15

WORD ORDER

A good deal has already been said in earlier chapters about the relative placing of individual words making up a phrase or clause. This chapter is concerned with the ordering of the prime constituents of the sentence—theme, predicate and amplifications of the predicate.

Easily the most baffling problem in this connection is the factor determining the choice between a thematic structure (theme → predicate) and a verbal one (verb → agent) in main sentences; subordinate clauses to a large extent have this choice determined by grammatical considerations. It seems to be true that in literary prose the choice of a verbal sentence structure is only slightly less so, and the operative factor in the choice is still very obscure.

In the verbal sentence structure, one has to consider the relative placing of agent, object and adverbials. As has been mentioned above (p. 88), adverbials enjoy considerable freedom of placing, even to the extent of preceding the verb; in such a case, although becoming logically a theme, they are not formally so and do not require a subsequent referential pronoun (contrast the formal thematic structures ⟨the king, smote-him the pestilence on that day⟩ and ⟨that day, smote the king, smote-him the pestilence⟩ with the logically but not formally thematic king on-it the pestilence⟩). An indirect object can of course be extrapolated as theme with subsequent preposition + referential pronoun (*haḏā lkitābu ṭtaláʾnā ʿalay-hi* ⟨this book, we have perused it⟩), but the placing of an indirect object as such (i.e. the entity term with its accompanying preposition) before the verb is exceptionally unusual apart from one or two special cases (e.g. in an adjectival clause a preposition + pronoun is sometimes placed before the verb, *lkitābu lladī ʿalay-hi ṭtaláʾnā* 'the book which we have perused').

Word order

Although the placing of agent, object and adverbial, relatively to each other after the verb, ranges over all the possible permutations, one fundamental principle applies to all cases: the entity assumed by the speaker to be more familiar to the hearer, and thus having less communication value, precedes one less familiar and hence having greater communication value. It will be seen that this principle echoes the principle of theme preceding predicate, for the theme is necessarily an entity assumed to be known to the hearer, while the predicate embodies fresh information about it, not previously available to the hearer.

The most conspicuous application of this principle is that a defined entity (assumedly identifiable by the hearer) normally precedes an undefined one, whose identity is not known to the hearer. This order is quite irrespective of the function of the two entities in the sentence: the word order ⟨shot the soldier a bandit⟩ is normal for both functional evaluations 'the soldier shot a bandit' and 'a bandit shot the soldier'.

A rhythmical factor appears also to have an effect on the word order. This is that the maximal break in the sentence should not occur much later than half way through its total length, so far as is possible. 'Length' in this connection has to be interpreted not on the phonological plane, but in terms of the number of lexical items. The maximal break occurs (i) in a thematic structure, between theme and predicate, (ii) in a verbal sentence structure, after the entity term which immediately follows the verb (irrespective of whether that be agent or object).

This principle operates so as to exclude, normally, a substantive clause from the beginning of the sentence even when it is the logical theme, as in 'the fact that my brother loves Mary is obvious'. A formulation *ʾanna ʾaḵ-ī yuḥibbu maryama ẓāhir* is avoided because the predicate 'is obvious' is so much shorter than the theme. It is avoided either by using a verb predicate structure *yaẓharu ʾanna ʾaḵ-ī...* ⟨is-obvious that my brother...⟩ or by the device of the forward-looking generalized pronoun theme (p. 41) *ʾinna-hu ẓāhirun ʾanna ʾaḵ-ī...* 'it is obvious that my brother...', or even without that by placing the simple predicate first *ẓāhirun ʾanna...* This last structure does occasionally occur, but is rare because it accords initial position in the sentence to an undefined term, which is felt to be anomalous; prepositional phrases on the other hand are extremely common in initial position, and consequently *ẓāhirun* in that structure is normally replaced by the partitive preposition *min* plus the generically defined category term, *mina ẓẓāhiri* ⟨a thing belonging to the category of the obvious⟩ which in spite of remaining logically undefined has at least the overt appearance of a defined term.

The rhythmical principle can also be clearly seen at work in a verbal sentence structure with both agent and object, of which one is amplified and the other not: the order verb → amplified term → unamplified term, which would result in the maximal break occurring immediately before the unamplified term (see above), is avoided. No matter which term is agent and which object, the amplified one follows the unamplified one. Hence, ⟨shot the soldier the rebel who was firing from the building⟩ and ⟨shot the rebel the soldier who was in command of the platoon⟩ are so structured no matter whether the rebel shot the soldier or vice versa. It does remain, however, an open question whether the determining factor here is purely the rhythmical consideration, or whether one has to take into account the 'familiarity' principle, since it could be presumed that an entity which the speaker feels to need amplification is less familiar to the hearer than one which he feels does not need any amplification.

One minor consequence of the familiarity principle is seen in identificatory predicates where one of the two terms is a demonstrative. Logically, all identificatory predicate structures should be freely reversible: 'Mary is my aunt' ~ 'my aunt is Mary', 'this is my meaning' ~ 'my meaning is this'. But the latter statement would ordinarily be structured in Arabic with 'this' functioning as theme, because the allusive nature of the demonstrative implies that it is more easily recognizable by the hearer than a term which needs overt description.[1]

In a verbal sentence structure, placing of the object before the agent is obligatory when the object term is logically annexed to the agent one and a pronoun is introduced to avoid repetition, as in the structure ⟨loved the boy his uncle⟩ described on p. 42.

Needless to say, distortions of normal prose order occur freely in verse, and in prose passages where a rhetorical effect is aimed at. But the admissible distortions are limited, and wholly unlike the extreme freedom of Latin verse in this respect. Such deviations as do occur almost always involve either (i) the placing of an adjective, which is not so firmly anchored to position immediately after the term it amplifies as it is in normal prose; or (ii) the placing of a prepositional phrase, which may occur almost anywhere in the sentence irrespective of its function. One will encounter cases in which a prepositional phrase occurs quite near the beginning of a line of verse, when its function may be to amplify the last word of the line. Probably the greatest difficulty the reader meets in verse is to evaluate the function of a prepositional phrase.

[1] Inversion of the order does indeed entail a change of meaning, since the phrase will then have an appositional structure without predicative function (ma'nā-ya hādā 'this idea of mine', see p. 43). But I believe this to be a consequence, not a cause, of the principle here stated.

16

LEXICON AND STYLE

In Arabic of all periods, the semantic spectrum of many lexical items is apt to seem to Europeans unduly diffuse. This is largely a mistake bred of the difficulty of viewing one's own language objectively, and of the fact that Arabic conceptual categories differ widely from those familiar to Europeans; the same criticism might easily be made about English by an Arab confronted with the semantics of 'high' (high seas, high road, high meat, high living, high adventure, high tension, etc.). Certainly the old-fashioned jibe that 'every word in Arabic means itself, its opposite and a kind of camel' is wholly unmerited; except in so far that the Arabs have themselves contributed to the illusion of 'contradictory meanings' by erecting this into a special branch of lexicography. It is, however, an illusion. The reality is that some words have a generalized meaning capable of taking an additional coloration from the context: *faraḥ* is 'strong emotion', and only the context will reveal whether the emotion is one of joy or sorrow; *ṭulū'* means 'climbing', and in ancient Arabic (though no longer in SA) could be used in contexts where 'climbing down' is envisaged and not 'climbing up'. The Arab lexicographers however have registered *ṭulū'* as a word with the contradictory meanings of 'ascending' and 'descending'.

The non-congruity of conceptual categories has the result that many lexical items (verbs above all) in the Arabic-English dictionary appear with what seems to the European a surprisingly disparate set of renderings. The converse is also true. Some concepts for which English has only one word are for the Arabs a series of quite independent concepts with appropriate words for each, or concepts subdivided into specialized compartments with distinctions not made in English: 'time' considered as a point or moment is for the Arab a wholly different concept from linear time, and each of these concepts has a number of specialized distinctions—under the heading of linear time one has

The conversion of a circumstantial clause may result in ambiguity. For the uniform marking of subordinate status, and the relative freedom of placing of an adverbial as against an adjective, mean that it may be unclear which of several entities in the main sentence is the one whose situation is described by the circumstantial phrase; *kuntu 'al'abu ma'a l'amīri wa-'ana ṣabiyyun* 'I used to play with the prince while I was a boy' and *kuntu 'al'abu ma'a l'amīri wa-huwa ṣabiyyun* 'I used to play with the prince while he was a boy' both convert to *kuntu 'al'abu ma'a l'amīri ṣabiyyan* 'I used to play with the prince while a boy'. This of course does not arise if there are gender and/or number contrasts between the entities.

Circumstantial clause conversion is common enough in poetry and in ancient Arabic. From the eighth century on there was a marked tendency in straightforward, non-ornamental prose to abandon it and use only the clause structures marked by *wa*. But modern writing is tending to reintroduce it into favour.

There are instances in which circumstantial clause conversion leads to a structure identical with that of substantive clause conversion after a verb of mental activity: *ra'aytu-hu wa-huwa ḍāḥikun* 'I (physically) observed him while he was laughing' and *ra'aytu 'anna-hu ḍāḥikun* 'I (mentally) observed the fact that he was laughing' will both convert to *ra'aytu-hu ḍāḥikan*. It is, I imagine, as a result of this that a certain amount of confusion arises between the two clause structures, and the circumstantial clause structure with *wa* is not infrequently used in SA[1] to present the predicate term of a proposition functioning as object of a verb of mental activity; Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal writes in his *Memoirs*, *ra'aytu-hum wa-qad jāla bi-kāṭiri-him mā jāla bi-kāṭiri* ⟨I observed them in a condition where that which revolved in my mind had revolved in their mind⟩ 'I observed that the same idea had occurred to their mind as to mine'.

[1] As it was already in medieval Arabic.

13

FUNCTIONALS

The Arab grammarians group all words which are neither verbs, nor entity terms, nor nouns functioning adjectivally, under the heading of *ḥurūf* (functionals).[1] Prepositions, in so far as they can be identified as such (see p. 88), are included under this heading.

Coordination

It is essential to the nature of coordinating functionals such as 'and' and 'or', that the two speech items which they link, whether these be sentences, phrases or single words, should have exact parity of syntactic status. But two of the commonest of these functionals in Arabic, *wa* and *fa*, are ambivalent and do not always have the function of coordination; cases of non-coordinating uses of these two have already been mentioned, pp. 66, 89–90.

The basic coordinator is *wa* 'and', implying simple structural linkage. *fa* on the other hand has the additional value of implying a sequence from the preceding expression to the following one, whether temporal or logical. In temporal sequence, 'he smiled and answered' using *fa* implies that the answer followed the smile; in contrast to *wa* which allows also the possibility that the two actions may have been simultaneous. In logical sequence, the mind may progress from a cause to its effect, in which case *fa* resembles English 'so'; or from a state-ment back to its cause or justification, as in 'this must be true, for (*fa*) I have seen it with my own eyes'.

Subordination

A number of subordinating functionals have already been described,

[1] This also has the meaning of 'letters (of the alphabet)', and its use as a gram-matical term for functionals is occasioned by the fact that some of the most characteristic members of the class consist only of single consonant plus short vowel.

including both markers of subordinate status in an entity term and indications of clause subordination.

Many subordinating functionals have an ambivalent role. *ḥattā* is not only a clause-subordinator with the values 'until', 'so that', 'in order that' (followed by a suffix set verb to denote 'so that', *a*-subset of the prefix verb for 'in order that', and either for 'until'), but has also the role of a preposition 'up to', and that of a modifier 'even' which has no effect on the sentence structure. *li* functions as preposition ('he sang for my delight') and as a clause subordinator ('he sang in order that he might delight me', p. 84).

The most interesting of the ambivalent functionals is *fa*. If this be followed by a primary set item of the prefix verb set, it is a coordinator and what follows it is a wholly independent sentence; but if followed by the *a*-subset item, and preceded by a sentence modified for negation, interrogation or command, then that modification extends to the following sentence also. The role of *fa* is thus to subordinate the second sentence to the totality of the first, so that coordination is only with the unmodified part of that. Take for example *yatiqūna bi-nā fa-yaʿmalūna bi-ʾamri-nā* 'they trust us, and so they do our bidding'; to negative the first proposition, and use the *a*-subset in the second *lā yatiqūna bi-nā fa-yaʿmalū bi-ʾamri-nā*, has the sense ⟨it is not the case that {they trust us and so do our bidding}⟩ 'they do not trust us so far as to do our bidding', and implies that they do *not* do our bidding; to negative the first proposition, but retain the primary set item of the second verb *yaʿmalūna*, would establish the *fa* as having a normal coordinating role and would imply 'they do not trust us, and (yet) they do our bidding'.

Clause subordinating functionals with temporal value are in some cases nothing but substantives marked for subordinate status and employed in the structure described p. 57: *ḥīna* 'when' is the subordinately marked form of the substantive *ḥīn* 'time' (which remains a fully functioning substantive, and can be used e.g. in *hāḏā ḥīnuʾazmaʾin* 'this is a time of crisis'), functioning just as does *yawma* in the structure there quoted.

It is of some interest in connection with time-marking subordinators to note that a fairly sharp distinction is made between past and future time siting. An event sited in the future cannot be a fact (cf. p. 79), for it may after all not take place; consequently, 'when he comes, I will talk to him' is envisaged in Arabic as a conditional sentence, 'if-and-when (*ʾiḏā*) he comes, I will talk to him', using the characteristic conditional structure (see Chapter 14), inasmuch as the possibility remains open that he may not come.

In past time marking, a distinction has to be made between reference to a dynamic event and reference to a static situation. In reference

to a static situation, such as 'when he was rich, he gave much to charity', the functional marker of the time clause is *ʾiḏ*. In reference to an event, the marker is *lammā*: but this nevertheless exercises on the suffix set verb (which, since an event is envisaged, is the only possible predicate in such a clause) the same kind of aspectual conversive force as *qad* does (p. 78): *lammā māta lmalik* represents 'when the king had died' or 'when the king died', and *not* 'when [= at the actual instant when] the king died'. Actual simultaneity of two events can only be marked by one of the substantives referred to above (e.g. *ḥīna māta* 'at the time he died'), or by a preposition plus substantive clause (*ʿinda mā māta*, cf. p. 57), or by preposition plus verbal abstract (*ʿinda mawti-t*, 'simultaneously with his death').

The clarity of functional differentiation between *ʾiḏā*, *ʾiḏ* and *lammā* as outlined above is, however, impaired by the fact that there is some fluidity of usage between *ʾiḏā* and *lammā*. Even in the archaic period, 'when something had happened', if placed after *ḥattā* 'until', was always marked by *ʾiḏā* and not *lammā*; and in modern SA this marking seems to be gaining some ground in other circumstances as well, in spite of the fact that an ambiguity is thereby created between past and future time reference.

A characteristic of both medieval and SA is that an initial *lammā* clause is sometimes treated, like a prepositional phrase (p. 65), as a logical theme, in that the following main clause begins with *fa*, which is thus in this case not a coordinator and cannot be translated in English.

All three of these time functionals are, moreover, ambivalent in that they can be used to indicate causation: just as in English the properly time-marking functional 'since' can be used in lieu of 'because'.

Negation

The most generalized negative functional is *lā*, but there are others with specialized uses. Apart from *laysa* (on which see below), all negative functionals modifying a verb predicate immediately precede the verb, with which they are in closest juncture so as to constitute a wholly indivisible phrase; those negativing a non-verbal predicate precede the theme.

The negative reflex of a suffix set verb with static aspectual value (whether or not the positive form be explicitly marked for static aspect by *qad*, p. 78) is *lam* + the short variety of the prefix set verb. Hence the negative of *qad, ịtalaʿnā ʿalā lkitāb* 'we have/had perused the book' is *lam naṭṭaliʿ ʿalā lkitāb* 'we have/had not perused the book'; and note that the latter form is in contrast with both *lā naṭṭaliʿu* 'we do/will/can/etc. not peruse' and *lā naṭṭaliʿ* 'let us not peruse' (p. 84).

The suffix set verb with dynamic aspect is regularly negatived by *mā*. Unlike *lam*, this negative functional enters into other structures as well. It is in free alternation with *laysª* for the negation of a non-verbal predicate; with *lā* as negativing a prefix-set verb item when this depicts a situation contemporaneous with the moment of utterance; and it will sometimes be found negativing the suffix-set item of a modifying verb, in place of *lam* + prefix-set item.[1]

laysª is a modifying verb showing differentiation of the agent pronoun (⟨I not⟩, ⟨she not⟩, etc.) by means of suffix morphemes only, and has no contrasting prefix set. In other respects it is structured exactly like the modifying *kwn*, including the transformation of a simple noun predicate from independent to subordinate status. But it comports only pure negative modification, not past time or notional value (owing to its lack of a prefix set which could furnish a contrast with the suffix forms), for which appropriately negatived forms of *kwn* must be used. Hence, *hāḏā ṣaḥīḥ^{un}* 'this is true', *laysa hāḏā ṣaḥīḥan* 'this is not true', but *lam yakun hāḏā ṣaḥīḥ^{an}* 'this was not true', *'an lā yakūna hāḏā ṣaḥīḥan* 'that this should not be true'. As to position, since *laysª* itself has the status of a verb, the normal rule for placing of a negative is neutralized, and it can occur either before the theme (which then becomes its agent) or before the predicate: *laysa hāḏā ṣaḥīḥan* or *hāḏā laysa ṣaḥīḥan* 'this is not true'.

A simple noun predicate of a negatived proposition can be marked by the preposition *bi* in lieu of the syntactic marker of subordinate status: *mā hāḏā bi-ṣaḥīḥ^{in}*, *laysa hāḏā bi-ṣaḥīḥ^{in}*, etc.

The English structure 'no + substantive' is paralleled in Arabic by one in which an undefined substantive functions as theme (see p. 65) preceded by *lā*. The substantive in this structure has the mark of subordinate status, thus *lā taw'amayni yatašābahāni bi-ttadqīq* 'no two twins are exactly alike'; but the subordinate marker -*a* is in this case never accompanied by -*n*, hence *lā ṭabība fī lbayt^{i}* 'no doctor is in the house', not **lā ṭabīban*. This marking might well lead one to assign a verbal force to the *lā* and to envisage the parts of the sentence which follow the substantive as amplifications of it, so that the above examples are treated as 'there are no two twins who are exactly alike' and 'there is no doctor (who is) in the house'.

This analysis is nevertheless incorrect.[2] The crucial point is that the *lā* + substantive structure is never used in Arabic in isolation, and can consequently not be regarded as a valid sentence structure. If one

[1] In archaic Arabic, both *'in* and the combination *mā 'in* are freely used as alternatives to *mā* in all the latter's negative functions. These usages disappeared from the medieval language, yet some writers of today have revived the use of the negative *mā 'in*.

[2] Although I did adopt it in *Written Arabic* §9·5.

wishes to say simply 'there are no angels' one is obliged to employ the existential verb (p. 81¹) and say *lā tūjadu malā'ika* 'angels do not exist'. Since therefore additions of some kind are necessary to constitute a sentence,[1] such additions must be regarded as genuine predicates.

In so far as an English 'no + substantive' structure functions otherwise than as theme, the negative must in Arabic be detached from the substantive and used to modify the predicate: the thematic form *lā 'aḥada yaqūlu hāḏā* 'nobody says this' is paralleled in the verb + agent structure by *lā yaqūlu hāḏā 'aḥad^{un}* ⟨not says this anybody⟩; and 'I saw nobody' is structured as *mā ra'aytu 'aḥadan* 'I did not see anybody'.[2]

On the analysis which I have suggested for the form *lā 'aḥada*, the negative functional has a syntactic status similar to that of the 'objectivizing' theme-markers such as *'inna*, *'anna* and *la'alla* (p. 64); and just as one could not use two of those functionals simultaneously, a difficulty is created over using one of them together with this type of *lā*, and the difficulty is commonly resolved by transferring the negative into the predicate part of the sentence, producing the form *yaḥtamilu 'anna 'aḥadan lā yaqūlu hāḏā* ⟨it is probable that anybody does not say this⟩ 'it is probable that nobody says this'.

The antithetical negative concept 'that which is not-X' is expressed by a noun *ġayr* annexed to the other term of the antithesis: *ġayr-ī* ⟨somebody/anybody who is not-me⟩, *ġayr^{u} nihā'iyy^{in}* substantivally or adjectivally '(something) interminable'. This noun has certain anomalies as to definitional status. In itself it is logically undefined, though the term to which it is annexed may be defined or undefined; *ġayr^{u} malik^{in}* ⟨somebody/anybody who is not a king⟩ versus *ġayr^{u} lmalik^{i}* ⟨somebody/anybody who is not the king⟩. Up to the recent past, the structural requirements for defined or undefined status were met by appropriate marking of the term to which *ġayr* was annexed, the word itself never having the article: thus *wakīl^{u} ġayr^{u} 'ādil^{in}* 'an unjust steward', *lwakīl^{u} ġayr^{u} l'ādil^{i}* 'the unjust steward', *lwakīlu ġayru 'ādil^{in}* 'the steward is unjust'. But in SA a distinct tendency is emerging to mark *ġayr* with the article when it is required to have defined status,

[1] It is true that expressions of this kind can function as sentences with ellipse of the predicate, as with English 'No doubt!' There are two Arabic clichés often used, both as elliptical sentence structures introduced by the coordinating *wa* 'and', and (like English 'this is no doubt true') simply as adverbials, viz. *lā budda* and *lā jarama* 'of course'/'inevitably'/'necessarily' etc.

[2] It may be noticed that it would be difficult in Arabic to reproduce the logical paradox exploited by Lewis Carroll in the passage concerning the Anglo-Saxon Messenger who 'saw nobody (or Nobody) on the road'.

and hence to write *lwakīlᵘ lğayrᵘ l'ādilᵘ* 'the unjust steward' which exhibits a type of contrast with the other two structures not found anywhere else in annexion structures.

Another tendency gaining ground in SA (though the first instances of it are to be found already in the medieval language) is to use *lā* in place of *ğayr* with nouns: *ğayrᵘ nihā'iyyⁱⁿ* is now in competition with *lānihā'iyy* for 'interminable', and the new coinage 'decentralized' is exclusively *lāmarkaziyy* and not *ğayrᵘ markaziyyⁱⁿ*.

In adjectival and circumstantial clause conversion, a negatived clause predicate is matched by *ğayr* in the conversion structure: *'ibāratᵘ laysa mā'nā-hā wāditᵘⁿ* 'an expression of which the meaning is not clear' converts to *'ibāratᵘ ğayrᵘ wāditⁱⁿ mā'nā-hā*.

In substantive clause conversion a negatived clause predicate is matched by *'adam* 'absence (of)' annexed to the verbal abstract: *'anna hāḍā lā yumkin* 'that this is not possible' converts to *'adamᵘ 'imkāni hāḍā* 'the impossibility of this'.

Questions

All SA interrogative functionals occur at beginning of the sentence except that a preposition may precede. A statement is converted into a question by the initial functional *'a* or *hal*; these do not *necessarily* entail any other change in the sentence structure, but they *can* be accompanied by certain inversions bringing the term which is the point of the enquiry to the position of a logical theme at the beginning of the sentence, so that in this case a formal predicate can precede the formal theme, and an object term precede the verb; thus the unmodified structures *'a-'anta jāhil* 'are you ignorant?' and *'a-qulta hāḍā* 'did you say this?' are paralleled by *'a-jāhilᵘⁿ 'anta* which might be rendered by the Irishism 'is it ignorant that you are?' and *'a-hāḍāqulta* 'is it this that you said?'.

Interrogative entity terms 'who?', 'what?' have the same morphological shape as the specialized entity terms *man*, *mā* (p. 49). As interrogatives they can be treated structurally as themes with subsequent referential pronoun, as in *mā yadḳulu fī-hi hāḍā?* 'into what does this enter?'; or as displaced sentence elements, needing no referential pronoun, *fī-ma yadḳulu hāḍā?* (interrogative *mā* loses its vowel length after a preposition). But if anything else than a preposition precedes the queried entity, only the thematic formulation is possible: *man saqaṭa fī yaday-h?* ⟨who it fell into his hands?⟩ 'into whose hands did it fall?'.

Any interrogative sentence, structured as above, can function as an entity term in a larger sentence, principally of course as direct object of verbs such as 'ask', 'wonder', etc. The English structure 'I asked her whether she thinks so' can be structured as ⟨I asked her does she think

so⟩ *sa'altu-hā 'a-tufakkiru ka-ḍālik*ᵃ. But just as in English, 'whether' can be replaced by 'if', so this structure can in Arabic be replaced by one in which the queried proposition is put in conditional structure (p. 104) with the conditional functional *'iḏā*. In so far as the main verb may demand an indirect object, it will be impossible to place a clause of this kind immediately after the preposition, since a preposition cannot be followed immediately by a modifying functional; the clause must be turned into a substantive by the use of *mā* (p. 57), thus producing the common cliché *fī mā 'iḏā*, as in *šakaktu fī mā 'iḏā* 'I doubt if . . .'.

Emphasis

The ancient Arabic functional *la* 'indeed' survives with its original emphatic value in SA only in a few cliché phrases where it modifies a handful of predicate verbs such as *qalla* 'is rare', *šadda* 'is violent', as in *la-qalla hāḍā* 'rare indeed is this', *la-šadda katᵃ'u-kᵃ* 'gross indeed is your mistake'.

Otherwise, it is now only used mechanically—and quite optionally —(i) as an accompaniment of the functional *qad* (*la-qad*); (ii) to mark the beginning of a predicate when the theme has been marked by *'inna* (p. 64); and (iii) to mark the beginning of the main proposition after a hypothetical *law* clause (p. 107). In the latter two cases its value is principally structural and the modifying value of emphasis has become very weak and hardly reproducible in English; with *qad* it is wholly otiose.