Is past tense *real* or *fake* in Makkan Arabic?

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This paper is on the interpretation of past tense in counterfactuals (CF) in Makkan Arabic (MA), which has not been analyzed before. In addition, I explore various environments where past tense does not receive any temporal interpretations in MA, and adds to the understanding of crosslinguistic variation of past tense. Finally, I argue that past tense in these environments is a real past, and the loss of its temporal properties is due to the strong feature of the universal modal operator $\forall$ that is associated with a CF *yareet* "wish", a CF particle *law*, and an auxiliary *kaan*.

Empirical Landscape:

(1)   yareet.ik   ḥaḍarti   ʔl-faraḥ
         wish.2,SG,F. attend.Past.2,SG,F. the-wedding
         "I wish you attended the wedding[1]."   (MA wishes: Present Orientation)

(2)   law kaan   ḥaḍrti   ʔl-faraḥ,   kaan   ʔanbasaTi
         law kaan.Past.SG. attend.Past.2,SG,F. the-wedding, kaan.Past.SG enjoy.Past.2,SG,F.
         "If you have attended the wedding, you would have enjoyed it."

(3)   kaan   ḥaḍarti   ʔl-faraḥ
         kaan.Past.SG. attend.Past.2,SG,F. the-wedding
         "You should have attended the wedding[2]."   (MA CF: Past Orientation)

Background: There is a consensus in the literature on past tense that the loss of temporal interpretation is usually taken to occur in specific environments, such as CF and CF "wish" (Iatridou, 2000; Schulz, 2014). With CFs, eventualities contradict actual events in the actual world either in the present or the past (Iatridou, 2000). Two approaches account for lack of past temporal interpretations; past tense as either *fake* (Iatridou, 2000) or *real* (Arregui, 2005; Ippolito, 2003, 2006). Under the real past approach, which I follow in this paper, the loss of temporal properties is relative to the treatment of the past as *variable past*, as in Arregui (2005) (not as a deictic past, as in Kratzer (1998)), or has two layers of past, as in Ippolito (2003, 2006).

Research questions: (1) Is MA past tense *real* or *fake*, as presented in the above examples? (2) What is the semantic computation of the past in these environments?

Analysis: I argue that past tense is structurally computed under a CF phrase, in line with Cinque (1999) for the structural height between modals and aspect. I claim that counterfactuality is lexically encoded in MA by *yareet*, *law* and the auxiliary *kaan*. They enter the derivation with their own universal modal operator $\forall$. The universal $\forall$ operator quantifies over all epistemic worlds, where past tense is initially interpreted inside their propositions.

(4) $[[\mathbf{CF}]] = \lambda p.\lambda t.\lambda Q.[\forall w \in W: t < w \wedge P < t,w > \rightarrow Q(t',w') = 1$ where $<t,w> \neq <t',w'>$ where t' is a non-past time]

I further claim that the focus in counterfactuality is on eventualities, rather than on their temporal properties, as in Van Lambalgen and Hamm (2008). I propose that the universal $\forall$ operator has a strong feature that causes past tense to lose its temporal properties in CF structures. A shifting operator ($\rightarrow$) takes the proposition p backwards into the past and finds the counterpart world w' that shares similar past properties of the actual world w where the proposition p is true.

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[1]MA is similar to Standard Arabic as being a Pro-Drop Language.

[2]Note that the auxiliary *kaan* is lexically ambiguous and can have multiple interpretations and a CF reading is among them.

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