that he trusts al-Khalīl only (*Kitāb* II, 49.21). The question is: What is exactly meant by the verb *za‘ama*? In his lexicon of the *Kitāb*’s terminology, Troupeau<sup>11</sup> translates it as “prétendre”, which supposes in French that what follows is not agreed on, or at least doubted. On the other hand, Kazimirski<sup>12</sup> is less univocal and translates it as “énoncer une opinion (vraie ou fausse)” and adds “s’emploie le plus souvent quand on rapporte les paroles des autres sans vouloir en garantir la vérité”. This implies then that Sībawayh does not want to take position. In this chapter 314, the verb *za‘ama* is used nine times, among which three times apply to al-Khalīl (*Kitāb* II, 48.22; 49.2; 51.4). In the same chapter, al-Khalīl is quoted three more times, where Sībawayh uses the verb

11. TROUPEAU, *Lexique-index...*, p. 104.

12. KAZIMIRSKI, *Dictionnaire arabe-français...*, (Boulaç: Imprimerie vice-royale égyptienne, 1875), vol. II, p. 417.

*qāla* “he said” (*Kitāb* II, 49.8; 49.21; 50.13). How can the verb *za‘ama* be used in the restrictive meaning of “to pretend” when it is used every other time to quote al-Khalīl’s opinion, he who was the only one trusted by Sībawayh? Then, what is Sībawayh’s opinion concerning the grammatical analysis of “twelve”? Why would not he want to take position in this chapter? Or does this mean that he adopts al-Khalīl’s opinion, when no reservation is expressed?

One may be surprised to see how imprecise Sībawayh is in this presentation of the compound numerals. After saying that they are compound nouns, which implies that they have the status (*bi-manzilah*) of one single noun, and are not fully declinable (*ghayr mutamakkinah*), he does not go any further concerning their syntactic behaviour: Why are they indeclinable? What is the status of the second part of the compound? Since the paragraph concerning the compound numerals — except “twelve” — comes just after the *tā’ marbūṭah*-like syntactic interpretation (frame 2a) for proper names, should we infer that this suggests the same kind of interpretation for the compound numerals? Or should the compound numerals stand for a separate syntactic frame of compound nouns (frame 2b)? According to Sībawayh, al-Khalīl “pretended” that, unlike in *khamṣata-‘ashara*, *-‘ashara* in *ithnā-‘ashara* is syntactically similar to the compensatory *nūn* in *muslimūna* (*Kitāb* II, 51.4–6). So what should *-‘ashara* in *khamṣata-‘ashara* and the other compound numerals be compared to, according to Sībawayh?

Another question lies in the frame used to describe the syntactic behaviour of compound nouns. If the compound numerals — except “twelve”, if we follow al-Khalīl — really stand for a frame of their own, what are the other words that Sībawayh classifies in this frame? He mentions a few, like *ḥayṣa-bayṣa* (*Kitāb* II, 47.14), *‘Ayādī-Sabā*, *Qālī-Qalā*, and *bādī-badā* (*Kitāb* II, 50.1). Are there other nouns? What characterizes them?

## II. Compound numerals in chapter 336

Chapter 336 is very short (*Kitāb* II, 84.1–16) and is concerned with the specific issue of adjectival derivation, i.e., forming an adjective from a noun. This gentilic adjective was later called *nisbah*, but Sībawayh confusingly calls it *‘idāfah*: He even uses the terms *‘idāfah* (for the gentilic adjective) and the terms *muḍāf* and *muḍāf ‘ilayh* (genitive annexion) in the same chapter.

### 2.1. *The annexion of a compound noun*

Although it is not obvious from the beginning of the chapter, Sībawayh clearly says at the end of this chapter that he is considering proper names only. So *Ithnā-‘ashara* and *Khamṣata-‘ashara* are here considered as proper names, which I capitalize in transliteration for the sake of clarity.

According to al-Khalīl, the general rule is that in order to form the gentile adjective, the first part of the compound should be deleted, just like the ending *tā' marbūṭah* should be deleted before adding the suffix *-iyy-* (*Kitāb* II, 84.2), as in *Ma'diyyun* and *Khamsiyyun* (*Kitāb* II, 84.4). This is very consistent with Sībawayh's *tā' marbūṭah*-like *tarkīb mazjiyy* interpretation (frame 2a) for proper names (*Kitāb* II, chapter 314: 46.18–47.7). So it is no surprise that this second part of the compound be deleted, just like the *tā' marbūṭah*. It should hence be noticed that here, *Khamsata-ʿashara*, as a proper name, is explicitly assigned to the frame of the compounds that behave like *Ṭalḥah*. This point was unclear in chapter 314, where the syntactic status of the second term of the compound numerals had not been clearly decided. However, this does not mean that it also applies to *khamsata-ʿashara* as a numeral.

Lastly, there are compound nouns that have been made “one noun” but whose pattern is not shared by the single [noun] (*mā lā yakūnu ʿalā mithālihi l-wāḥidu*) (*Kitāb* II, 84.6–9). This is the case of a compound noun like *ʿAyādī-Sabā*, because it has eight “letters”; or *shaghara-baghara* “turmoil”, because of its pattern which is not found in any single word. In this case, always according to al-Khalīl, these compounds are treated like a *muḍāf* and its *muḍāf ʿilayh* in order to build their gentile adjective (*ʿiḍāfah*): The second part is simply erased, just like the *muḍāf ʿilayh*.

As usual, some expressions do not fit the general picture and Arabs have also been reported uttering exceptional forms such as *Ḥaḍramiyy* and *ʿAbdariyy*, respectively built on *Ḥaḍra-mawt* (a compound noun) and *ʿAbdu d-dāri* (a *muḍāf* and its *muḍāf ʿilayh*). On the particular issue of the gentile adjectives built on a *muḍāf* and its *muḍāf ʿilayh*, see chapter 337 (*Kitāb* II, 84–85).

## 2.2. The gentile adjective of *Ithnā-ʿashara*

Then comes the case of *Ithnā-ʿashara*, as a proper name, whose gentile adjective is *Thanawiyy* (or *Ithniyy*). In this case, says Sībawayh, still quoting al-Khalīl, *-ʿashara* has been interpreted as the compensatory *nūn* (frame 2g) whereas it was interpreted as a *tā' marbūṭah* in *Khamsata-ʿashara* (frame 2a) (*Kitāb* II, 84.14–15). It is clear that these gentile adjectives only apply to the case when *Ithnā-ʿashara*, *Khamsata-ʿashara* and other numerals are proper names, otherwise it is not correct to build a gentile adjective on them (*Kitāb* II, 84.15–16).

## 2.3. Findings in chapter 336

The conclusions that we can draw from this chapter concerning the grammar of numerals are the following:

**(336a)** According to al-Khalīl, as quoted by Sībawayh, *-‘ashara* is interpreted as the compensatory *nūn* in the proper name *Ithnā-‘ashara* (frame 2g) and as a *tā’ marbūṭah* in the proper name *Khamsata-‘ashara* (frame 2a) (*Kitāb* II, 84.14–15).

**(336b)** Always according to al-Khalīl, as quoted by Sībawayh, no gentilic adjective can be built on a compound numeral (in order to avoid the confusion with the non compound numeral, since the second part of the compound should be erased when a gentilic adjective is formed from it) (*Kitāb* II, 84.15–16).

**(336c)** Al-Khalīl also said that if this compound numeral refers to a proper name, there is no problem to erase the second part of the compound and build a gentilic adjective (*Kitāb* II, 84.13).

#### 2.4. Open issues in chapter 336

An interesting issue that would need more investigation is that nowhere in this chapter does Sībawayh express his own view. We have seen in the previous chapters that he is quite precise in quoting his sources and distinguishing between his own views and others’. In this chapter, he never says if he agrees or not. Everything seems to be attributed to his master al-Khalīl exclusively, and with no restriction.

One of the issues that remained open at the end of chapter 314 was the interpretation of the second part of the compound numerals: Is it syntactically similar to the compensatory *nūn* in *muslimūna* (frame 2g), as is the case for *ithnā-‘ashara*, according to al-Khalīl, quoted by Sībawayh, or to a *tā’ marbūṭah*, as in *Ṭalḥah* (frame 2a)? In this chapter, it seems that al-Khalīl has partially answered the question: He considers that, in the proper names, *-‘ashara* in *Khamsata-‘ashara* is syntactically similar to a *tā’ marbūṭah*, and to the compensatory *nūn* in *Ithnā-‘ashara*.

### III. Compound numerals in chapter 412

I would like now to focus on chapter 412 (*Kitāb* II, 176–177), which is the first one to be explicitly devoted to numerals, and which is immediately followed by three other chapters also explicitly concerned with numerals. In chapter 412, Sībawayh considers the series from “three” to “nineteen”. It is extremely striking that Sībawayh does not quote any other grammarian, nor poet, unlike in the other chapters that we read so far. He clearly speaks here out of his own authority, and the imperative *i’lam ‘anna...* “know that...” is probably the best marker for this. For example, in chapter 336 (*Kitāb* II, 84.1–16) where it seemed that Sībawayh was not giving his own point of view, this imperative was nowhere to be found indeed. Even more striking is the fact

that he quotes neither a poet nor a single verse of poetry. This chapter, which concerns the morphology and the grammatical class of the numerals between “three” and “nineteen”, is thus very special for our study.

### 3.1. “Eleven” in the masculine

For “eleven”, the numeral applying to masculine nouns is *ʾaḥada-ʾashara*. Sībawayh says a bit obscurely that there is no *ʾalif*<sup>13</sup> in *-ʾashara* (*laysat fī ʾashara ʾalifun*) and that this is a “one-noun” compound, *ḥarfāni juʾilā sman wāḥidan ḍammū ʾaḥada ʾilā ʾashara* (*Kitāb* II, 176.20–21). In this construction, *ʾaḥada-* is said to have the same pattern (*bināʾ*) as in the expression *ʾaḥadun wa-ʾishrūna ʾāman* (*Kitāb* II, 176.22), whereas *-ʾashara* does not have the same *bināʾ* as when it was referring to “ten” (*Kitāb* II, 176.22–23): Its *bināʾ* has changed from *faʾalah* (in *ʾasharah*, “ten” masc) to *faʾal* (in *-ʾashara*, “-teen” masc.)

### 3.2. “Eleven” in the feminine

If “eleven” applies to a feminine noun, the numeral spells *ʾiḥdā-ʾashirata* in the dialect (*lughah*) of Tamīm, or *ʾiḥdā-ʾashrata* in the dialect of Ḥijāz (henceforth *-ʾash(i)rata*; *Kitāb* II, 176.23–24). The analysis for the two parts of this feminine compound noun, *ʾiḥdā-* and *-ʾash(i)rata*, is the same as for the masculine *ʾaḥada-* and *-ʾashara*: *ʾiḥdā-* has not changed its situation (*ḥāl*) if compared to its situation in the expression *ʾiḥdā wa-ʾishrūna sanatan* whereas *-ʾash(i)rata* (“-teen” fem.) has (*Kitāb* II, 177.2–3).

In the end, we have the following patterns: “Ten” (masc.) is *ʾasharatun*, pattern: *faʾalah*; “ten” (fem.) is *ʾashrun*, pattern: *faʾl*; “-teen” (masc.) is *-ʾashara*, pattern: *-faʾal*; “-teen” (fem.) is *-ʾash(i)rata*, pattern: *-faʾ(i)lah*. In other words, the pattern of “ten” in the masculine changes from *faʾalah* to *-faʾal* and, in the feminine, from *faʾl* to *-faʾ(i)lah* when used in compound numerals from “eleven” to “nineteen”.

### 3.3. “Twelve” in the masculine

For “twelve”, the numeral applying to masculine nouns is *ithnā-ʾashara* in the independent case and *ithnay-ʾashara* in the dependent and oblique cases (*Kitāb* II, 177.4). As was the case for *ʾaḥada-ʾashara* and *ʾiḥdā-ʾash(i)rata*, the first part of the compound has not changed its situation (*ḥāl*) if compared to its usage when alone, except that its compensatory *nūn* in *ithnā-ni* has been

13. This *ʾalif* probably refers to the pausal form *-ā*. The pausal form of *ʾaḥada-ʾashara* is *ʾaḥada-ʾashar*, not *ʾaḥada-ʾasharā*.

deleted. This, because *-‘ashara* has the same status (*bi-manzilah*) as this deleted compensatory *nūn* (frame 2g) (*Kitāb* II, 177.5). As for the first part of the compound, *ithnā-*, it bears the declension, which is not the case in *khamsata-* in the compound *khamsata-‘ashara* (*Kitāb* II, 177.5–6).

Sībawayh refers here to his chapter entitled “The declinable and the non-declinable” (*mā yanṣarifu wa-lā yanṣarifu*; *Kitāb* II, chap. 285–315, 1–56). In this chapter — or rather group of chapters — he deals only once with the elision of the compensatory *nūn* (*Kitāb* II, 18.11), saying that in the case of the dependent and oblique plural *muslimātin*, the *tā’* resembles (*‘ashbahat*) the *yā’* in the plural *muslimīna* and in the dual *rajulayni*, whereas the *tanwīn* in *muslimātin* has the same status (*bi-manzilah*) as the (compensatory) *nūn* in *muslimīna*. Thus, *muslimā-t-in* is to be analyzed like *muslim-ī-na* and *rajula-y-ni*. The consequence of this for the numeral “twelve” is that *ithnā-‘ashara* should be analyzed *ithn-ā-‘ashara* like *ithn-ā-ni*: The invariable term *-‘ashara* stands here for the ending *-ni*, or to put it in other words, it has the same status (*bi-manzilah*) as the compensatory *nūn*. Of course, the same goes for *ithnay-‘ashara* which is to be analyzed *ithna-y-‘ashara*.

### 3.4. “Twelve” in the feminine

The same analysis is done for the feminine forms of “twelve”, *ithnat-ā-‘ash(i)rata* and *ithnata-y-‘ash(i)rata*. The following alternative forms are also mentioned: *thint-ā-‘ash(i)rata* and *thinta-y-‘ash(i)rata*, so that “twelve” can take eight different forms altogether (*Kitāb* II, 177.7–8). The same analysis for the status of both parts of the compound and the ending *nūn* is also mentioned here (*Kitāb* II, 177.8–9).

As for the second part of the compound numerals, (*-‘ashara*, *-‘ash(i)rata*), Sībawayh says that its pattern (*binā’*) has changed because its situation (*ḥāl*) has changed, and that it is not rare in the language that a noun changes its *binā’* when its *ḥāl* changes. What is at stake here is that this second part of the compound does not have the same status (*bi-manzilah*) as a substantive (*ism*) anymore, as was the case when it meant “ten”, but to the compensatory *nūn* in *ithn-ā-ni*. To make his point understood, Sībawayh quotes here other examples where a change of situation (*ḥāl*), from an *ism* to an *‘idāfah* (understand: *nisbah*), goes along with a change of pattern (*binā’*), from *fu‘ul* to *fa‘aliyy* as in *‘ufuq* and *‘afaqiyy*, and from *fa‘ilah* to *fa‘aliyy* as in *Zabīnah* and *Zabāniyy* (*Kitāb* II, 177.11–13).

### 3.5. “Thirteen” to “nineteen”

Sībawayh explains then that the analysis for the compound numerals “eleven” and “twelve” (frame 2g) is also true of all compound numerals,

from “thirteen” to “nineteen”, both in the masculine and the feminine (*Kitāb* II, 177.13–18). He also notes here that all numerals from “three” to “nineteen” have different forms in the masculine and the feminine (*Kitāb* II, 177.18–19).

### 3.6. Sībawayh's own interpretation

What is very striking here is that Sībawayh has chosen not to follow al-Khalīl, whose analysis of compound numerals was quoted in the previous chapters. In chapter 314, it was clear that for Sībawayh all compound numerals are “one-word” compounds, and not of the “*muḍāf* and *muḍāf 'ilayh*”-type (see finding 314c) but a disagreement could be felt between al-Khalīl and Sībawayh, as to the syntactic status of the second part of the compound numerals, (see finding 336a and al-Khalīl's different interpretations for –*ashara* in the proper names *Ithnā-‘ashara* and *Khamsata-‘ashara*). Not only Sībawayh was evasive on this issue, but he even quoted al-Khalīl without discussing him in chapter 336. Here in chapter 412, Sībawayh is very clear on this point: the second part in *all* compound numerals is similar to the compensatory *nūn* in *muslimūna* (frame 2g), not of the *tā' marbūṭah* in *Talḥah* (frame 2a) (*Kitāb* II, 177.13–18).

The difference between Sībawayh and al-Khalīl's interpretation of the lexical category of the second part of the compound numerals lies in that al-Khalīl interprets –*ashara* and –*ash(i)rata* in the *tā' marbūṭah*-like frame for all compound numerals except *ithnā-‘ashara* and *ithnatā-‘ash(i)rata*, which he interprets in the compensatory *nūn*-like frame; whereas Sībawayh interprets all compound numerals in the compensatory *nūn*-like frame.

In other words, there is no separate frame 2b. For Sībawayh, all compound numerals — and a small number of other compounds — behave according to frame 2g. As for the compound numerals used as proper names, we only have al-Khalīl's interpretation, in chapter 336.

### 3.7. Findings in chapter 412

The conclusions that we can draw from this chapter concerning the grammar of numerals are the following:

**(412a)** From “eleven” to “nineteen”, numerals are compound nouns of the shape “*n*-teen”, “*n*” representing the numeral from “one” to “nine”. These compound nouns are to be considered as “one noun” (*humā ḥarfāni ju'ilā sman wāḥidan*; *Kitāb* II, 176.21; 177.2).

**(412b)** The first part of the compound is a substantive. Its situation (*ḥāl*) and pattern (*binā'*) are the same whether this numeral is isolated (from “one”

to “nine”) or if it is the first term of the “-teen” compound (from “one-teen” to “nine-teen”) (*Kitāb* II, 177.13–18).

(412c) The second part of the compound has a different pattern (*binā`*) than the isolated numeral “ten”, both before a masculine and a feminine, supposedly indicating a change of situation (*ḥāl*) if compared with its isolated form (*Kitāb* II, 177.11–13).

(412d) For “twelve”, the compensatory *nūn* of *ithnāni* “two” is dropped before “-teen”, exactly as for an annexion. Sībawayh explains this by saying that the second term of the compound has the same status (*bi-manzilah*) as this compensatory *nūn* (*Kitāb* II, 177.3–6).

(412e) The analysis for “twelve” is valid for the other compounds “eleven” to “nineteen” (*Kitāb* II, 177.13–18), both masculine and feminine. The compound makes up one single substantive, where the first part of the compound is the substantive itself, and the second part of the compound is similar to the compensatory *nūn* in *ithn-ā-ni* (frame 2g), i.e. not a full right substantive anymore.

(412f) “Twelve” is the only compound numeral to be modified by declension: *ithnā-‘ashara* (feminine *ithnatā-‘ash(i)rata* or *thintā-‘ash(i)rata*) in the independent case and *ithnay-‘ashara* (feminine *ithnatay-‘ash(i)rata* or *thintay-‘ash(i)rata*) in the dependent and oblique cases (*Kitāb* II, 177.4, 7–8), all other compound numerals bearing an invariable *fathāh* on both parts (*Kitāb* II, chapter 413: 178.7).

### 3.8. Open issues in chapter 412

In chapter 314 (see finding 314f) Sībawayh disliked the common usage, among the Arabs, to add the definite article to compound numerals, as in (*al-khamsata-‘ashara*). Why should this be a problem, when one considers with him, in this chapter 412, that the second part of the compound numerals is syntactically similar to the compensatory *nūn* in *muslimūna* and *ithnāni*? There is no difficulty to add the article *al-* to nouns carrying this compensatory *nūn*, as in *al-muslimūna* and *al-muslimāni*. It is only if the word is defined by the genitive annexion that this *nūn* falls down as in: *muslimū al-madīnati* and *muslimā al-madīnati*. Why should there be a problem to accept expressions like *al-khamsata-‘ashar-a* and *al-khāmisa-‘ashar-a*, interpreted like *al-muslimū-n-a*? The answer to this issue lies in the fact that a similarity between two terms is not a strict equivalence and two similar phenomena do not agree in everything. For example, the compensatory *nūn* and *-‘ashara* are comparable but not strictly equivalent. In other words, there is an analogy between them, not an equivalence<sup>14</sup>.

14. See BAALBAKI, *The legacy of the Kitāb*, pp. 47–56, for an in-depth account of the different meanings of *qiyās* “analogy” in the *Kitāb*, from a mere awareness of a similarity



#### IV. The art of reading the *Kitāb*

It is not easy to read Sībawayh's *Kitāb* because it is quite different from what we would call a "grammar book". Behind these issues, there is always a real danger to insert one's own logic and consistency into the text, and indeed the major risk is to systematize Sībawayh's thought and to fill the gaps in his presentation. As consistently pointed out and demonstrated by Baalbaki<sup>15</sup> Sībawayh's *Kitāb* is a remarkably coherent opus. However, its coherence is not immediately obvious to the modern reader and this limited study would like to illustrate this fact.

##### 4.1. *The status of the text*

As for the status of the text itself, it is clear in more than one case that it presents a discussion rather than results. Sībawayh does not always agree with every grammarian he quotes in his *Kitāb*, and sometimes it is only because a different view is expressed later in the text, with no grammarian quoted, that one understands that here only he expresses his own view. Typically, the expression *I'lam 'anna...* ("Know that...") at the beginning of a sentence is the sign that Sībawayh expresses his own view. At least in some chapters, the *Kitāb* seems to be more a textbook of grammatical argumentation than a textbook of grammar itself.

The case of "twelve" and the interpretation of the second part of the compound numerals is emblematic of this dialectical grammar: In chapter 314, Sībawayh quotes al-Khalīl's interpretation of *ithnā-ʿashara* and does not take position himself (findings 314e & g). Later, in chapter 336, Sībawayh quotes again al-Khalīl's interpretation and still does not express his own position (finding 336a). Only in chapter 412 does he contradict al-Khalīl's views on the status of *-ʿashara* in the compound numerals (finding 412e) and states his own interpretation, using the *I'lam 'anna...* expression and quoting no other grammarian. Can we really think that chapter 412 has the same status as chapters 314 and 336, to mention only these? And how to read other chapters of the *Kitāb*, if one cannot assume that what is written is Sībawayh's final position? After reading the three chapters presented here, one can only remember to pay a very acute attention at the authorities quoted and to the expression *I'lam 'anna...* as a textual marker of Sībawayh's own position.

between two elements to an active theoretical activity of the grammarian. See also CARTER, "Analogical and syllogistic reasoning in grammar and law", *Islam: Essays on scripture, thought and society*, ed. P.G. Riddell and T. Street (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 104–112.

15. See BAALBAKI, "Introduction: The early Islamic grammatical tradition", *The early Islamic grammatical tradition*, ed. R. Baalbaki (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) pp. xxix–xxx; and *The legacy of the Kitāb*, pp. 226–228.

4.2. *The logic at stake*

Sībawayh's logic may be puzzling because he tries to do two opposite things at the same time: On the one hand, he proceeds through successive analogies, where "something" of the initial "grammatical strength" is lost in the process; whereas on the other hand he aims at a global consistency of grammatical phenomena. These two logics are incompatible because an analogy is not an equivalence, and since something is lost in the analogy, the resulting grammatical rule does not apply fully to the compared phenomenon and it loses part of its consistency: All the rules that apply to the first element in the analogy do not apply to the second element, and what is lost in the process is not always obvious.

A simple example of this is given in the problem of the addition of the article to the compound numerals: Sībawayh draws an analogy between compound numerals and duals, assimilating syntactically *-ʿashara* in *ithnā-ʿashara* to the compensatory *nūn* in *ithnāni* (finding 412d). This solution accounts for the declension of *ithnā-* in the middle of the compound. But when it comes to the addition of the definite article *al-*, it does not work any more: It is correct to say *al-ithnāni* but Sībawayh disapproves of the expression *al-ithnā-ʿashara* (finding 314f). What was gained through analogy is lost in terms of consistency. In other words, *-ʿashara* is comparable to the compensatory *nūn*, but also differs from it in some aspects.

A more technical example lies in the question of the invariability of both parts of all compound numerals, except "twelve". Normally, the addition of the compensatory *nūn* does not prevent the noun from receiving the declension, which is added before the *nūn*. Analogically, this works perfectly with "twelve", interpreted in the compensatory *nūn*-like frame: Compare *ithnā-ʿashara* with *ithnā-ni* (independent case) and *ithnāy-ʿashara* with *ithnāy-ni* (dependant and oblique cases). But regarding the other compound numerals, this analogy does not work any more because the first part of the compound is always *mabniyy* on a *fathah* as in "fifteen", *khamsat-a-ʿashara* in all three cases (*Kitāb* II, chapter 413: 178.7). Here, consistency is lost, and al-Khalīl has a point when he "pretends" that "twelve" does not behave like the other compound numerals (see finding 314e). However, Sībawayh does his best to interpret all compound numerals in one same compensatory *nūn*-like analogical frame (see finding 412e), instead of following al-Khalīl who chooses two different frames, namely the *tā' marbūṭah*-like frame and the compensatory *nūn*-like frame (see finding 336a). The first solution accounts for the invariable *fathah* that precedes *-ʿashara* and the second solution accounts for the inner declension. In the end, both solutions are interesting, but none is completely consistent because none can be applied satisfactorily to all compound numerals alike.

To sum the whole process up, –‘ashara is “like” *nūn al-ithnayni wa-l-jamī‘* (aka, the compensatory *nūn*) but not everything that applies to *nūn al-ithnayni wa-l-jamī‘* applies to –‘ashara, and *nūn al-ithnayni wa-l-jamī‘* itself is “like” the *tanwīn*, but not everything that applies to the *tanwīn* applies to *nūn al-ithnayni wa-l-jamī‘*, and what is lost at each step can only be deduced by the reader. In these analogies, Sībawayh presents his own interpretation along with other grammarians’ interpretations, so that sometimes the modern reader has the impression that there are inconsistencies and contradictions in his presentation.

It is only by an acute attention to both the authorities quoted and to the successive analogies that the modern reader can avoid misunderstandings and over interpretations of the text of the *Kitāb*.

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