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Agreement in Modern Standard Arabic constructions with cardinal numerals over ten

Marcin Michalski

Institute of Linguistics, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

e-mail: mmich@amu.edu.pl

Abstract: In Modern Standard Arabic constructions with cardinal numerals over ten in which the noun denoting the counted object follows the numeral, e.g. *al-ḥamsūna ḡundiyyan* ‘the fifty soldiers’ (as opposed to *al-ḡunūdu l-ḥamsūna* ‘idem’), the noun is indefinite singular. When a property of the object counted is to be expressed by means of an attribute: an adjective, participle, or a relative clause, it agrees with the noun in gender, but agreement in the three remaining categories, i.e. number, case and definiteness, may be distributed between the noun and the numeral. The present study analyzes examples of such constructions found in contemporary journalistic texts. Four agreement configurations are distinguished, out of which three were described by Classical Arabic grammarians, while one is non-classical. In some instances, due to the syncretism of declension forms, agreement in case is indeterminate. The analysis of the examples shows that apart from variation in agreement that can be observed with some types of the qualifier, the choice of a particular agreement configuration depends on phraseology and/or the lexico-syntactic properties of the qualifier: whether it is a proper adjective, a *nisba* adjective, a participle, or a relative clause.

Keywords: Modern Standard Arabic, agreement, semantic agreement, syntactic agreement, Arabic cardinal numeral, numeral construction, numeral syntagm.

0. Introductory remarks

In Modern Standard Arabic (hereafter MSA), cardinal numerals between 11 and 99 on one hand and one hundred and its multiples on the other constitute separate categories from the point of view of syntax. According to classical rules, the numeral is the qualified (modified) constituent while the noun denoting the counted object is the qualifying (modifying) constituent (qualifier). The noun is governed for case by the numeral. The numeral’s ability to govern nouns for case is a feature shared with nouns. (In fact, the numeral cannot be considered a separate part of speech in MSA on grounds other than semantic ones.) Another feature that is shared by this numeral with the noun and that is of interest to us here is that in this classical type of construction, when a property of the object counted is to be expressed by means of an attribute, i.e. an adjective (understood as a non-participial positive¹), partici-

¹ The elative, excluded from our present considerations, deserves a separate study in this respect.

ple, or a clause, the numeral may function as the controller of this attribute as far as agreement in three categories, i.e. number, case and definiteness, is concerned. Despite the fact that the issue of Standard Arabic numerals in general has been frequently discussed, both in classical and modern descriptions, the agreement relationships in question have not been duly described. Ḥasan, author of a well-known grammar of Arabic, remarks that the problem was not presented clearly by classical grammarians (Ḥasan [n.d.]: IV, 530, fn. 1.). Modern descriptions of this language are not satisfactory, as well as rules included in school grammars and university course books.

The type of construction we will be concerned with will be referred to as *classical* in this paper, as it is the one described by classical and classicizing Arabic grammarians (as opposed to another, innovative one, termed *adjectival*). First, the classical construction and its descriptions in Western and Arabic grammars of Classical Arabic and MSA will be presented. Then, agreement configurations used with this construction involving adjectival, participial and clausal qualification will be identified and illustrated with examples from real usage (journalistic texts)². Finally, an attempt will be made to identify factors (conditions) that determine the choice of particular agreement configurations.

1. The syntax of the classical construction and attributive construction

In the classical construction, the noun denoting the counted object, termed in Arabic *tamyīz al-‘adad* ‘specification of the numeral’ (al-Ġalāyīnī 2010 [1912]: 577), is singular and indefinite; it follows the numeral immediately and is governed by it for case, which is the accusative with the numerals from 11 to 99 and the genitive with one hundred and its multiples³. The classical construction is thus one based on government, the numeral being the governor and the noun the governee. The feature of definiteness is marked on the numeral (by means of the definite article *al-*⁴). Examples (1) and (2) show a numeral from the range 11-99:

- (1) خمسون ولدا
ḥamsūna walad-a-n
 fifty.NOM boy(M).SG-ACC-INDF⁵
 ‘fifty boys’

² The texts from which examples are taken are online versions of Arabic newspapers and media sites: al-ʿAḥrām (Cairo), BBC Arabic (London), CNN Arabic (Dubai), al-Dustūr_A (Amman), al-Dustūr_C (Cairo), al-Ġazīra_D (Doha), al-Ġazīra_R (Riyadh), al-Ḥayāt (London), al-Maṣrī al-Yawm (Cairo), al-Mustaqbal (Beirut), al-Nahār (Beirut), al-Riyāḍ (Riyadh), al-Šarq al-ʿAwsaṭ (London), and Tišrīn (Damascus). Website addresses are given in end-notes. The examples have been found through targeted queries performed with the use of the Google search engine.

³ If in a compound numeral the last component is a decade, hundred or thousand, it is this last component that governs the noun for case.

⁴ The transcription used in this paper reflects the fact that the vowel of the article is elided after words ending in vowels and, in most cases, changes to *i* after words ending in consonants. The assimilation of *l* to the so-called ‘sun letters’ is not indicated.

⁵ Only units that are relevant for the present considerations are fully glossed. Since the relevant nouns are all personal, the feature ‘personal’ is not marked in the glossing line.

- (2) الخمسون ولدا
al-ḥamsūna walad-a-n
 DEF-fifty.NOM boy(M).SG -ACC-INDF
 ‘the fifty boys’

In examples (3) and (4), the category of one hundred and its multiples is exemplified:

- (3) مئة ولد
mi’at-u walad-i-n
 hundred-NOM boy(M).SG-GEN-INDF
 ‘a hundred boys’
- (4) المئة ولد
al-mi’at-u walad-i-n
 DEF-hundred-NOM boy(M).SG-GEN-INDF
 ‘the hundred boys’⁶

By contrast, in the attributive construction, the numeral functions as an attribute (hence the name) of a plural noun designating the counted object and agrees with it in case and definiteness (plurality being an inherent feature of the numeral, while its gender appears to be non-specified). Thus, the attributive construction is one based on agreement, the noun being the controller and the numeral the target. Usually, it is used with definite nouns⁷. It is exemplified in (5) and (6):

- (5) الأولاد الخمسون
al-’awlād-u l-ḥamsūna
 DEF-boy(M).PL-NOM DEF-fifty.NOM
 ‘the fifty boys’
- (6) الأولاد المئة
al-’awlād-u l-mi’at-u
 DEF-boy(M).PL-NOM DEF-hundred-NOM
 ‘the hundred boys’

Classical and classicizing grammars written by Arab authors seem not to know the attributive construction for this range of numerals⁸. According to them, only cardinal numerals up

⁶ This type of construction, which can be found in some classical texts although classical rules prohibit the use of the definite article on the first term of genitive constructions, was approved by the Cairo Academy of the Arabic Language in 1973 (al-’Adnānī 1989 [1984]: 434, n° 1257).

⁷ The following example with an indefinite noun given by Būḥdūd (1987: 252) is rather exceptional:

عندي كتب ثلاثون
’ind-ī kutub-u-n talātūna
 at-1SG book.PL-NOM-INDF thirty.NOM
 ‘I have thirty books’.

⁸ Examples showing that the attributive construction was used in this way in Classical Arabic are adduced by Reckendorf (1921: 207), who characterizes them as “weit seltener” (much less frequent). As far as diachrony is concerned, this construction might have developed by way of analogy with the numerals from 3 to 9 (e.g. *al-riḡā-*

to 10 can be used attributively, while decades from 20 onwards, hundreds, thousands, etc., when used attributively, combine with singular nouns and have an ordinal, not cardinal meaning, e.g.

- (7) الولد الخمسون
al-walad-u l-ḥamsūna
 DEF-boy(M)-NOM DEF-fifty.NOM
 ‘the fiftieth boy’

In modern Western descriptions of Classical and/or Modern Standard Arabic, rules for combining nouns with numerals over ten are presented in a very heterogeneous manner, especially as far as definite numerals are concerned. Some authors do not deal with the problem of definite numerals over ten at all, e.g. Aloh (2005: 288-289); Haywood & Nahmad (1993 [1962]: 307-308). In other works, only the classical construction is given, e.g. Wright (1962 [1862]: II, 245); Fischer (1972: 73), and Grande (1963: 357-358 and 362) for classical Arabic; Buckley (2004: 916-922) and Holes (2004 [1995]: 214-215) for Modern Arabic. In Schulz *et al.* (2000: 128), by contrast, the attributive construction is introduced before the classical one, while a note in this textbook says that classical construction “is also frequently found”. Sometimes the attributive construction is only hinted at; for instance, Cantarino observes that “it does not seem to be frequently used” (1974-75: II, 372), Badawi *et al.* only mention one example of this construction (2004: 273), Corriente gives two instances thereof with hundreds (2002 [1980]: 133-134), whereas El-Ayoubi *et al.* adduce relevant examples (with “16” and “22”) together with numerals from 3 to 10, without indicating any difference between these groups (2001: 363-365). Finally, there are descriptions of MSA in which only the attributive construction is presented: Abu-Chacra (2007: 264) and Ryding (2005: 341).

2. Agreement in the attributive construction

As far as agreement in attributive constructions is concerned, the attribute, regardless of its lexico-syntactic category, agrees in number, gender, case (not applicable for relative clauses) and definiteness with the noun. Since the noun is always plural, the attribute is always plural too, as the following examples show for each of these categories, respectively:

- (8) ادانت المحكمة المتهمين العشرين الآخرين [al-Šarq al-ʿAwsat¹]
ʿadānat il-maḥkamat-u l-muttaham-īna l-ʿiṣrīna l-ʿāḥar-īna
 condemned DEF-court-NOM DEF-defendant(M)-PL.ACC DEF-twenty.ACC DEF-other-M.PL.ACC
 ‘the court condemned the twenty other defendants’
- (9) من الشعراء الثلاثين القادمين للمشاركة [al-Ḥayāt¹]
min al-šuʿarāʾ-i l-talāṭīna l-qādim-īna li-l-mušāraḳat-i
 out.of DEF-poet(M).PL-GEN DEF-thirty.GEN DEF-coming-M.PL.GEN for-DEF-participation-GEN
 ‘out of the thirty poets coming for the participation’

lu l-ḥamsatu ‘the five men’), which can be used attributively according to the classical rules, especially with definite nouns.

- (10) الاشخاص الثلاثون الذين حوكموا [al-Šarq al-ʿAwsaṭ^{III}]
al-ʿašḥāṣ-u l-talāṭīna llaḏīna ḥūkimū
 DEF-per son(M).PL-NOM DEF-thirty-NOM who.M.PL were.tried
 ‘the thirty persons who were tried’

The agreement relationships in attributive constructions might seem rather uninteresting from the morphological or syntactic point of view. For the users, however, this uninterestingness is an advantage because it eliminates uncertainty as to what the qualifier should be agreeing with. Perhaps it is the fact that there is only one potential agreement controller in the attributive construction that accounts for its origin and spread.

3. Agreement in the classical construction in previous descriptions

In the classical construction, by contrast, the issue of the agreement of the qualifier is complex because the attribute may agree, with respect to particular categories, either with the numeral or the noun. A satisfying presentation of this issue cannot be found in classical or modern descriptions of Classical Arabic or MSA. If the problem is raised, the discussion is usually limited to agreement in number, and not exhaustive, while the question of agreement in the remaining categories is left aside. We will start our discussion by recapitulating what modern authors have written as regards this issue in MSA and later on turn to the classical descriptions. The present analysis will be limited to constructions with masculine personal nouns because it is in units showing these morphological features where the MSA agreement relationships are best visible, at least in script.

Modern didactic descriptions written by Arab authors consulted for the needs of this study (al-Daḥdāḥ 1989 [1981], ʿĪd 1982, and al-Ġārim & ʿAmīn [n.d.], III) do not discuss the problem of adjectival or clausal qualification in such constructions at all. The authors of western descriptions of Classical Arabic, if they devote attention to this issue (Wright 1962 [1862]: II, 238; Reckendorf 1921: 206), follow the classical grammarians but, unfortunately, give only examples with non-personal nouns. Neither Arab nor Western authors dealing with Classical Arabic seem to be concerned with the question of the lexico-morphological category to which a given qualifier belongs, i.e. if it is an adjective, a participle or a relative clause.

In Western descriptions of MSA, if the question of agreement in the classical construction is raised at all, the discussion is limited to agreement in number, of which two types are distinguished: grammatical agreement (with the *tamyīz* noun), termed by some authors syntactic agreement, and semantic agreement (with the numeral), termed by some authors logical agreement or agreement ad sensum (cf. Corbett 2006: 155). However, the problem is not explored exhaustively or conclusively. Thus, according to Cantarino, only semantic agreement occurs in such constructions (“the agreement will be plural if the idea expressed by the numeral is a plural”, 1974-75: II, 385), however, his examples involve only qualifiers that are participles or relative clauses, which will turn out to be of importance. Badawi *et al.* (2004: 105) write that the adjective (they also use an example with a participle) “generally agrees with the grammatical form of the noun, not its logical number”, but in the Chapter “Number and gender concord” (p. 270) they add that agreement of adjectives can also be semantic

(“logical”). Buckley claims that agreement in such constructions is grammatical rather than semantic: “Pronouns, adjectives and verbs agree in gender and number (and case – with adjectives) with the numbered noun (...) rather than with the number (...)” (2004: 929) but further on he adds that “[i]f the idea of the number is plural (i.e. more than two), agreement with the numbered noun is usually also plural, even when the noun is in the singular” (p. 930); his examples, however, are not very illustrative to this point. According to Corriente (2002 [1980]: 132), plural agreement is always allowed in such constructions. In the example he adduces, *‘arba ‘ūna rağulan mu ‘minīna* ‘forty believing men’, the attribute agrees in number with the numeral, but in case with the noun, which, let us add, is not the most frequent usage in MSA. Some insights about the type of agreement being dependent on the lexico-morphological category of the qualifier have been made by Esseesy (2000) and El-Ayoubi *et al.* (2001), even though these authors center their attention on agreement in number. Esseesy, who bases his considerations on examples taken from the Qur’ān and Cantarino, observes that “the modifying adjective (...) agrees with the quantified noun (...) by taking the singular indefinite form” (2000: 269-70) but for definite relative clauses, he notes that their relative pronoun agrees in number with the numeral (2000: 278). According to El-Ayoubi *et al.* (2001: 359-60), adjectival attributes agree grammatically but also, less frequently, semantically, while other modifiers, such as relative clauses, show semantic agreement (2001: 359).

A more complete description can be found in works of classical and classicizing Arab grammarians. The issue of agreement did interest classical grammarians, who, however, were concerned mostly with agreement in number and case and used only adjectival attributes in their examples. For instance, al-Suyūfī in his *Ham‘ al-hawāmi‘* (quoted by Ḥasan [n.d.]: IV, 531, fn. 1 →) adduces examples showing several possible configurations of agreement in case and number. Apart from one, which seems rather rare and is not used in MSA⁹, the same configurations are given in al-Ġalāyīnī’s popular compendium (2010 [1912]: 577). Leaving aside constructions with nouns other than masculine personal, these configurations can be reduced to three.

In Configuration 1, the qualifier agrees in case and number with the noun, i.e. agrees with the grammatical form (*lafẓ*) of the *tamyīz* noun (grammatical agreement). The qualifier is thus singular, in the accusative with numerals from 11 to 90 and in the genitive with one hundred and its multiples:

- (11) ثلاثون رجلاً كريماً
talā‘ūna rağul-a-n karīm-a-n
 thirty.NOM man(M).SG-ACC-INDF gener ous.M.SG-ACC-INDF
 ‘thirty generous men’

⁹ This configuration, in which the qualifier agrees in number with the noun and in case with the numeral, is exemplified as follows:

عشرون رجلاً صالحاً
‘iṣrūna rağul-a-n ṣāliḥ-u-n
 twenty.NOM man(M).SG-ACC-INDF good.M.SG-NOM-INDF
 ‘twenty good men’

- (12) مئة رجل كريم
mi'at-u rağul-i-n karīm-i-n
 hundred-NOM man(M).SG-GEN-INDF generous.M.SG-GEN-INDF
 'one hundred generous men'

In the two remaining configurations, 2 and 3, the qualifier is plural. As al-Ġalāyīnī explains, this plural form can be interpreted as reflecting the sense of the *tamyīz* noun – because *rağulan* is used “in the sense of *al-riğāl*” (*fī ma'nā al-riğāl*, al-Ġalāyīnī 2010 [1912]: 577) – or as agreeing with the meaning of the numeral, which is inherently plural (semantic agreement)¹⁰.

In Configuration 2, the qualifier agrees in case and number with the numeral, consequently, it is plural. If the qualifier is an adjective, it may have a ‘sound’ (i.e. suffixal or external) plural (Subconfiguration 2a), as in (13), or a ‘broken’ (i.e. internal) plural (Subconfiguration 2b)¹¹, as in (14):

- (13) أربعون رجلاً صالحون
'arba'ūna rağul-a-n ṣāliḥ-ūna
 forty.NOM man(M).SG-ACC-INDF good-M.PL.NOM
 'forty good men'

- (14) ثلاثون رجلاً كراماً
ṭalāṭūna rağul-a-n kirām-u-n
 thirty.NOM man(M).SG-ACC-INDF generous.M.PL-NOM-INDF
 'thirty generous men'

In Configuration 3, the qualifier agrees in case with the noun and in number with the numeral; thus, it is plural. This configuration is restricted to adjectives that have a broken plural:

- (15) ثلاثون رجلاً كراماً
ṭalāṭūna rağul-a-n kirām-a-n
 thirty.NOM man(M).SG-ACC-INDF generous.M.PL-ACC-INDF
 'thirty generous men'

The three configurations of agreement in case and number according to classical rule presented by al-Ġalāyīnī, are represented in Table 1:

¹⁰ Unlike al-Ġalāyīnī, who does not say which of these two agreement types, grammatical or semantic, is preferable or more frequent, Ḥasan claims that grammatical agreement (*murā'āt al-laḥẓ*) is more often ([n.d.]: IV, 530, fn. 1).

¹¹ Interestingly, in some editions of al-Ġalāyīnī's book (e.g. 1994: III, 126; 2002: 493), probably due to a misprint, the existence of this quite frequent configuration is not indicated. Configuration 3, a less frequent one, is repeated there instead, which makes this passage rather obscure.

	Controller of agreement in number	Controller of agreement in case	Additional information
Configuration 1	noun	noun	syntactic agreement
Configuration 2	numeral	numeral	semantic agreement; broken and sound plurals
Configuration 3	numeral	noun	mixed semantic and syntactic agreement; broken plurals only

Table 1. Agreement in number and case according to al-Ġalāyīnī (2010 [1912]: 577)

At this point, it can be added that the qualifier always agrees in gender with the noun, never with the numeral, which does not have an inherent gender. The gender of the numeral, if marked at all (only on those with units), reflects the gender of the noun denoting the counted object.

4. Agreement configurations

All of the configurations of agreement in case and number presented above are used in the MSA texts. In what follows, they will be completed by characterizing them with respect to the feature of definiteness. To this aim, examples taken from journalistic texts will be analyzed. They will also serve us for identifying possible other configurations. The choice of examples is intended to reflect the fact that the numeral may be definite or indefinite and that the qualifiers represent various lexico-morphological categories: proper adjectives, *nisba* adjectives, the adjective *'āḥar-*, and participles (relative clauses are dealt with in section 5). It is hypothesized that the categorial membership of the qualifier determines, at least to some extent, the choice of an agreement configuration.

It should be observed that not all agreement relationships are easily identifiable in the real-text occurrences of such constructions. While number and gender agreement relationships are easy to identify, agreement in case and determination may be obscure. This will be discussed in more detail in subsequent paragraphs.

Let us now complete the configurations. In **Configuration 1**, the qualifier agrees in all four categories with the noun denoting the counted object. Thus, it shows full agreement and is always singular, as represented in Table 2.

Agreement category	Controller
gender	noun
number	
case	
definiteness	

Table 2. Configuration 1 (full agreement with the noun).

Below, examples with indefinite numerals are given for qualifiers belonging to particular categories. The use of participles in this configuration is rare.

- (16) 13 لاعبًا جديدًا [al-Dustūr_C^{IV}, proper adjective]
bi-ṭalāṭata 'ašara lā'ib-a-n ḡadīd-a-n
 with-thirteen.M.GEN player(M).SG-ACC-INDF new.M.SG-ACC-INDF
 'with thirteen new players'
- (17) 20 معتقلًا سياسيًا [al-Ḥayāt^V, *nisba* adjective]
'iṭlāq-u sarāḥ-i 'iṣrīna mu'taqal-a-n siyāsiyy-a-n
 release-NOM liberty-GEN twenty.GEN prisoner(M).SG-ACC-INDF political.M.SG-ACC-INDF
 'the release of twenty political prisoners'
- (18) 12 فلسطينيًا آخر [al-Ġazīra_D^{VI}, adjective 'āḥar-]
'uṣība ṭnā 'ašara filasṭīniyy-a-n 'āḥar-a
 were.wounded twelve.M.NOM Palestinian(M).SG-ACC-INDF other.M.SG-ACC
 'twelve other Palestinians have been wounded'
- (19) 480 فلسطينيًا مقيمًا في سوريا [al-Dustūr_A^{VII}, participle]
'arba '-u mi'at-i-n wa-ṭamānūna filasṭīniyy-a-n muqīm-a-n
 four-NOM hundred-GEN-INDF and-eighty.NOM Palestinian(M).SG-ACC-INDF living.M.SG-ACC-INDF
fī Sūriyā
 in Syria
 '480 Palestinians living in Syria'

Examples of this configuration with definite numerals are less easy to find. No examples could be found for 'āḥar- and participles:

- (20) قائمة الـ17 محافظًا جديدًا [al-Maṣrī al-Yawm^{VIII}, proper adjective]
qā'imat-u l-sab'ata 'ašara muḥāfiẓ-a-n ḡadīd-a-n
 list-NOM DEF-seventeen.M.GEN governor(M).SG-ACC-INDF new.M.SG-ACC-INDF
 'the list of the seventeen new governors'
- (21) عن اختطاف الـ21 صيادًا مصريًا [al-Maṣrī al-Yawm^{IX}, *nisba* adjective]
'an iḥtīf-i l-wāḥid-i wa-l-'iṣrīna ṣayyād-a-n
 about kidnapping-GEN DEF-one.M-GEN and-DEF-twenty-GEN fisherman(M).SG-ACC-INDF
miṣriyy-a-n
 Egyptian.M.SG-ACC-INDF
 'about the kidnapping of the 21 Egyptian fishermen'
- (22) دون بقية الـ46 مدانًا آخر [CNN Arabic^X, adjective 'āḥar-]
dūna baqiyat-i l-sitt-at-i wa-l-'arba'īna mudān-a-n 'āḥar-a
 without rest-GEN DEF-six-M-GEN and-DEF-forty.GEN convict(M).SG-ACC-INDF other.M.SG-ACC
 'to the exclusion of the rest of the 46 other convicts'

In Configurations 2 and 3, which will be discussed in what follows (together with Configuration 4, which will be distinguished subsequently), the qualifier agrees with two control-

lers simultaneously¹². A common feature of all these configurations is that it agrees in number with the numeral and consequently is always plural. Therefore, they can be referred to as plural configurations, as opposed to the singular Configuration 1.

Some remarks must be made here as regards the category of case. All al-Ġalāyīnī's (and other authors') examples are given with the numeral in the nominative case, which shows clearly the case agreement relationships. However, in some situations, these relationships may be obscured by the fact that some inflectional endings are normally not written in Arabic script on one hand and by declension syncretism on the other hand. More specifically, case agreement is difficult to determine:

(i) with sound plurals, which have only two declension forms because the genitive and accusative are phonetically (and graphically) syncretic; thus, only the opposition nominative vs. oblique is marked (ون *-ūna* vs. ين *-īna*);

(ii) with words that have three declension forms but two of them are graphically syncretic; e.g. the nominative *ġudud-u-n* 'new(M.PL.)' and genitive *ġudud-i-n* are both written جدد, as opposed to the accusative *ġudud-a-n*, written جدداً;

(iii) with words that show graphical syncretism in all three cases, e.g. the nominative 'abriyā'-u 'innocent' and genitive and accusative 'abriyā'-a are both written أبرياء; similarly, the three case forms of the masculine plural definite adjective 'new', viz. *al-ġudud-u* in the nominative, *al-ġudud-i* in the genitive, and *al-ġudud-a* in the accusative, are all written الجدد.

Thus, the choice of proper adjectives that may occur in our examples is rather restricted as those that show unwanted syncretism should be excluded. In what follows, it will be attempted to adduce examples in which the cases can be ascertained. Words the case of which is made obscure by some type of syncretism but can be determined by applying one of the classical rules discussed above will be considered to have an ascertained case.

In addition, it is assumed that the classical rules (indicated by al-Ġalāyīnī) governing the use of cases in constructions with indefinite numerals apply to constructions with definite numerals as well.

We can now take up the discussion of the agreement configurations. In **Configuration 2**, the qualifier agrees in number, case and definiteness with the numeral. The only feature controlled by the noun is gender, as shown in Table 3.

Agreement category	Controller
gender	noun
number	numeral
case	
definiteness	

Table 3. Configuration 2.

¹² See Corbett (2006: 18) for an example of a target that agrees with more than one controller taken from Shona.

The adjectives that occur in this configuration may have sound or broken plurals. With sound plurals, which have a syncretic form in the genitive and accusative, case agreement is obscured if the numeral is in the genitive or accusative, as in (26), (28) and (30). It is then not clear if the agreement is with the numeral or the noun. However, since it is against classical rules for sound plurals to agree with the noun, such qualifiers will be interpreted as agreeing in case with the numeral. (Notwithstanding, it cannot be excluded that they represent the non-classical Configuration 4, described below and illustrated with examples (45)-(48); therefore, they will be marked with an asterisk).

Below, examples of the use of Configuration 2 with indefinite numerals are given. Those containing *nisba* adjectives seem rather infrequent.

- (23) مع 13 لاعبا جدد [al-Dustūr^{XI}, proper adjective]
ma'a ʔalālātata 'ašara lā 'ib-a-n ǧudud-i-n¹³
 with thirteen.M.GEN player(M).SG-ACC-INDF new.M.PL-GEN-INDF
 'with thirteen new players'
- (24) مع ٥٣ موظفا جدد [al-Nahār^{XII}, proper adjective]
ma'a ʔalālāt-i mi 'at-i-n wa-ḥamsīna muwazzaf-a-n ǧudud-i-n
 with three.F-GEN hundred-GEN-INDF and-fifty.GEN employee(M).SG-ACC-INDF new.M.PL-GEN-INDF
 'with 350 new employees'
- (25) تلقى 134 لاجئاً سورياً للعلاج [al-Ḥayāt^{XIII}, nisba adjective]
talaqqā mi 'at-u-n wa-'arba 'at-u-n wa-ʔalālātūna lāǧi'-a-n
 received hundred-NOM-INDF and-four-M-NOM-INDF and-thirty.NOM refugee(M).SG-ACC-INDF
sūriyy-ūna l- 'ilāǧ-a
 Syrian-M.PL.NOM DEF-treatment -ACC
 '134 Syrian refugees received medical treatment'
- (26) لـ 864 لاجئاً سورياً [al-Ḥayāt^{XIV}, nisba adjective]*
li-ṭamānī mi 'at-i-n wa-'arba 'at-i-n wa-sittīna lāǧi'-a-n
 to-eight.F-GEN hundred-GEN-INDF and-four-M-GEN-INDF and-sixty.GEN refugee(M).SG-ACC-INDF
sūriyy-īna
 Syrian-M.PL.GEN
 'to 864 Syrian refugees'
- (27) عشرون جندياً آخرون [al-Riyād^{XV}, adjective 'āḥar-]
'išrūna ǧundiyy-a-n 'āḥar-ūna
 twenty.NOM soldier(M).SG-ACC-INDF other-M.PL.NOM
 'twenty other soldiers'
- (28) بطاقة 16 ناخباً آخرين [al-Mustaqbal^{XVI}, adjective 'āḥar-]*
biṭāqat-u sittata 'ašara nāḥib-a-n 'āḥar-īna
 card-NOM sixteen.M.GEN voter(M).SG-ACC-INDF other-M.PL.GEN
 'the cards of sixteen other voters'

¹³ This configuration corresponds to the classical Subconfiguration 2b, therefore, a possible interpretation as the nominative *ǧududun* (written in the same way), which could represent the non-classical Configuration 4, is rejected. The same concerns (24).

- (29) بينهم 50 شخصاً متهمون بـ [al-Ġazīra^{XVII}, participle]
bayna-hum ḥamsūna šaḥṣ-a-n muttahaḡ-ūna bi-
 among-them fifty.NOM person(M).SG-ACC-INDF suspected-M.PL.NOM of
 ‘among them are fifty persons suspected of...’
- (30) في 31 شخصاً مقيمين في [al-’Ahrām^{XVIII}, participle]*
li-wāḥid-i-n wa-ṭalāṭīna šaḥṣ-a-n muqīm-īna fī
 of-one.M-GEN-INDF and-thirt y.GEN person(M).SG-ACC-INDF living-M.PL.GEN in
 ‘of 31 persons living in...’
- Configuration 2 with definite numerals is exemplified in (31)–(35). No examples for proper adjectives are given since such constructions cannot be distinguished from those that represent Configuration 3 (and are listed under Indeterminate Configuration, below). The use with *nisba* adjectives seems infrequent.
- (31) إن الـ ٥٥ مسيحياً مصريين [al-Maṣrī al-Yawm^{XIX}, *nisba* adjective]*
’inna l-ḥams-at-a wa-l-ḥamsīna masīḥiyy-a-n il-miṣriyy-īna
 that DEF-five-M-ACC and-DEF-fifty.ACC Christian.M.SG-ACC-INDF DEF-Egyptian-M.PL.ACC
 ‘that the 55 Egyptian Christians’
- (32) لم يبك الـ 32 شخصاً الآخرين [al-Šarq al-’Awsaṭ^{XX}, adjective ‘*āḥar-*]
lam yabki l-iṭnāni wa-l-ṭalāṭīna šaḥṣ-a-n il-’āḥar-ūna
 did.not cry DEF-two.M.NOM and-DEF-thirty.NOM person(M).SG-ACC-INDF DEF-other-M.PL.NOM
 ‘the remaining 32 persons did not cry’
- (33) بشأن الـ 17 فلسطينياً الآخرين [al-Ġazīra^{XXI}, adjective ‘*āḥar-*]*
bi-ša’n-i l-sab’ata ašara filasṭīniyy-a-n il-’āḥar-īna
 in-matter-GEN DEF-seventeen.M.GEN Palestinian(M).SG-ACC-INDF DEF-other-M.PL.GEN
 ‘with respect to the other seventeen Palestinians’
- (34) استأنف الـ 14 عضواً المتبقون للاجتماع [al-Ḥayāt^{XXII}, participle]
ista’nafa l-’arba’ata ašara uḡw-a-n il-mutabaqq-ūna l-iḡtimā’-a
 resumed DEF-fourteen.M.NOM member(M).SG-ACC-INDF DEF-remaining-M.PL.NOM DEF-meeting-ACC
 ‘the remaining 14 members resumed the meeting’
- (35) ضمن الثمانين شخصاً المصابين بـ [al-Riyād^{XXIII}, participle]*
ḡimna l-ṭamānīna šaḥṣ-a-n il-muṣāb-īna
 among DEF-eight y.GEN person(M).SG-ACC-INDF DEF-afflicted-M.PL.GEN
 ‘among the 80 persons afflicted...’

In **Configuration 3**, the qualifier agrees with the numeral in number and with the noun in case (the accusative), as shown in Table 4. Since only examples with indefinite numerals could be found, it remains unclear if the controller of the agreement in definiteness is the numeral, as in Configuration 2.

Agreement category	Controller
gender	noun
number	numeral
case	noun
definiteness	numeral (?)

Table 4. Configuration 3.

Below, examples of the use of Configuration 3 with indefinite numerals are given.

- (36) 18 شخصاً صمّاً وبيكماً [al-Ġazīra^{XXIV}, proper adjective]
min tamāniyata 'ašara šaḥṣ-a-n *ṣumm-a-n* *wa-bukm-a-n*
of eighteen.M.GEN person(M).SG-ACC-INDF deaf.M.PL-ACC-INDF and-mut e.M.PL-ACC-INDF
‘of eighteen deaf and mute persons’
- (37) 11 لاعبا جددا [al-Šarq al-’Awsaṭ^{XXV}, proper adjective]
bi-’aḥada ‘ašara lā’ib-a-n *ġudud-a-n*
with-eleven.M.GEN player(M).SG-ACC-INDF new.M.PL-ACC-INDF
‘with eleven new players’
- (38) 150 شخصاً كباراً وصغاراً [al-Ġazīra^{XXVI}, proper adjective]
ḍammat mi’at-a-n *wa-ḥamsīna šaḥṣ-a-n* *kibār-a-n*
it.comprised hundred-ACC-INDF and-fifty.ACC person(M).SG-ACC-INDF adult.M.PL-ACC-INDF
wa-šigār-a-n
and-young.M.PL-ACC-INDF
‘it comprised 150 persons, young and old’
- (39) 90 مريضاً صغاراً وكباراً [Tišrīn^{XXVII}, proper adjective]
ḥawālay tis’ina marīd-a-n *šigār-a-n* *wa-kibār-a-n*
around ninety.GEN patient(M).SG-ACC-INDF young.M.PL-ACC-INDF adult.M.PL-ACC-INDF
‘around 90 patients, young and old’

Not many examples for this configuration could be found (as the list of adjectives that fit semantically into journalistic texts and have broken plurals is short), and out of those available, only (36) is unproblematic. Although more examples with *جددا* *ġududan*, used in (37), could be adduced, it cannot be excluded that these forms are misprints for *جديدا* *ġadīdan*, a singular belonging to Configuration 1. As for the examples (38) and (39) with *šigāran* and *kibāran*, it is quite probable that these adjectives are not attributes but non-canonical instances of a circumstantial qualifier (*ḥāl*) meaning, idiomatically, ‘both children and adults’¹⁴.

There are, however, examples showing that, contrary to the classical rules, Configuration 3 is used with sound plurals. This configuration is only visible if the numeral is in the nominative

¹⁴ Non-canonical because according to classical rules, a *ḥāl* must have a definite antecedent, which is not the case in both examples.

case (otherwise the interpretation as Configuration 2 should be preferred). Only a limited number of examples could be found, in all of which the adjective *'āḥar-* is used:

- (40) وأصيب عشرون شخصاً آخرين [al-Ġazīra^{XXVIII}]
wa-'uṣība 'iṣrūna ṣaḥṣ-a-n 'āḥar-īna
 and-got.injured twenty.NOM person(M).SG-ACC-INDF other-M.PL.ACC
 'and twenty other persons have been injured'
- (41) سقط ثلاثون قتيلاً آخرين [al-Šarq al-'Awsaṭ^{XXIX}]
saqaṭa ṭalāṭūna qaṭīl-a-n 'āḥar-īna
 fell thirty.NOM killed.person(M).SG-ACC-INDF other-M.PL.ACC
 'thirty other persons were killed'

As for Configuration 3 with definite numerals, no examples for proper adjectives are given here since such constructions cannot be distinguished from those that represent Configuration 2 (see Indeterminate Configuration, below). Examples of the non-classical use of sound plurals could not be found.

Constructions about which it cannot be known if they represent Configuration 2 or Configuration 3 (even though the former is more probable, as the frequency of its use suggests) are listed under **Indeterminate Configuration**. This concerns constructions in which the attributes are proper adjectives in broken plural, both definite and indefinite, about which it is impossible to say if they are in the genitive or accusative case (we signal it with a question mark), due to phonetic and/or graphical syncretism. In (42), an example with an indefinite numeral is given, in (43), one with a definite one.

- (42) ومقتل 51 طفلاً أبرياء [al-Dustūr^{XXX}, proper adjective]
wa-maqtal-u wāḥid-i-n wa-ḥamsīna ṭifl-a-n 'abriyā'-a
 and-killing-NOM one.M-GEN-INDF and fifty.GEN child(M).SG-ACC-INDF innocent.M.PL-?
 'and the killing of 51 innocent children'
- (43) عن الـ16 طالباً الجدد [CNN Arabic^{XXXI}, proper adjective]
'an il-sittata 'ašara ṭālib-a-n il-ḡudud-?
 from DEF-SIXTEEN.M.GEN student(M).SG-ACC-INDF DEF-NEW.M.PL-?
 'from the sixteen new students'

A number of instances of constructions occurring in the texts searched for evidence that do not fit into Configurations 1-3 suggest that **Configuration 4** must be added here. In these instances, which are surprisingly easy to find, the qualifier is in the nominative (this is visible only with sound plurals) although another case should be used according to the classical rules and no potential governor of the nominative can be identified.

- (44) ضمن مجموعة من 15 شخصاً متهمون بـ [BBC Arabic^{XXXII}, participle]
ḍimna maḡmū'at-i-n min ḥamsata 'ašara ṣaḥṣ-a-n muttaḥam-ūna bi-
 within group-GEN-INDF of fifteen.M.GEN person(M).SG-ACC-INDF accused- M.PL.NOM of
 'in a group of fifteen people accused of...'

- (45) علاج 20 مريضاً مصابون بـ [al-Šarq al-ʿAwsaṭ^{XXXIII}, participle]
li-ʿilāğ-i ʿiṣrīna marīd-a-n muṣāb-ūna bi-
 for-treatment-GEN twenty.GEN patient(M).SG-ACC-INDF afflicted-M.PL.NOM by
 ‘for the treatment of twenty patients suffering from...’
- (46) تم ضبط ثلاثين شخصاً مطلوبون [al-Ġazīra^{XXXIV}, participle]
tamma dabṭ-u ʿalāṭīna ṣaḥṣ-a-n maṭlūb-ūna
 was.effectuated detention-NOM thirty.GEN person(M).SG-ACC-INDF wanted- M.PL.NOM
 ‘the detention of thirteen wanted persons has been effectuated’
- (47) يضم 65 ألف جندي موزعون على [al-ʿAhrām^{XXXV}, participle]
yaḍummu ḥams-at-a-n wa-sittīna ʿalf-a ġundiyy-i-n
 comprises five-M-ACC-INDF and-sixty.ACC thousand-ACC soldier(M).SG-GEN-INDF
muwazzaʿ-ūna ʿalā
 deployed- M.PL.NOM over
 ‘it comprises 65 thousand soldiers deployed over...’

Such expressions, which may be considered instances of hypercorrection, indicate that some users of MSA are uncertain about which case should be used in such situations.

To sum up the above paragraphs, it can be said that the classical rules concerning agreement, as presented by al-Ġalāyīnī, are generally observed with the following reservations: Configuration 3 is not frequently used (as few occurrences with indefinite numerals and the absence of examples with definite ones suggest). Innovations can be observed: in Configuration 3, adjectives with sound plurals are used. Configuration 4 can be identified, possibly reflecting a hypercorrect usage.

5. Agreement of relative clauses

The agreement of a relative clause with its controller in gender and number is marked on its subject or verbal predicate if the subject of the relative clause is coreferential with its antecedent, as in (48), or, otherwise, a resumptive pronoun, as in (49). The analysis of our data has shown that relative clauses generally agree with the noun in gender and with the numeral in number and definiteness. The latter feature is marked as the presence or absence of a relative pronoun, as exemplified in (48) and (49), respectively:

- (48) ومن بين الاربعين مريضاً الذين كانوا يتناولون [al-Šarq al-ʿAwsaṭ^{XXXVI}]
wa-min bayn-i l-ʿarbaʿīna marīd-a-n illaḍīna kāmū yatanāwalūna
 and-from among-GEN DEF-forty.GEN patient(M).SG-ACC-INDF REL.M.PL were they.take
 ‘out of the forty patients who had been taking...’
- (49) ضمن 15 جندياً تم استجوابهم [al-Šarq al-ʿAwsaṭ^{XXXVII}]
ḍimna ḥamsata ʿašara ġundiyy-a-n tamma stiġwāb-u-hum
 within fifteen.M.GEN soldier(M).SG-ACC-INDF was.effectuated interrogation-NOM-3PL
 ‘among fifteen soldiers who have been interrogated (lit. whose interrogation has been carried out)’

Agreement with respect to case in relative clauses is indeterminate because they do not show morphological properties, e.g. a declinable relative pronoun¹⁵, that would make it possible to determine their case. The agreement configuration for relative clauses is a plural configuration which can be represented as follows:

Agreement category	Controller
gender	noun
number	numeral
case	indeterminate
definiteness	numeral

Table 5. Agreement configuration for relative clauses.

6. Two issues related to agreement in definiteness

Definiteness is marked by means of a definite article with adjectives and participles and by means of a relative pronoun with relative clauses. Indefiniteness, by contrast, is marked by the absence of the definite article or the relative pronoun. Classical sources and contemporary descriptions do not discuss agreement with respect to this category. In examples adduced there (e.g. al-Ġalāyīnī's or Ḥasan's), constructions with indefinite numerals are used, while agreement relationships as regards definiteness can only be determined when the numeral is definite (otherwise, it cannot be known if the indefiniteness of the qualifier results from its agreeing with the noun or with the numeral). In Configurations 1 and 2, the controller is easy to identify: the noun and the numeral, respectively. For Configurations 3 and 4, however, we have no data, i.e. no instances with definite numerals (extrapolating from Configuration 2 does not seem to be convincing evidence).

Another issue concerns some constructions representing Configuration 2 in which the numeral has no definite article although the qualifier that should agree with it in definiteness is definite. In the following example, the missing articles are given in parentheses:

- (50) في محاكمة 26 شخصًا المتهمين بـ [al-'Ahrām^{XXXVIII}]
fī muḥākamat-i (l-)sitt-at-i wa-(l-)'iṣrīna ṣaḥṣ-a-n
 in trial-GEN (DEF-)SIX-M-GEN and-(DEF-)twenty.GEN person(M).SG-ACC-INDF
il-muttaham-īna bi-
 DEF-accused-M.PL.GEN of
 'in the trial of the 26 persons accused of...'

¹⁵ Declinable relative pronouns exist in the dual but, understandably, they do not occur in constructions with numerals over ten.

Such cases are, however, limited to constructions in which the numeral is spelt in numbers¹⁶. In all constructions with definite qualifiers in which the numeral is written out as words and nearly all in which the numeral is written out as numbers, the numeral does have the article. In cases like (50), the definite article must be supplied by the reader.

7. An attempt to explain agreement configurations

The existence of various agreement configurations presented above means that sometimes one semantic content can be coded grammatically in more than one way. However, variation is not always allowed. There are cases in which the choice of a particular agreement configuration is not free. Our analysis allows us to claim that it is determined, at least to a considerable extent, by the lexico-morphological category of the qualifier. The following conclusions can be drawn:

Proper adjectives show strong variation between Configurations 1 and 2 but 1 seems to be preferred, especially with indefinite numerals. In many cases, it is impossible to distinguish Configuration 2 from 3.

With *nisba* adjectives, Configuration 1 is preferred to Configuration 2.

The adjective *'āḥar-* shows variation between Configurations 1 and 2 (less often, non-classically, 3).

With participles, Configuration 2 is generally used (much less often 2 and, hypercorrectly, 4).

Relative clauses are used in a plural configuration.

It is possible that what is, at least partly, responsible for this preference of agreement configurations, (which should be understood in terms of tendencies rather than strict rules), are the degree of inherence of the property in the object denoted by the noun and/or phraseology. Full agreement, i.e. Configuration 1, is preferred with fixed, phraseological expressions composed of a noun and an adjective which would be split if other configurations were used. This accounts, for instance, for the fact that the phrase *mu'taqal siyāsī* 'political prisoner' in (17) is used in Configuration 1. We have not found equivalents in other agreement configurations for expressions of this kind. Many adjectives, although not necessarily representing phraseological expressions, designate properties that are inherent, or at least relatively stable, and thus strongly associated with the object. Therefore, they are most frequently used in Configuration 1. This concerns in particular *nisba* adjectives, for instance, the names

¹⁶ The one occurrence we have come across in which the numeral is written out in words and has no article should arguably be treated as a grammatical or typographical mistake.

أكثر من مائتي طالب الحاصلين على [al-Riyād*]

<i>'aktar-u</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>mi'at-ay</i>	<i>tālib-i-n</i>	<i>il-ḥāṣil-īna 'alā</i>
more-NOM	than	hundred-DU.GEN	student(M).SG-GEN-INDF	DEF-having.achieved-M.PL.GEN
'more than two hundred students who have achieved...'				

* <http://www.alriyadh.com/715682>

of nationalities. Other configurations, however, are also possible. They seem to be chosen especially with proper (non-*nisba*) adjectives denoting accidental features, such as *ġadīdun* ‘new’, although more data are needed on this point. Strong variation is displayed by *’āḥar-*, an adjective that designates a very accidental feature and it is perhaps for this reason that users do not always feel it needs to agree in number with the noun. Participles and relative clauses designate accidental features and this possibly explains why they generally do not show full agreement with the noun.

The distribution of agreement configuration based on the lexico-morphological properties of the qualifiers is well visible when various types of agreement co-occur. Example (51) shows Configuration 1 (*filibīniyyan* agrees fully with the noun *ġundiyyan*) co-occurring with Configuration 2 (*il-muntaširīna* agrees in number, case and definiteness with the numeral *l-ḥamsīna*):

- (51) بابقاء الخمسين جنديا فلبينيا المنتشرين حاليا في [al-Šarq al-’Awsaṭ^{XXXIX}]
bi-’ibqā’-i l-ḥamsīna ġundiyy-a-n filibīniyy-a-n
 with-keeping-GEN DEF-fifty.GEN soldier(M).SG-ACC-INDF Filipino.M.SG-ACC-INDF
il-muntašir-īna ḥāliyyan fī...
 DEF-stationed-M.PL.GEN at.present in
 ‘by keeping the fifty Filipino soldiers stationed at present in...’

Example (52) shows Configuration 1 (*’irāqiyyan* agrees fully with the noun *mas’ūlan*) co-occurring with a plural configuration (the relative clause *llaḏīna taṭlubu Wāšīnṭun qatlahum* agrees in number and definiteness with the numeral *l-iṭnayni wa-l-ḥamsīna*):

- (52) ضمن قائمة الاثنين والخمسين مسؤولا عراقيا الذين تطلب واشنطن قتلهم [al-’Ahrām^{XL}]
ḏimna qā’imat-i l-iṭnayni wa-l-ḥamsīna mas’ūl-a-n ’irāqiyy-a-n
 within list-GEN DEF-two.GEN and-DEF-fifty.GEN official(M).SG-ACC-INDF Iraqi.M.SG-ACC-INDF
illaḏīna taṭlubu Wāšīnṭun qatl-a-hum
 REL.M.PL want s Washingt on.NOM killing-ACC-3PL
 ‘on the list of the fifty two Iraqi officials whom Washington wants dead’

Finally, let us signal an issue that deserves exploration, namely the relationship between particular configurations and the attributive construction. It seems that the fact that in Configuration 1 occurrences of constructions with indefinite numerals were easier to find than those with definite numerals is due to the fact that for the definite meaning the attributive construction is frequently chosen.

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ⁱ <http://archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?issueno=8800&article=195656#.WJ48nvnhDDc>

ⁱⁱ http://daharchives.alhayat.com/issue_archive/Hayat%20INT/2002/3/19/-معتقلاً-سياسياً-في-السودان-العلماء-العربي-يحيي-ربيع-الشعر/

ⁱⁱⁱ [عربياً وفرنسياً.html](http://www.dostor.org/282501)

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ http://archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=460527&issueno=10684#.VW1SK8_tjNM

^v <http://www.dostor.org/282501>

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