Constituent questions in Palestinian Arabic

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**CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS IN PALESTINIAN ARABIC**

1. **TWO STRATEGIES FOR WH-QUESTION FORMATION**

Like several other dialects of Arabic, Palestinian employs two strategies for the formation of wh-interrogatives. I argue that the first is familiar from well-studied languages such as English and involves cyclic movement of a wh-operator to Comp. As such, it presents no novel features and I put it aside after a brief discussion.

The bulk of the paper is devoted to a study of the second strategy. This strategy is more intriguing in that it appears to lack some of the hallmarks of syntactic wh-movement. I argue, however, that it is not an LF-movement strategy and indeed does involve movement of a wh-element in overt syntax, albeit not from the D-structure position of its corresponding variable.

In essence, I argue that this strategy of constituent interrogation should be analyzed at D-structure as a copular construction of which the subject is the wh-phrase and the predicate, a free relative clause. I attempt to substantiate the claim that the free relative is a nominal predicate, a definite description and hence the clause in which it appears as a predicate is a statement of identity. Between D-structure and S-structure, the wh-operator - the subject of predication - is moved to Comp, as diagrammed in (1).
2. CLASS I INTERROGATIVES

In the first strategy of constituent question formation, illustrated in (2a-d), the wh-word appears in clause-initial position and a gap marks the position of the variable bound by the wh-expression.

(2) a. miin, l-?asad ?akal e1 mbaarih?
   who the-lion ate yesterday
   'Who did the lion eat yesterday?'

b. [?anii bint]; l-?asad ?akal e1 mbaarih?
   which girl the-lion ate yesterday
   'Which girl did the lion eat yesterday?'

c. suu; ?inti katabti e1 mbaarih?
   what you(F) wrote yesterday
   'What did you write yesterday?'

d. [la-miin]; ?inti ba'athi maktuub e1 mbaarih?
   to-whom you(F) sent letter yesterday
   'To whom did you send a letter yesterday?'

Indirect questions can also be formed by means of this strategy, as in (3).

(3) ma- ?irift i[l-a-miin]; ?inti ba'athi maktuub e1 mbaarih?
   NEG (I) knew to-whom you(F) sent letter yesterday
   'I didn’t know to whom you sent a letter yesterday.'

Moreover, this strategy is unbounded, in that a wh-expression can bind a variable located an unlimited number of clauses down, as demonstrated by (4).

(4) [la-miin]; Mona qaalat ?innu Mary fakkarat ?innu Faatme ba'athi to-whom Mona said that Mary thought that Faatme sent maktuub e1 mbaarih?
   letter yesterday
   'To whom did Mona say that Mary thought that Faatme sent a letter yesterday?'

Finally, Class I interrogatives obey Subjacency, as indicated by the ungrammaticality of (5), which illustrates a violation of the Complex NP Constraint.

(5) *[?anii bint]; ?ifti l-?asad ?illi ?akal e2?
   which girl (you) saw the-lion that ate?
   'Which girl did you see the lion that ate?'

The most straightforward way of accounting for these facts is to assume that syntactic wh-movement is at work in Palestinian, fronting a wh-element to Comp in a successive cyclic fashion.

3. CLASS II INTERROGATIVES - DESCRIPTION

The second strategy employed in the formation of constituent questions in Palestinian differs in a number of respects from the one described above. First, the fronted wh-element is followed by the complementizer (?)illi. Thus, compare the examples in (2a-c) with those in (6a-c).

(6) a. miin, ?illi l-?asad ?akal -ha1 mbaarih?
   who the-lion ate -her yesterday
   'Who did the lion eat yesterday?'

b. [?anii bint]; ?illi l-?asad ?akal -ha1 mbaarih?
   which girl the-lion ate -her yesterday
   'Which girl did the lion eat yesterday?'

c. suu; ?illi ?inti katabti -i mbaarih?
   what you(F) wrote -it yesterday
   'What did you write yesterday?'

A second difference between (2a-c) and (6a-c) can be immediately discerned. In the former sentences, the wh-word is associated with an empty category, in the
latter, with a resumptive pronoun. Indeed, an empty category is unacceptable in (6a-c), as shown by comparing (6a) with (7).1

(7) *min ?illi l-?asad ?akal e mbaarih?
    who that the-lion ate yesterday
    ‘Who did the lion eat yesterday?’

Third, questioning into an island is fully acceptable in this brand of questions. Contrast the ungrammatical (5) with the fully acceptable (8) below.

    which girl that (you) saw the-lion that ate -her
    ‘Which girl did you see the lion that ate?’

Fourth, Class II interrogatives are restricted to nominal wh-expressions, as noted originally for Egyptian Arabic by Wahba (1984). Adverbial phrases and PPs can only be questioned by means of a Class I interrogative, that is, by the movement strategy described in §2. Consider the fact that the Class II equivalent to (2d) above, where the wh-expression is a (pied-piped) PP, is ungrammatical, as shown in (9).

(9) *la-min ?illi inti ba-afoi maktuub?
    to-whom that you sent letter
    ‘To whom did you send a letter?’

This difference between the two strategies of question formation is further exemplified by the contrasts between the (a) and (b) sentences in (10)-(12), in which the wh-expressions are adjuncts or adverbials.

(10) a. winta katabti l-maktuub?
    when (you) wrote the-letter
    ‘When did you write the letter?’

b. *winta ?illi katabti l-maktuub?
    when that (you) wrote the-letter
    ‘When did you write the letter?’

(11) a. kiif fabasti s-?sayyara?
    how (you) examined the-car
    ‘How did you examine the car?’

b. *kiif ?illi fabasti s-?sayyara?
    how that (you) examined the-car
    ‘How did you examine the car?’

This difference between the two strategies of question formation is further exemplified by the contrasts between the (a) and (b) sentences in (10)-(12), in which the wh-expressions are adjuncts or adverbials.

(12) a. ween katabti l-maktuub?
    where (you) wrote the-letter
    ‘Where did you write the letter?’

b. *ween ?illi katabti l-maktuub?
    where that (you) wrote the-letter
    ‘Where did you write the letter?’

Note, finally, that Class II interrogatives may appear as embedded questions and can express an unbounded dependency. These properties are illustrated by (13) and (14) and are shared by the two strategies of question formation in Palestinian.

(13) ma- s- [?aay maktuub]; ?illi Mona ba’fat -o la-Mary.
    NEG (1) knew NEG which letter that Mona sent -it to-Mary
    ‘I didn’t know which letter Mona sent it to Mary.’

(14) [?aay maktuub]; ?illi Mona qaalat ?innu Mary fakkarat ?innu Faatme
    which letter that Mona said that Mary thought that Faatme
    ba’fat -o la-Mhemmad?
    sent -it to-Mhemmad
    ‘Which letter did Mona say that Mary thought that Faatme sent it to
    Mhemmad?’

The syntactic properties of the two strategies of question formation in Palestinian Arabic are recapitulated in (15) below.

(15) | Class I | Class II |
    | interrogatives | interrogatives |
    | Unbounded dependency | yes | yes |
    | Used to form matrix questions | yes | yes |
    | Used to form indirect questions | yes | trace |
    | Type of variable | resumptive pronoun | no |
    | Constrained by Subjacency | yes | no |
    | Compatible with all types of wh-expressions | yes | no, only with nominal |

3.1. The interpretation of Class II interrogatives

Although the two interrogation strategies have the same truth values, they differ in presupposition. This is brought out clearly in the contrast in (16a, b) below: (16b) presupposes that someone actually solved the problem; (16a) implies no such presupposition.
A further difference in presuppositions is brought out by consideration of the following paradigm from Moroccan Arabic, which resembles Palestinian in utilizing the same two strategies for the formation of wh-interrogatives. Under the first strategy, the verb of the interrogative clause can only bear default third person masculine singular agreement. Even when the wh-word is interpreted as feminine or plural, the verb cannot be inflected for these features, as shown by the contrast in (17a-b).

\[\begin{align*}
(17) \text{a.} & \quad \text{škun mša?} \\
& \quad \text{who left(3MS)} \\
& \quad \text{‘Who left?’} \\
\text{b.} & \quad *\text{škun mšat/ mšaw?} \\
& \quad \text{who left(3FS) left(3MPL)} \\
& \quad \text{‘Who left?’}
\end{align*}\]

Under the second strategy, however, the verb may be inflected for all persons and numbers, as shown in (18).

\[\begin{align*}
(18) \text{škun lii mša/ mšat/ mšaw?} \\
& \quad \text{who that left(3MS) left(3FS) left(3MPL)} \\
& \quad \text{‘Who left?’}
\end{align*}\]

While the agreement specification on the verb in (17a), namely [3MS], is a default one, the third person singular masculine features on the verb in (18) denote a masculine third person and are not default or non-person features (viz. Benveniste (1966), Shlonsky (1987) ch.5.).

The question in (18) asks for the identity of the person or persons who are presumed or presupposed to have left. The number and gender specification establishes that identity grammatically. The question in (17a), on the other hand, simply asks who left and does not presuppose that anyone actually did. (See Ouhalla, (this volume,) for a brief discussion of Moroccan Arabic interrogatives.)

4. CLASS II INTERROGATIVES - ANALYSIS

If the first strategy for question formation is best analyzed as a movement strategy, Class II interrogatives seem to manifest the hallmarks of a non-movement strategy. In particular, their insensitivity to Subjacency and the occurrence of resumptive pronouns in the site of interrogation strongly suggest that no movement occurs from e.g., the direct object position marked by the resumptive pronoun in (6). The alternative view, namely, that this class of questions is derived by movement, would require the introduction of non-trivial assumptions in order to plausibly account for the insensitivity to Island conditions and the occurrence of resumptive pronouns. (But see Aoun & Bennamoun (1998) on resumptive pronouns in Arabic left-dislocation structures.)

Pursuing the idea that (6a-c) are not derived by wh-movement leads us to pose the following questions:

a. What accounts for the occurrence of the complementizer ?illi?

b. What accounts for the distribution of the resumptive pronouns?

c. What explains the restriction of Class II interrogatives to nominal expressions?

d. What accounts for the ‘presuppositional force’ of the clause containing the variable?

4.1. The structure of the ?illi-Phrase

My initial claim is that ?illi is a C0 element, that is, it heads CP. ?illi typically appears in the Comp position of relative clauses, as shown by the restrictive and free relative clauses in (19a, b), where a resumptive pronoun is obligatory just as in the interrogative (6a) (see Shlonsky (1992) for detailed discussion of ?illi in restrictive relative clauses).

\[\begin{align*}
(19) \text{a.} & \quad \text{haay l-binot ?illi l-asad ?akal *(ha) mbaaril) ..} \\
& \quad \text{this the-girl thal the-lion ate -ber yesterday} \\
& \quad \text{‘This is the girl thal lion ate yesterday.’} \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{l-jnuud darabu ?illi ḥabasu -u.} \\
& \quad \text{the-army hit that (they) arrested -him} \\
& \quad \text{‘The army beat up who they arrested.’}
\end{align*}\]

?illi differs from the subordinating complementizer in Palestinian, the formative ?innu in e.g., (4) and (14) above. The feature system developed by Rizzi (1990) for classifying complementizers can be usefully deployed to characterize this difference: ?innu is a [-PREDICATIONAL] C0 while ?illi is [+PREDICATIONAL]. Since maximal projections inherit features from their heads, it can be concluded that...
the CP headed by ʿilli is a predicate in the relative clauses in (19a, b) as well as in the example of the interrogative in (6a-c).

If the CP headed by ʿilli is a predicate, it must be predicated of something, it must have a subject. In the restrictive relative in (19a), the subject of predication is the relative head ʿl-binaṭ 'the girl'. As for the free relative in (19b), suppose that the subject of predication is a null head, as originally proposed in Groos and van Riemsdijk (1981), more specifically a null pronominal (Grosu (1989), Harbert (1992), Sufier (1984), among others). The structure I have in mind for (19b) is diagrammed in (20), which incorporates the additional assumption that a null operator appears in Spec,C. Following the works cited above, I take the Pro head of the relative clause in (20) to constitute the subject for the CP predicate headed by ʿilli.

(20)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{DP} \\
\text{C} \\
\text{IP} \\
\hline
\text{1-jnuud ʿdarabu Pro, operator ʿilli habsu-u (they) arrested-him}
\end{array}
\]

With this analysis of relative ʿilli in mind, let us reconsider its role in constituent questions. I think the simplest hypothesis to make is that the CP headed by ʿilli in e.g., (6a-c), is also a relative clause.

Support for treating the ʿilli-phrase in (6a-c) as a relative clause comes from a consideration of the distribution of resumptive pronouns.

### 4.2. The distribution of resumptive pronouns in ʿilli-Phrases

Putting aside some minor complications, the generalization which characterizes the distribution of resumptive pronouns in relative clauses is the following: They are obligatory in all but the highest position of the relative clause, where a gap must appear. I exemplify this in (21a, b)-(22a, b), contrasting object relatives, which require a resumptive pronoun, with subject relatives, which disallow them ((21a) = (19a)).

The highest subject restriction (HSR), as McCloskey (1990) termed the pattern of distribution of resumptive pronouns illustrated in (21)-(22), is explained in Shlonsky (1992) in the following terms. It is argued that the complementizer ʿilli is endowed with agreement features which must be licensed by coindexation with its specifier. Thus, ʿilli determines its specifier as an A-position and movement to Spec, ʿilli takes the form of A-movement. It is only the highest subject which can A-move to Spec, ʿilli without violating the condition of relativized minimality (Rizzi (1990) (or the specified subject constraint of Chomsky (1973) and later work)). Movement from all other A-positions to Spec, ʿilli gives rise to a relativized minimality effect, since it crosses over the clausal subject in Spec, I. When wh-movement, the UG-preferred option is unavailable, a resumptive pronoun is inserted in the variable position and an operator in Spec, ʿilli. Thus, it is concluded, grammars prefer wh-movement and utilize the resumptive strategy as a last resort, when movement is unavailable.

Two related consequences to this line of analysis are worth mentioning. First, there is no resumptive strategy per se but rather a last resort manoeuvre. Second, a complementizer such as ʿilli does not in any sense select for resumptive pronouns since if it did the asymmetry between highest subjects and other positions could not be explained.

Note, now, that the HSR is observed in Class II interrogatives. The pattern in (23a, b)-(24a, b) is identical to the one manifested by (21)-(22), suggesting that the CP headed by ʿilli has the same properties in both relatives and Class II interrogatives.
Recall that Class II interrogatives can only be used in conjunction with a nominal wh-expression: Pied-piped PPs and adjunct wh-expressions cannot avail themselves of this strategy. One might argue that the ungrammaticality of the (b) sentences in (12a, b) is due to the absence of suitable pronominal forms to resume the position of the variable in case it is a PP or an adjunct. This view is not tenable, I believe, because there is no sense in which ʔill/i is intrinsically tied to the occurrence of resumptive pronouns, as I have tried to show.

Since ʔill/i determines its specifier position as an A position and an agreement relationship is established between ʔill/i and the element occupying its Spec position, it follows that only A elements which can enter into an agreement relationship may occupy that position. PPs and adjuncts do not bear φ-features and are hence barred from Spec,C, when C is filled with ʔill/i.5

This conclusion holds not only if the wh-expression is itself in Spec,C, but also if the wh-expression does not occupy Spec,C, but is coindexed with a null operator in that position. I now turn to some arguments designed to establish precisely this last point.

4.3. The position of the wh expression in Class II interrogatives

Consider more closely the example in (24b), the one with a gap in the highest subject position. Its presence should be interpreted to mean that movement occurs from Spec,l to Spec,C. If this is so, then it is not the case that Class II interrogatives should be characterized as a 'non-movement' strategy.

We have seen that ʔill/i-headed relative clauses - contrary to the claim in the opening paragraph of §4 - do not manifest a generalized 'resumptive strategy'. Rather, the distribution of resumptive pronouns is driven by last resort considerations. The same reasoning must apply to Class II interrogatives: They incur movement from the highest subject position because it is only from that position that movement can be licitly launched. In all other positions, a resumptive pronoun appears.

The question which now arises concerns the nature of the moved element. If we push the analogy between Class II interrogatives and relative clauses, we are led to say that it is not the wh-expression itself which is moved (it is not the relative head which undergoes movement in relative clauses), but rather a null operator.

If Spec,C is filled by a (null) operator in Class II interrogatives, then it follows that the wh-expression itself is not in Spec,C. Where is it?

Consider the fact that a copula (more precisely, the pronoun which appears in lieu of a copula, glossed PRON, see §4.6) occurs in a position between the wh-expression and ʔill/i in Class II interrogatives. (25a, b) are free variants of (23a) and (24b). (See Ouhalla & Shlonsky and Greenberg (this volume.).)

(25) a. miin, ʔilli ʔakal –ha, mbaarîh?
   who that the-lion ate -her yesterday
   'Who did the lion eat yesterday?'

b. *miin, ʔilli ʔakal e, mbaarîh?
   who that the-lion ate yesterday
   'Who did the lion eat yesterday?'

(26) a. *miin hî ʔakal mbaarîh?
   who Pron the-lion ate yesterday
   'Who did the lion eat yesterday?'

b. *miin hî ʔakal mbaarîh?
   who Pron the-lion ate yesterday
   'Who ate the lion yesterday.'

The occurrence of Pron to the right of the wh-expression is completely excluded in a Class I interrogative, as shown by the unacceptability of (26a, b).
interrogatives is external to CP. I come back to discussing the actual position of the wh-expression in §4.4.

Furthermore, there is robust evidence that lexical elements, e.g., overt operators, may never occupy Spec,C when C is filled by ?illi. This evidence can be obtained from a comparison of two types of free relative structures available in Palestinian Arabic.

4.3.1. Free relatives in Palestinian
Alongside the free relative structure illustrated in (19b) and schematically represented in (20), Palestinian grammar is endowed with another free relative construction, illustrated in (27a, b). Let us call it the ma construction, since it manifests the complementizer ma (The homophony of the complementizer ma and the negative head ma is irrelevant for this discussion. See Ouhalla (this volume.).

(27) a. ma ‘imitl -§ šuu ma ?inti ‘imitl.
   NEG (I) did -NEG what that you did
   ‘I didn’t do what you did.’

b. miin ma biddu yiji, yiji.
   who that wants come come
   Whoever wants to come, let him come.’

In (27a, b), ma is obligatorily preceded by lexical wh-expressions such as šuu ‘what’ or miin ‘who’. I take the structure of e.g., (27a) to be as in (28).

(28)  
```
         DP
        /   \  
       DP   CP
      /     \  
     DP    C’
    /       |
   C   IP
  /   |
 Pro, šuu ma ?inti ‘imitl
  what that you did
```

There is every reason to believe that ma-relatives are derived by movement: They obey Subjacency (29a) and resumptive pronouns cannot appear in direct object position, (29b). In both respects, they differ from ?illi-relatives.

Moreover, ma-free relatives admit adjunct wh-phrases to their left while ?illi-free relatives do not, as we have seen. This contrast is illustrated in (30a, b) and (31a, b). Recall that interrogatives formed with ?illi-phrases differ from Class I wh-questions precisely in the same way, (cf. (10a, b)-(12a, b) above.)

(30) a. ṭaḥ ṭaḥji winta ma ?inti btiiji.
   will arrive(IS) when that you arrive.
   ‘I will arrive when(ever) you arrive.’

   will arrive(IS) when that you arrive.
   ‘I will arrive when(ever) you arrive.’

(31) a. biddi ṭasaafir ween ma ?inti bitqulii -li.
   will(IS) travel(IS) where that you tell -me
   ‘I will travel where(ever) you tell me.’

   will(IS) travel(IS) where that you tell -me
   ‘I will travel where(ever) you tell me.’

Yet there is a fourth sense in which the two constructions differ. A ma-free relative, such as the one in (27a), is preceded by a lexical wh-expression (šuu ‘what’). An ?illi-free relative, such as (19b), is not preceded by an overt wh-expression. The sentences in (32a, b) show that ?illi-free relatives cannot contain an overt wh-expression while those formed with ma must contain one.

   NEG (I) did -NEG what that you did -it
   ‘I didn’t do what you did.’

   NEG (I) did -NEG that you did
   ‘I didn’t do what you did.’
Recall that there is no restriction on the occurrence of a wh-word linearly preceding "illi. Indeed, that is precisely what characterizes Class II interrogatives. Rather, the restriction is that an overt wh-word may not appear in Spec,C, when C0 = "illi.\(^6\)

The appearance of Pron in a position in-between the wh-expression and the complementizer coupled with the observation that free relatives formed with "illi do not admit an overt wh-expression in Spec,C demonstrate that the wh-expression in strategy II interrogatives occupies a position external to CP.

4.4. The structure of Strategy II interrogatives

In this section, I argue in favor of the hypothesis that Class II interrogatives should be minimally represented as in (33). I take the wh-expression to be a a clausal subject (moved perhaps to Spec,I from a position internal to the predicate phrase) and the CP headed by "illi to be a predicate nominal.

\[(33) \)  

\[
\text{wh expression} \quad \text{Pro} \quad \text{Op.} \quad \text{illi}
\]

The proposed structure of Class II interrogatives suggests a resemblance with sentences containing non-verbal predicates of the sort illustrated in (34a, b). (I henceforth refer to these as nominal sentences, the traditional term.)

\begin{enumerate}
\item Faatme ra\^ist 1-baladiye. Faatme that head the-municipality 'Faatme is the Mayor.'
\item Mhemmad \^awlil. Mhemmad that tall 'Mhemmad is tall.'
\item \^axuu-y bi-t-taxt. brother-my in-the-bed 'My brother is in bed.'
\end{enumerate}

Predictably, Palestinian has well-formed sentences in which the predicate is a free relative, a DP. The difference between the sentences in (35a, b) and Class II interrogatives is simply that the subject in (35a, b) is not a wh-expression.

\begin{enumerate}
\item Faatme ?illi ra\^ist 1-baladiye. Faatme that head the-municipality 'Faatme is (the one who is) the Mayor.'
\item Mhemmad ?illi \^awlil. Mhemmad that tall 'Mhemmad is (the one who is) tall.'
\end{enumerate}

Let us reconsider (33), the proposed structure for Class II interrogatives. As it stands, it cannot be an appropriate S-structure representation for the following reason: Palestinian, like English, is a language where wh-expressions must appear in Comp at S-structure. When a wh-expression is unmoved, the sentence containing it can only be interpreted as an echo question with the wh-word contrastively stressed, as in (36).

\[(36) \)  

\[
\text{darabti MIIN?} \quad \text{hit(2MS) WHO} \quad \text{You hit WHO?}
\]

Class II interrogatives, however, have the same pattern of intonation as Class I interrogatives and are not interpreted echoically. It must be the case, then, that the wh-expression in (33) is not in IP but in CP at S-structure. That is to say, a more appropriate S-structure representation for a Class II interrogative is as in (37).
We are thus led to the conclusion that wh-movement does occur in a Class II interrogative, though from the D-structure subject position of the nominal sentence and not from a position internal to the DP predicate.

There is now a straightforward prediction that should be tested. A Class II interrogative is expected to respect familiar conditions on long subject extraction, namely, Subjacency and the ECP.

### 4.5. Long extraction in Class II interrogatives

The following sentences are ungrammatical. They both involve extraction of the wh-expression miin ‘who’ from inside a wh-island.

(38) a. *miin, ma- ‘irift -š weenta (hu) ?illi l-?asad who NEG (you) knew NEG how (PRON) that the-lion ?akal -haʔ? ate -her
   ‘Who didn’t you know how the lion ate?’

b. *miin, ma- ‘irift -š weenta (hu) ?illi l-?asad who NEG (you) knew NEG how (PRON) that the-lion ?akal -haʔ? ate -her
   ‘Who didn’t you know how the lion ate?’

The relevant structure to consider is schematized in (39).

(39) [CP who,.....[CP how/when [IP ρ...]]]

Extraction of miin leaves a trace in subject position: This non properly-governed trace is separated from its antecedent by the wh-expressions ‘how’/‘when’. The unacceptability of the sentences in (38a, b) is due to an ECP violation on the part of the subject trace.

To summarize, I initially assumed that Class II interogatives did not involve movement but closer inspection led me to modify this view. While standard diagnostics show that no movement occurs from a position inside the free relative ?illi-phrase, those same diagnostics and others, strongly indicate that movement does occur from the base position of the wh-phrase to Comp.

### 4.6. Pron and the presuppositional force of a the ?illi-headed CP

Recall that the wh expression in a Class II interrogative can be separated from the ?illi-headed CP by Pron. To reiterate, Pron is homophous with the third person pronoun (the singular feminine pronoun in (25a, b), repeated below.

(25) a. miin, (hi) ?illi l-?asad ?akal -haʔ? mbaarîh? who (PRON(3FS)) that the-lion ate -her yesterday ‘Who did the lion eat yesterday?’

b. miin, (hi) ?illi eʔl ?aklat l-?asad mbaarîh? who (PRON(3FS)) that ate the-lion yesterday ‘Who ate the lion yesterday?’

Doron (1983) argues forcefully against treating Pron as a copula in Hebrew and shows that it is not the present tense form of the verb be, but rather the realization of agreement features in (nfl). The Semitic languages lack an (overt) present tense form of the copular verb be and as Doron shows, hi lacks just about all of the properties of the future and past tense forms of be. I will assume that Doron’s arguments carry over to Palestinian and that hi in e.g. (25a,b) is the phonetic...
realization of Agr$^0$. (See Shlonsky (2000) for the identification of the functional head filled by Pron.)

The distribution of Pron is subject to a complex set of conditions, which are discussed in Greenberg (this volume). What concerns us most in the present context is the occurrence of Pron in identificational or equative sentences, that is, in sentences in which there are two referential expressions, as in (40).

(40) Daniela hi ha-madrixa sel-i.
Daniela PRON(3FS) the-advisor of-me
'Daniela is my advisor.'

I would like to argue that Class II interrogatives are identificational sentences. Recall that the use of this strategy of question formation presupposes the existence of the person(s) or thing(s) asked about. Interrogatives formed by means of the first strategy entail no such presupposition, as discussed above in §3.1.

One way of capturing the presupposition implied by Class II interrogatives is to assume that the free relative is always interpreted as a definite description, that is, as a referential and not as a predicative DP. Suppose that the LF representation of a Class II interrogative such as (6a) is (41).

(41) For which x: x=y, [THEy [The lion ate y yesterday]]

The CP that the lion ate her in (6) is not directly predicated of the wh-expression who. Rather, it is predicated of the null relative head. The entire free relative is taken to be a definite description, the reference of which is identified with the reference of the variable bound by the wh-expression. The presuppositional force of (6a) is a direct consequence of the fact that the free relative is a definite description.

In Class I interrogatives such as (2a), on the other hand, the variable is not identified with any definite description. The proposition containing it is construed as an open sentence, as expressed in the LF representation (42).

(42) For which x: x a person, [The lion ate x yesterday]

A final problem now arises: Pron is obligatory in identificational sentences such as (43) (cf. (40) above), yet it is optional in Class II interrogatives (viz. (25)).

(43) Mhemmad *(hu) Abu-Taariq.
Mhemmad (PRON(3MS)) Abu-Taariq
'Mhemmad is Abu-Taariq.'

Doron (1983) observes that there are several cases in which Pron is optional in Hebrew identificational sentences. In particular, its occurrence is not obligatory when the clausal subject is wh-moved. Thus, compare (40) above, repeated below as (44a), and (44b).

(44) a. Daniela hi ha-madrixa sel-i
Daniela PRON(3FS) the-advisor of-me
'Daniela is my advisor.'

b. mi (hi) ha-madrixa sel-i?
who (PRON(3FS)) the-advisor of-me
'Who is my advisor?'

Shlonsky (2000) discusses such examples and suggests an analysis of the apparent optionality manifested in (44). The optionality of Pron in Class II interrogatives, as compared with its obligatoriness in identificational sentences in which wh-movement does not take place, strongly suggests that both fall under the same generalization.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has focused on the syntax of a productive class of wh-interrogatives in Palestinian. It was argued that this strategy gives rise to a somewhat concealed identificational nominal sentence in which the wh-expression is base-generated as a clausal subject, regardless of its semantic role. The wh-expression is followed by a free-relative clause, a predicate nominal, containing a null operator which binds a variable. It was further argued that the structure of these interrogatives is bi-clausal in the sense that the wh-word, although base-generated outside the clause containing the variable, is nevertheless raised into the Comp of the clause containing it.

APPENDIX: THE FEATURE MAKEUP OF PALESTINIAN COMPLEMENTIZERS

One of the properties of the complementizer ?illi observed earlier is that a phonetically overt, or lexical wh-operator, cannot, for many speakers, appear in its specifier position. I concluded that the (relative) operator which occurs in CPs headed by ?illi is always null.

In this appendix, I provide a more coherent picture of the complementizer system of Palestinian and propose an explanation for the properties of ?illi in terms of the feature composition of Comp developed by Rizzi (1990).
A brief digression and a comparison with English relative clauses provides a useful point of departure for this discussion. Consider the data in (45a-b). The Comp of English relative clauses may contain either an overt wh-expression, (45a), an overt complementizer that, (45b), but not both, (45c).

(45) a. This is the girl who ate the lion.
b. This is the girl that ate the lion.
c. *This is the girl who that ate the lion.

Following Rizzi (1990), suppose that English distinguishes between two complementizers: that, which is [-WH] and \( \emptyset \), a phonetically unrealized complementizer which bears the feature [+WH]. (45c) is excluded, in this approach, on grounds of feature inconsistency between the head of CP and its specifier: The wh-phrase is Spec,C is [+WH] but \( \emptyset \) is [-WH].

Consider, now, the following Palestinian paradigms, which illustrate the patterning of \( \text{?illi} \) and of \( \text{ma} \)-free relatives. While \( \text{ma} \) requires an overt operator in its Spec, compare (46a) and (46b), \( \text{?illi} \) cannot be coupled with one, cf. (47a) and (47b).

(46) a. \( \text{ma ?inti} \text{cimilt} \text{?inti} \text{cimilt.} \)  
\( \text{NEG (l) did} \text{NEG what that you did} \)  
\( 'I didn't do what you did.' \)  

b. *\( \text{ma ?inti} \text{cimilt} \text{?inti} \text{cimilt.} \)  
\( \text{NEG (l) did} \text{NEG that you did} \)  
\( 'I didn't do what you did.' \)

(47) a. \( \text{ma ?inti} \text{?illi} \text{?inti} \text{?inti} \text{cimilt} \text{?inti} \text{cimilt-o.} \)  
\( \text{NEG (l) did} \text{NEG that you did -it} \)  
\( 'I didn't do what you did.' \)  

b. *\( \text{ma ?inti} \text{?inti} \text{cimilt} \text{?inti} \text{cimilt-o.} \)  
\( \text{NEG (l) did} \text{NEG what that you did -it} \)  
\( 'I didn't do what you did.' \)

I have argued that \( \text{?illi} \) is best characterized as a [+PREDICATIONAL] \( C^0 \) (viz. the discussion following example (19)). The analysis of Class II interrogatives leads to the conclusion that it is also characterized by the feature specification [-WH], since the CP that it heads is not an interrogative CP but a relative clause, serving as a nominal predicate for an externally base-generated wh-expression. Like \( \text{?illi} \), \( \text{ma} \) should be classified as [+PREDICATIONAL], since it heads free relatives. Unlike \( \text{?illi} \), however, it is [+WH], since it is invariably preceded by a wh-expression in its Spec. Class I interrogatives, cf. §2, contain a phonetically-null complementizer, \( \emptyset \), which appears only in interrogatives. The classification of these complementizers in terms of the features [+PREDICATIONAL] and [+WH] is tabulated in (48).

(48)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( C^0 )</th>
<th>PREDICATIONAL</th>
<th>WH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( \text{?illi} )</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \text{ma} )</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \emptyset )</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \text{?inunu} )</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lexical operators in Palestinian are marked [+WH] but are unmarked for the feature [-WH]. Consequently, such operators may appear in Comps headed by both \( \text{ma} \) and \( \emptyset \), as we have seen. However, they are barred from the specifier of Comps headed by \( \text{?illi} \), where only null [-WH] operators may appear.

NOTES

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The dialect described in this paper is one of the dialects spoken in the northern Palestinian town of Nazareth and in some neighboring villages. Thanks to Sahar Hasan and to many students at Haifa University in 1989-90 for judgements and appraisal of the data. In many respects, the Palestinian data is remarkably similar to the Egyptian variety described by Wahba (1984). Thanks also to Mohand Guerssel for discussion of the Moroccan data. All errors and omissions are my own.

1 In Roberts & Shlonsky (1996) and Shlonsky (1997), I argue that the clitic pronoun, instantiated by e.g., -ha in (6b), is not a pronominal form but the affixal head of Agr\(^0\), to which the verb is syntactically adjoined. The actual resumptive pronoun is phonetically unexpressed. Since nothing hangs on this point, I will continue to use the label 'resumptive pronoun' for this and similar forms, as in Shlonsky (1992).

2 I provide only a brief summary of the analysis. The reader is referred to the cited work for details.

3 McCloskey (1990) as well as Ouhalla (1993) opt for a different explanation, based on Aoun and Li's (1989) notion of pronominal A'-disjointness.

4 An inspection of Moroccan interrogatives further disconfirms the view that the unavailability of the second interrogation strategy for adjuncts and PPs is due to a violation of a condition requiring resumptive pronouns to mark the interrogation site. One clear difference between Moroccan and Palestinian is that resumptive pronouns in direct object position are obligatory in Class II interrogatives in Palestinian but optional in Moroccan (or even prohibited in some contexts. See Wager (1983)). Compare (i) below, with the resumptive pronoun in parenthesis, indicating its optionality, with (7) above.

(i) \( \text{?illi} \text{dhab?i} \text{?inti} \text{cimilt} \text{?inti} \text{cimilt-o.} \)  
\( '\text{Who hit (him)}' \)  

Who did you hit?"

?illi, which only null [-WH] operators may appear.
Yet Moroccan is exactly like Palestinian in restricting the second interrogation strategy to nominal wh-words, as shown by the contrasts in (iia) and (iib). In both languages, non-nominal wh-phrases can only utilize the first strategy for the formation of constituent questions.

(ii) a. fi mšitî?
   where (you) went  
   'Where did you go?'
   
b. *fi li mšitî?
   where that (you) went  
   'Where did you go?'

(iii) a. ki mšitî?
   how (you) went  
   'How did you go?'
   
b. *ki li mšitî?
   how that (you) went  
   'How did you go?'

5 Which NP expressions manifest ϕ-features in Palestinian: ʔanî is the feminine form (cf. (6b)), ʔanî is the masculine form.

6 For some speakers (32a) is acceptable. I leave this matter unexplained.

7 One might argue that ʔillî is, in fact, a definite determiner. In Palestinian restrictive relative clauses, ʔillî only occurs when the relative head is definite, as in (i). When the head is indefinite, no overt complementizer appears.

(i) a. 1-bint ʔillî l-ʔasad ʔakal -ha...
   the-girl that the-lion ate -her  
   'The girl that the lion ate...'
   
b. bint (*ʔillî) l-ʔasad ʔakal -ha...
   girl that the-lion ate her  
   'A girl that the lion ate...'

This difference parallels that of NP determiners in Palestinian: Only the definite article is phonetically realized:

(ii) a. 1-bint
   the-girl
   'the girl'
   
b. bint
   girl
   'a girl'

One might suppose that relative clauses are DPs and that ʔillî is a D0 element which selects a clause.

8 This is corroborated by (i), which although structurally equivalent to (46a), is nevertheless ungrammatical as a question. Although ʔanî is [+WH], it is also [+PREDICATIONAL]. Questions, however, require a [-PREDICATIONAL] C0. The ungrammaticality of (i) is hence due to a clash in the feature [-PREDICATIONAL].