TOWARDS A DIALECT GEOGRAPHY OF OMAN

By CLIVE HOLES

This study presents some new observations on selected features of the phonology and morphology of the Omani Arabic dialects, and attempts to place them in a peninsula-wide typological framework. The paper is based on the results of an analysis of tape-recorded conversational data gathered in more than thirty, mainly rural locations in northern Oman between 1985 and 1987. Most of the speakers were men and women aged 35 and above with little or no formal education who, if not retired, were engaged in traditional occupations such as farming, fishing, pottery and animal husbandry. Much of the data was gathered in the context of a study of the epidemiology of rheumatic diseases conducted on a random sample of 2,000 Omani adults by my wife for the Omani Ministry of Health, during which the subjects were interviewed by me at length in their homes or places of work.

Previous studies of Omani Arabic

Studies of Omani Arabic have been few, doubtless because of the inaccessibility of the country to outsiders until recently. Much of the most useful work was done at the turn of this century: Jayakar (1889) on the ‘settled’ speech of the Muscat area; Rhodokanakis (1908, 1911) on Dhufar Arabic; and especially Reinhardt’s (1894) detailed study of the phonology, morphology and grammar of the dialect of the settled Bani Kharīṣ, based on data gathered from informants resident in East Africa. In more recent times, there have been two further studies. Galloway’s (1977) minidepth gives a survey of the structural characteristics of Omani dialects as a whole, a lexicon of Omani vocabulary, and selected texts. Useful though it is, this study is limited from a dialectologist’s point of view by the lack of precise attributions of dialect forms and texts to locations. Brockett’s (1985) monograph is a detailed glossary of agricultural and other technical terms used in the Bājina coastal town of Khābūra, with short notes on the phonology, morphology and grammar of Khābūra Arabic.

What is clearly lacking is a geographical survey of Omani dialects as a whole, which also shows their relationship to the dialects of neighbouring areas. This study is intended as a first step down that road, and limits itself to a description of the distribution in northern and central Oman of a number of key phonological and morphological variables which have been intensively dealt with in work on the contiguous peninsular dialects (Johnstone, 1963, 1965, 1967; Ingham, 1982, 1986; Holes, 1983, 1987), and which are crucial to the classification of Arabic dialects on a broader dialectal canvas into ‘settled’ or ‘Bedouin’ types (see Blanc, 1964:30).

Two areas excluded from this study, though for different reasons, are the Capital Area and Ṣalālā. The Capital Area has undergone far-reaching social changes since 1970, with influxes of Omanis from other areas of the country and from East Africa, a flood of expatriate Arabs, chiefly from Egypt, and the permanent or semi-permanent immigration of non-Arabic speakers from the Indian subcontinent. The linguistic influences of these groups have been added to the already polyglot local community in which many local families were already bi- or trilingual in Arabic, Swahili and one or other of the languages of the Indian subcontinent as a consequence of Oman’s maritime and trading heritage. Whilst it would make a fascinating site for the study of sociolinguistic phenomena such as multilingualism or code-switching, it is precisely the ‘melting pot’ characteristics of the Capital Area which exclude it from relevance to the survey objectives of this study.

As far as the southern region is concerned, I have so far been able to collect only a small amount of data from Ṣalālā town itself, and no data at all from the local Badu communities. Accordingly, these areas are excluded from the present study.

Oman as a dialect area

Johnstone (1967: 1–3), states that the dialects of peninsular Arabia can be roughly classified into four groups:

(a) North Arabian (including the Syrian desert, western Iraq, the whole of Najd as far south of the tribal dīra of the Al-Murrā on the northern edge of the Empty Quarter, and the Gulf sheikhdoms);
(b) Hijazi (Red Sea littoral from the Gulf of Aqaba to the borders of North Yemen);
(c) South-western Arabian (the Yemens, including the Ḥḍramawt, Dhūfār);
(d) Omani (modern Oman, excluding Dhūfār).

This tentative classification of Oman (excluding Dhūfār) as a single dialect area was based on the only evidence then available, Jayakar and Reinhardt’s work. However, the fact that Oman is a large country, about the size of France, with a varied topography which includes vast deserts, impassable mountain ranges and fertile coastal plains, with until recently no modern roads or communications to link them, makes it prima facie likely that a considerable degree of dialectal diversity would be found there. It turns out on detailed investigation that, whilst there is a bundle of features which are shared by all, or virtually all ‘Omani’ dialects in contrast to those of neighbouring areas, clear typological divisions within the country certainly do exist. These differences link various Omani population groups to others outside Oman with whom they once had (in some cases still have) familial, tribal or socio-economic connexions.

From the point of view of dialect, the principal typological distinction within Oman is between the settled, or Ḥḍarā language groups living in the towns and villages and around the mountain massifs of the Jabal Akhdar and Eastern Ḥajar (henceforth H dialects) on the one hand, and the Badu nomadic or semi-settled populations of the western desert, the Jaddat al-Ḥarāṣī, and Wāliba Sands (henceforth B dialects), on the other. This mountain/desert dialect distinction, within which there are important subdialects, is not always clear-cut: there are transitional areas where the population is a mix of Ḥḍar and Badu groups, and in which both dialect types, or a ‘mixed’ dialect, can be heard. This is true of many of the townships and villages of the northern Sharqiyya, such as Minātib and al-Dairīz, in which the sand reaches virtually into the town, and in which Badu camel-rearers and herders, who may be away in the desert for part of the year, live next door to Ḥḍar date-farmers. Regional administrative and economic centres on the edge of cultivable areas, whose population may be entirely of the Ḥḍar type, such as Tiwi in the north-west, are also points of continuous linguistic contact between the Badu and Ḥḍar groups, though perhaps of a more superficial and specialized kind.

The third major geographical feature of Oman, after its mountains and deserts, is its lengthy coastline. From the UAE border at Khatmat Mīlāḥī, the Bājina coast stretches south-east for 250 miles to Muṣṭrāḥ, constituting a ribbon
of virtually unbroken cultivation and population. Demographically, the prosperous Bajina, which has always been open to outside social and linguistic influences because of its easy marine access, and road links to the north, is a melting pot in which disparate elements have fused over many centuries. An old established coastal population, with strong Baluchi and Gulf accretions, has in recent times, like the Capital Area, seen infuences of ‘returning’ Omanis of diverse origins and of migrants from the mountainous interior attracted by the relative ease of life on the coast.

From Muscat south-east to Ras al-Hadd the coastline is less fertile and more thinly populated, though there are large towns at Qurayat, Qalhat and Sur. The economy of the east coast, and to a lesser extent of the Bajina, has always been dependent on fishing and maritime trade. Consequently, there has been considerable long-term contact with the coastal populations of the peninsula, especially of the Gulf ports, but also with places as distant as Mukalla and Aden.

The data in this paper are drawn from some 40 speakers from 15 different locations (see map), each selected as representative of the speech of the surrounding area and its particular social complexion, Badu or Hadjar. These terms, as used today, denote ancestral differences in tribal allegiance which are now more symbolic than real factors in the definition of personal identity. However, they still serve to some extent correlate with differences in occupation and patterns of social contact between the two groups. To this extent they remain sociolinguistic factors of relevance to any study of Omani dialects.

Features common to all Omani dialects

Analysis of the data gathered in the course of this study confirmed that there is indeed a heterogeneous group of high frequency phonological and morphological characteristics which all, or virtually all, Omani dialects, B or H, have in common. Each of these features, listed below, also occurs in one or other of the areas which border on Oman, but only in Oman (except for Buraimi) do all of them occur as a ‘dialect bundle’. In that they are common to both B and H groups, as well as to most of the areas they border on, and also occur in neighbouring areas outside, these seem to be ‘geographically’ rather than ‘socially’ distributed dialect features. The list below is not of course exhaustive, and further text analysis will no doubt reveal more shared features.

1. The 2nd fem. sing. possessive/object suffix is universally -/j/, not -/i/. This feature has long been recognized as a ‘southern’ one, recorded for various dialects of Yemen (de Landberg 1919: 2667, Rossi, 1939: 20, Fischer & Jastrow 1980: 112), Hadramawt (de Landberg 1901: 358), Dhufar (Rhodokanakis, 1908: 77), and as far north as the Al-Murra in southern Qatar and the northern Empty Quarter (Ingham, 1986: 278), and in the Bahraini dialects of Bahrain (Holes, 1983: 24).

2. An -/fin/ infix is obligatorily inserted in all Omani dialects between an active participle having verbal force and a following object pronoun, e.g. /mawratinallah /juljumma/ ‘the government has provided it’. This phenomenon has also been noted for some (unspecified) groups in Abu Dhabi (Qafisheh, 1977: 168–9), and for the Bahairi dialects of Bahrain (Holes, 1983: 25). Some Omani speakers also insert the -/fin/ infix between an imperfect verb and a suffixed object. This has been noted by Brockett, (1982: 18) for Khubu speakers in the Bajina, and in my data it occurs sporadically in the speech of nomadic or sedentarized Badu, e.g. (Tan’am) /yidagtaghim /dag/ ‘he puts pressure on them’.

3. The absence of the so-called ‘ghawa syndrome’ of central, northern and eastern Arabia, whereby initial CaC syllables become resyllabified to CCa if the consonant closing the syllable is /k/, /l/, /t/ or /t/, is total.

4. Feminine plural verb, adjective and pronoun forms occur regularly. In contrast to features 1–3, which distinguish southern ‘peninsular dialects from those of the north, centre and east, this is a feature which the Omani dialects share with central and north Arabian dialects, and which distinguishes them as a group from the Gulf littoral dialects described in Johnston (1967).

5. The internal passive of verbs Form I and II is of extremely common occurrence, and is again a general feature which sets the Omani dialects apart from the eastern Arabian group, and allies them with the dialects of central Najj (cf. Ingham, 1982: 41).

Features 4 and 5 ally the Omani dialects with the generically ‘conservative’ Bedoin dialects of Najj, and the reductive tendencies which have affected the morphology of Mesopotamian and Gulf dialects (summarized in Ingham, 1982: 22) are much less in evidence in uneducated Omani speech of the type being described here. However, more educated Omanis, especially those who received their education in the Gulf, and in general those living in the Capital Area, tend to replace some of these typically Omani speech tendencies with their Gulf equivalents, as in the now widespread replacement of feminine plurals by masculine plurals, and use of the -/fin/ passifying prefix instead of the internal passive.

The only area investigated which did not share all the above features was the northern border area of Buraimi, where the dialect agreed with other Omani dialects on feature 2 and 4, but differed on features 1, and 3, with an absence of data for feature 5. With its -/i/ 2nd fem. sing. suffix (feature 1), and /ghawa/-type forms (feature 3), the Buraimi dialect spoken on the Omani side of the border resembles the eastern Arabian type described in Johnston (1967). It also shares many lexical features with the eastern Arabian group in contrast with the rest of Oman (e.g. use of /fadi/ ‘to go’ instead of /fii/).

Phonological variables

The first variable, or rather set of variables, selected for detailed analysis here are the reflexes of Old Arabic (OA) /q/, /k/, /j/. Studies done over a wide area of Arabia, Iraq, and Palestine have indicated that there are limited sets of combinatorial possibilities for the variant reflexes of these OA consonants, each set of which tends to be associated with the relative degree of ‘nomadicity’ or sedentariness of particular groups of speakers (Blanc, 1964: 29–30; 1969: 24–8).

The second variable concerns the occurrence of resyllabified CCCvC(C) forms as reflexes of OA CCvC(C) in certain verb and noun forms, e.g. /kitbu/ versus /kitbu/ or kattubu/ ‘they wrote’, /rigiba/ versus /ragiba/ ‘neck’. The occurrence of the CCCvC(C) type of form, like a voiced reflex of OA /q/, has been considered a hallmark of the central Arabian and central Arabian-descended types of dialect (Ingham, 1986: 276), all of which are ’B’ in the terminology of this paper.

The first question to be addressed here is how Omani dialects fit into the peninsula dialectal jigsaw on these key phonological variables.

Omani reflex of OA /q/, /k/, /j/. My data showed six combinatorial possibilities for the reflexes of OA /q/, /k/, /j/ which were differently socially and geographically distributed:
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OA:

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<th>/q/</th>
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SYSTEM 1:

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<th>/g/ and /j/</th>
<th>/k/ and /e/</th>
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<td>2: /g/</td>
<td>/k/</td>
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<td>3: /g/</td>
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<td>4: /g/</td>
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<td>5: /g/</td>
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<td>6: /g/</td>
<td>/k/</td>
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/g/ is a voiced velar stop
/k/ is a voiceless velar stop
/q/ is a voiceless retracted velar or uvular stop
/j/ is a voiced alveolar affricate
/e/ is a voiceless alveolar affricate
/y/ is a voiced palatal stop

In systems 1 and 2, the affricates /j/ < OA/q/ and /e/ < OA/k/ occur in front vowel environments only.

The distribution of these systems in the fifteen locations was as follows (B = group claiming Badu ancestry, H = group claiming Ḥaḍarī ancestry; numbers indicate locations on map):

system 1: 1. (Buraimi: B), 4. (Ṣuhār: B), 11. (Ṣār: B)
system 2: 12. (Ras al-Ḥadd: B)
system 3: 2. (Durū: B), 3. (Durū: H), 5. (Suwaiq: H), 15. (Ḥarāsī: B)
system 4: 14. (al-Ḏarūr: H)

Some comparative dialectological comment is called for at this point.

Within the Arabian peninsula, systems 1 and 2 have been shown to be typical of eastern coastal "nomadic" dialects in general (Johnstone 1967, Holes 1983), and in this study were found in the dialects of three Omani groups: those who claim a B ancestry and who live in the extreme northern areas bordering on the UAE (itself a B area); in B-descended groups on the Bāṭina such as exist in Ṣuhār and Ṣaḥām, which also have strong social and economic ties with B-type dialect speakers of the lower Gulf; and the population living along the eastern eastern coastal strip from Ṣūr to Ras al-Ḥadd.

Systems 5 and 6, on the other hand, are found in Oman only in interior regions which are solidly H in their social complexion. These two systems represent alternative developments of the OA phonological system, both of which are attested for other H communities on the fringes of peninsular Arabia. In its preservation of OA /q/ as a voiceless uvular, its non-affricated reflexes of OA /k/, and voiced alveolar affricate /j/ < OA/j/, system 5 is similar to that found in H-type dialects spoken by long established Muslim sedentaries and non-Muslims over large areas of northern Iraq and southern Turkey (cf. Jastrow's texts from Mardin and Şirât (1980: 165–6, 170–1)), which did not undergo depopulation and subsequent repopulation by Bedouin tribesmen in the wake of the Mongol conquests. (Central and southern Iraq did suffer this fate, which may explain why there is such a clear dividing line between the H-type dialects of northern Iraq, and the B-type dialects of the south.) System 6, which in Oman is typical of the isolated central Jabal Akhdar villages only, represents an alternative H-type of phonological development of /q/, /k/ and /j/ in which OA /q/ was fronted and, presumably, thereby created the phonological pressure to bring about the unconditional affrication of OA /k/ to /j/. In Arabia, the same development has been noted for the oldest pre-Anazi dialect.
stratum in certain Shīʿ Baharna villages of Bahrain claiming ancient tribal affiliations to Oman (Holes 1983: 14) and for south Syrian and central Palestinian villages (cf. Cantinieu’s ‘parlers S (sedentaires)’ 1960: 66, 69 in his general classification). All of these are long established Ḥadari communities.

System 3, with its voiced /g/ reflex of OA /g/, is clearly a B development, though its lack of affrication of /g/ < OA /g/ and OA /k/ in front vowel environments mark it out as a separate, and more conservative type of development of OA than systems 1 and 2, as do certain of its morphological characteristics. System 3 is the main B system in the desert areas of inland Oman. As far as I can tell, it is used throughout the tribal diras of the Durūʿ in the north west, the Harāsī in the south, and the Al-Wahiba and Janaba in, and to the south of, the Wahiba sands. It is also typical of settled members of the Durūʿ living on the fringes of the desert. The fact that it also seems to occur in the Bājtina at Suwaila requires comment.

The Suwaila dialect (and others from the central/south Bājtina region—see Brocket, 1985: 12–15) seem to be ‘mixed’ dialects, showing a number of features which in other areas of the country are associated in a much more cut-and-dried manner with speakers claiming B ancestry on the one hand, or H ancestry on the other. In this particular case, the main speaker recorded showed a basically B-type phonology (system 3), but with a preponderance of H-type morphological features (see below). He was a 70-year-old retired farmer who had lived all his life on the Bājtina coast, except for thirteen years spent in Bahrain and Kuwait working as a labourer. This kind and length of contact with neighbouring Arabic-speaking areas is very common in Oman, and may have had some effect on his idiolect. A more powerful general influence, however, is likely to have been the longstanding contact between the H people of the mountains, and the mixed population of the coastal region. Permanent and semi-permanent immigration into the lush coastal areas from the coastal hinterland and the mountains has been going on for many generations. Many of Brocket’s 30 Khābārūn informants show a similar pattern of vacillation between H and B forms to that of the Suwaila speaker.

System 4 is typical of the H population of towns along the northern edge of the Wahiba sands between Ibrāʿ and Al-Kāmil—three of about 100 ks. Its voiceless reflex of /q/ suggests its basically H character, as do most aspects of its morphology. However, the occurrence of the /j/ reflex of /j/, which is typical of B dialects in all areas of Oman, including the contiguous Wahiba Sands, and which does not normally occur in ‘heartland’ H areas, suggests that this is a ‘transitional’ system produced by linguistic contact with B speakers. It is also heard among the population of H regional centres like Muṣlahi on the western fringe of the Wahiba sands, though here the /j/ reflex is regularly found in certain common lexical items only.

**Syndyle structure of OA CvCvCvC(C) forms**

As far as the syntactic structure of originally CvCvCvC(C) forms is concerned, all of the B-descended speakers (systems 1–3) except the one from Sur showed CvCvCvC(C) forms typical of Najdi and Najdi-descended dialects such as /bms/ ‘turtle’ (Ras al-Hadd) /ghaba/ ‘neck’ (Wādī Ashwad), /jiṣbṭen/ ‘two wooden beams’ (Ṣuḥār), although CvCvCvC(C) or CvCvCvC(C) forms were more common for most of these speakers in the past tense verb than CvCvCvC(C)-type forms, e.g. /gitilīš/ ‘they killed him’ (Ḫarāsī), /kitibūh/ ‘they wrote them down’ (Durūʿ), /kubraw/ ‘they grew old’ (Ṣuḥār). In contrast, all those speakers who showed systems 4, 5 and 6 on the segmental phonological variables—that is, the H groups—as well as those H speakers who showed the
TYPE H2
/k/ < OA /ṣ/
/k/ < OA /k/ (unconditionally in all environments)
/j/ < /j/  
CV(C)/CV(C) forms only
kahwa only
B /s/ only for 2nd f. s. pronoun suffix

Type H2 is a separate H dialect-type which shares the main morphological features of H1 (see below) but shows a different kind of H phonological development with the fronting of OA /ṣ/ to /ṣ/ and the unconditioned affrication of OA /k/ in all positions. It is typical of the speech of villagers from the higher and more remote areas of the central Jabal Akhdar and is represented here by speakers from Wādi Saḥṭān on the seaward watershed of the range, and Misfāt al-ʿAbriyyīn on the desert side. It also appears to be typical of the older inhabitants of Rustaq and its immediate vicinity. Text 4 provides an example.

The dialect of the Suwaiq informant does not clearly fit into any of these types, being Type B2 from the point of view of the segmental variables, but consistently showing syllable structure variants which place it in Type H1. As we shall now see, the Suwaiq dialect is also the most 'mixed' in its treatment of the morphological variables examined.

**Dialectal morphological variables**

The competing variants in four morphological variables are noted below. In each case, the variant described by Reinhardt for the dialect of the Bani Kharīṣ—an H1 dialect in terms of this paper—is contrasted with variants shown by Johnstone (1967: 7–8) to be typical of the B dialects of central and northern Arabia.

(a) final /-/ə/ and /-/ı/ in 3 pl. and 2 f. s. imperfects (B) versus final /-/u/ and /-/i/ (H), e.g. /yikībūn/ versus /yikībi/ 'they write'
(b) -/ḥ/ (B) for the 3rd m. s. object/ possessive enclitic, versus -/uḥ/ (H), e.g. /nābū/ versus /nābū/ 'we drink it'
(c) /-/ə/- (B) versus /-/ı/- (H) type prefixes for verbs initial hamza in the imperfect active, e.g. /yīḥ/ versus /yīḥ/ 'he takes'
(d) /-/i/- (B) versus /-/u/- (H) type prefixes for verbs Form V and VI, e.g. /niṭallam/ versus /niṭallam/ 'we learn'.

The distribution of these variant forms closely correlated with the four basic dialect types as defined by the phonological criteria described above. In the data for the locations given below, the B or H morphological forms occurred 100% of the time.

**Phonological type**

**Type B1**
(Buraimi: B, Ṣuḥār: B)

**Type B2**
(Durū: B, Ḥarāṣūk: B)

**Type H1**
(Karshā-Ḥīwh: H, Ḥirā: H, al-Ḥarāz: H)

**Type H2**
(Misfāt al-ʿAbriyyīn: H, Wādi Saḥṭān: H)

As in the case of the phonological variables, however, there are a number of transitional dialects which do not fit neatly into this B/H dichotomy. Among the

**Morphological variable**

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Type B1 and B2 dialects defined on phonological grounds, the Durū Ḥāḍarīs and the B dialect-speakers of Ṣūr and Ṣur al-Ḥadd all show categorical H forms on morphological variable (a) where B forms would have been expected, and two of the Type H1 dialects show a mixed patterning:

Type B1: (a) (b) (c) (d)  
Bahlā H H B H
Qalīḥāt H B H B

The dialect of the Suwaiq speaker, phonologically a B dialect, showed the most variation of all:

Suwaiq H/B H B H/B

Again, it is difficult to give a certain explanation of these inconsistencies, but what is noticeable is that all but one (the exception is Bahla) of the six dialects which show some degree of a B and H 'mixture', and/or variation between B and H variants are from dialectally 'border' areas in which there has been longstanding linguistic contact between B and H speakers. In the case of the 'variable' B1 and B2 dialects, all are closely economically linked with nearby H areas. This is most obvious in the case of the Durū Ḥāḍarīs, a sedentary offshoot of the Durū Ḍūdū living in the government-built 'tribal centre' at Tan'am, for many of whom 'Ibrī, a few miles to the east, provides daytime employment and/or markets in which to sell their produce.

The same kind of variation between B and H forms also marks the speech of the basically B-speaking fishermen and herders of the coastal strip between Ṣūr and Ṣur al-Ḥadd, and of the basically H-speaking date farmers of Qalīḥāt and the hinterland mountainous region, which is some 15 miles distant to the northwest of Ṣūr on the edge of a 'heartland' H area. The economies of these fishing and farming communities are interdependent, which results in a high degree of social and linguistic contact between them.

The Suwaiq data shows a dialect in which there is a very high degree of variation and variation between competing forms: a result, I would suggest, of the particular demographic history of the central Bājīna area with its manifold original elements and the long history of migration into it from its less fertile mountainous hinterland and from the Gulf.

**Summary and conclusions**

The main points to emerge from this preliminary examination of Omani dialects are:

1. There is a heterogeneous bundle of features which characterize all Omani dialects in all areas (except for Buraimi). Some of these features are variously shared by contiguous southern and central peninsular dialects.
2. Notwithstanding this, a major dichotomy can be established within Omani dialects, corresponding closely with claimed Ḍūdū or Ḥāḍar ancestry and social identity. Whilst this distinction has been established here on the basis of phonology and morphology, it should be noted that there are also consistent differences between the two dialect types in syntax and lexicon.
3. Within each of these major, socially based dialect classes, there are two geographically defined subdivisions, giving four basic types.
4. 'Transitional' dialects are found where B and H dialect types have fused as the result of long term mixing and social integration, as in the central/south Bājīna, or are in continuous contact, as in the northern Sharqiyya towns, the area around Qalīḥāt and Ṣūr, and western desert fringes around 'Ibrī.

Three of the four Omani dialect types identified here are described by Reinhardt or other early investigators (B1, B2, H2) each bear resemblances to dialects from outside Oman with which they are more or less closely tribally,
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and/or historically connected: B1 to the eastern subgroup of the north Arabian dialects; B2 to the dialects of the ‘Awâmîr and Râshîd tribes of the southern Empty Quarter; H2 to the Bahârînda dialects spoken in certain Shi‘i villages of Bahrain (whose speakers, like those of H2, assert that their ancestors were sedentary farmers who migrated from the Yemen to Oman from the sixth century onwards). H1, the major H dialect, shows a combination of reflexes of OA /q/, /k/ and /j/ which, according to Blanc (1969: 28) is closest to the Old Arabic dialects of other groups of long established sedentaries in northern Iraq.

Sample texts and translations

The texts presented here are given in broad transcription, sufficient to bring out the major phonological differences.

Text 1: Buraimi: Wedding customs and general conversation

This text, which exemplifies a Type B1 dialect, was recorded in April 1987 by a female undergraduate at Sultan Qaboos University at her home in Buraimi.

All speakers are from the Al Bu Shâmis.

(I) = interviewer (the student)
(A) = speaker A, aged about 35 (his aunt)
(B) = speaker B, aged about 70 (his grandmother)

(I) agiì lî yaﬁni yaxtrî ñagûlî yaxni yîn yîstîbû Sîndukum yaxni wîhîd yitqaddam binnîh bintikûm ... ñagûl yaxni—
(II) ñagûl ... ñagûl ... ñagûl ... ñagûl ... ñagûl ... ñagûl ...
(III) ñagûl ... ñagûl ...

Translation

(I) ‘I say, my sister, how—I mean, when it happens that someone comes (to ask for) your daughter, how I mean—

(II) We ask the chap then for . . . a hundred . . . a hundred thousand.

(III) And then what do you agree with the person who asks for your daughter?

(A) Nothing . . . except the hundred (thousand) we asked from him. All the expenses are paid by them themselves. Then he goes and buys her clothes so that she can get her ready. I mean the clothes, in the old days—the husband would clothe his (future) wife and would bring the food, I mean for the wedding, and would invite the guests and would bring the food on the Thursday—everything. On Friday we would make “hars”—

(II) On Thursday—

(A) Thursday is the wedding. In the morning they make the “miksa’r”, I mean the (wedding) food . . . we used to call it “zihba” but now the things have got all modern and we call it “miksa’r”. When they come—we invite our relations and kindfolk and neighbours and people—we send a woman, I mean we send them a car.

(B) The guests, the cooking, comes out at ten thousand . . . the cook gets that!

(II) Yes, true, that actually is a fact . . . in the old days people were satisfied with simpler things

(B) Now it’s ten thousand just for the cooking, and those who do the job of inviting (guests) want a thousand Rupees...

(II) Yes, true, the world’s changed.

(B) The trousseau costs more than fifty thousand!

(A) Nowadays they want a lot . . .

(B) The jeweller’s costs more than fifty thousand!’

‘On the Friday we give our neighbours—we distribute the “hars” to them. And when, as usual, he brings—after the bridegroom brings—the car, he makes them get ready, saying “Come on you women, those of you who are up to it, get in!” We go and get the bride and afterwards the women get in—those who want to go with the bride come forward and get...
in the car. They go there and bring her to the house and have coffee with her, I mean they give coffee to the bridegroom's family. When they've given them coffee, when they've told them—they've made them swear that they'll have lunch with them, if the bride's family accept, I mean the people who've brought the bride, they have lunch with them. If they don't accept, they go home. The bride stays on her own with a woman for a week—I mean the bride and her aunt. She then leaves her and then he (the bridegroom) takes her after that week, he collects her and takes her visiting. He brings—he is not stingy—what he can, he brings as much as he is able: rice and coffee and grain and animals for slaughter—everything. The bridegroom and his family and the bride eat lunch with the bride's family and stay until late afternoon. He (the bridegroom) comes back for her after three days and takes away his wife. That's all there is to it.'

(I) 'I say, when you got up in the morning in the old days, what did you do?
(B) We used to ... we had difficult times, my girl, you hear, difficult times. Thanks be to God, may Qaboos's life be long, we praise God and thank him ... First we used to cut (crops), we'd get up early and stay up late with our children. And after we'd stay up late with our children we'd get up and cut (crops). We'd wait in the house, and pick up the scraps of paper, and make the coffee and tea and the breakfast with our families ... but the old days were better. In the old days when people got up they'd ask you whether anything was siring you or not. Now there's nobody around: everyone is in their house, it's no good ... that's the problem today.'

Text 2: Wādī Ya'ālī, Juddah al-Ḥarāsī: The oryx project
This text, which typifies B2 dialects, is part of a recording made at the main field HQ of the RGS Oman Wahiba Sands Project in Mināţib, in February 1986. The two speakers (A) and (B) are illiterate Ḥarsūsī park wardens at the oryx game park in Wādī Ya'ālī, who happened to be visiting the RGS project at the same time as I was. They were aged about 40, and were both bilingual in Ḥarsūsī and Arabic. (I) is the interviewer, myself.

(I) ‘Su il-farg ya'ni bēnhum?
(A) farg? ḥāda r-rim abyaq ud ilal waqīf kīdāk wil il-qlība ḥāda—gażāl—ilal dayman yihīzah, yūn yisir yihīz yilal, tamh yihīzah
(B) il-qlība abhār wil il-rim abyaq
(A) wi r-rim waqīf il-ilal ... ila-waqī fawwal yūn yirā hawīya rabīh dāxīl rumūl dāxīl yihīz yifur ḥāda yazīk, awma, fi ṭ-ḍāhr il-abwaq. il-ḥān muḫādir yirabbah bas bīnašū ḥawīya ṣawwa bas ṣal d-ṭāriyya.
(B) kēnū hu fi il-ḥadīja yažīna hāda miqṣīt il-ḥān ṣawwa, ma hu ṣīla, dāxīl ṣawwa
(A) yirā hāna bīn al-ṣalat wa mīṣar dēl ... rūf u nṣība lina ṣawwa il-ḥān min ṣīddat ṣalat sana ṭāra ma ṣawwa l-ṭāriyya, lāna ṣawwa nūr ṣawwa ṣawwa ... ṭāba bīrī ... (B) il-awwal kān nāṣūmān, ma si
(A) awwaal sīl min zamān, min ḍāhr bīn tāmūr bāṣa ma ḥkm gābīs ʿallān bīn sōla u rāḥān ... min bāṣa ṭārī ḥa mā ṣawwa līlāh, hu yā il-ḥān min ḥkm gābīs, yanbīnūn gābīs, wi ṣād yāna fi ṭ-ḥadda, yaddat il-ḥarā♯īs, u nṣība il-ḥān maṣīra, yanna ṣīla u nṣība lina mūkṣur u il-ḥān maṣīla ṭāra ṣarīyya u ṣawwa l-ṭāriyya. nūr ṣawwa ṣawwa ... ila ṣawwa l-ḥān, ṣawwa il-ḥān, ṣawwa ila il-ḥān, ṣawwa il-ḥān, ṣawwa ila il-ḥān, ṣawwa ila il-ḥān, ṣawwa ila il-ḥān, ṣawwa ila il-ḥān ...

Translation
(I) 'What is the difference between them?
(A) Difference? The oryx is white and its tail is immobile, like this. The antelope, or gazelle, constantly wags its tail ... When it moves it wags its tail, it keeps on wagging it ...
(B) The antelope is red and the oryx white.

(A) And the oryx doesn't move its tail ... At times in the old days, when it would go with its companions into the sands or into the hills it might stumble and break its leg, in the old days, the old days. Nowadays nobody returns it (to the wild), it just gradually goes by itself, except there are patrol (to watch over it).
(B) The way the oryx is kept now, in the park, this area of park, it used not to be like that, inside a park ...

(A) The Sultan protects them, and Mr Daly. They protected (them) and established a park for them about three years ago. They (the oryx) have gone to the desert and they have patrols (to watch over them). We're with them, we go to them ... The oryx has gone back to the wild ...
(B) Before, they had become extinct, there weren't any.
(A) Before, they were hunted to extinction, in the days of (Sa‘īd) bin Taimur. After Qaboos acceded, the oryx became extinct and disappeared. Later, he (Sa‘īd bin Taimur) departed, praise be to God, and after Qaboos came and acceded, after they'd brought in Qaboos, he came to us in the Jiddat il-Ḥarāṣī and now they've set up a project, he came to us here and they set up a camp for us. And now, thanks be to God, (the oryx) have gone back to the wild, and there are patrols (to protect them), we go out on patrol. When we stay (out) overnight, when we spend the night away, in the morning we go out and we can't see where they are, so we scatter ... tracks, there is someone in the car while someone else follows the tracks, we carry on until we find them ... In the summer, they neither drink nor go into the desert—water, they don't drink at all.'

Text 3: Bahālī: The manufacture of pottery
This extract, in which the dialect is of the H1 type, was recorded in a pottery in the town of Bahālī in April 1986. The speaker is the potter, aged about 35.

nāṭih min ḥād u nasawwi l-ḥalmar ṣala l-ḥaḍrār lākān il-ḥalmar yinqaya bi n-nuṣsa l-ḥalmar u ṣawwa l-wāyib yamīn. u nṣūtān fi ṣādāk il-ḥasf u ṣawwa nūṣuṯā ʿaṯf min l-ḥāna yinrī yu xūs ṣawwa nūṣuṯā mu_RENDERING работает на Windows 10 или более поздних версий. Если вы используете другой операционную систему, нам рекомендуется попытаться найти альтернативную программу для чтения PDF.

...
Translation

We bring it (the clay) from here and we mix the red clay with the green, but the red clay is cut with edges slightly more than half green clay. We mix it in this pit and we put the refined clay here. And then we remove the crust from it. We give the refined clay (time)—we put it (aside) for a period. If it's in cold weather it needs ten days, but in hot weather it only needs three. The clay becomes like cheese, it acquires a greasy appearance. We work the clay there and tread it with our feet so that it becomes well mixed. Sometimes it's for pots like this which need different clay from that. Then I come and if it needs three hours to use up all the clay, I work three hours. If I've prepared enough clay for fifty pots, I make fifty pots. I estimate the amount. We put it (the pot) into the mould and bring water and a broken pot-ash (for decorating). We then make a rope (to wrap around it) so that the pot does not get spoilt. After I make the rope, the pot goes into the mould three times: the first time when I'm throwing it, then twice when I shape it: the bottom of it, and the top. Then I come back again the next day and it's dry. I shape it with this so that it looks like this. Then I come back and put it in a cooling and drying room. Like this room takes a hundred pots, and I make a hundred in two or three days. If it's fifty, two days, if it's thirty-five or twenty-five, three or four days.

Text 4: Wādāi Sahlūn, Jabal Akhdar: The old days

This text was recorded in June 1986 in Hárat l-Byshin, near Rustāq. The main speaker (A) is an ex-farmer aged approximately 70, born and brought up in the village of al-Nid, Wādāi Sahlūn, in the central Jabal Akhdar. (B) is his son, and (C) the writer. The main speaker's dialect is an excellent example of the H2 dialect type, almost completely unaffected by Modern Standard Arabic.

References


* Unclear on the tape.

1 yīhiyyāt apparently for yīhiyya: 'they want' with metathesis of the first two radicals.

3 * xarjat & k for x occurred regularly in this speaker's speech.

4 Unclear on the tape.
ON TADMÍN (ENJAMBMENT) AND STRUCTURAL COHERENCE IN CLASSICAL ARABIC POETRY

By Amidu Sanni

The importance of poetry as the chief aesthetic experience of the Arabs as well as the principal repository of materials on their life and thought has long been recognized by the Arab and, following them, non-Arab students of Arabic culture. The fact that all the technical terminologies of Arabic verse which were formalized in *al-Tarīq* (Prosody) are derived from the components of the bedouin tent—a highly prized possession—indicates the significance of the art to the Arab mind. The pride of place enjoyed by poetry in Arabic literary thought derives primarily from the hieratic idiom associated with it, as well as from its structural coherence, which relies on the harmony of prosodic factors (*al-qawāmil al-arḍiyya*) associated with poetic praxis. Thus non-observance of those factors, which consequently leads to production of faulty verses, has often been frowned upon by Arab literary critics. This study, therefore, aims at examining one of these faults, viz., *tadmín* 'enjambment', often regarded as a serious drawback to the much-cherished concept of structural continuity of Arabic verse.

There is hardly any disagreement among Arab critics over the social status of poets. They are generally regarded as *ummar al-kalam* 'masters of the language' who, none the less, enjoy certain dispensations from the strict rules of the formal language as necessitated by the peculiarity of their craft. According to al-Mubarrad (285/898), the very rigid nature of Arabic metre imposes some constraint (*dirara*) on the poet while the strict demands of rhyme require application of skill (*hilah*). However, the theorists have often sought to reconcile these concessions with the structural needs of the Arabic line. The standard definition of an Arabic line (bawā')—usually composed of two hemistiches—implies that it must be a meaningful unit by itself: not depending on what precedes it, and more importantly, not relying on what follows it, for a clear perception of the idea being expressed to emerge. In its most pedantic form, the definition favours intralinear independence, that is, the absolute meaningfulness of either hemistich independent of the other.

It is against this background that the critics condemn a situation where the full meaning of a poetic idea started in a particular line is achieved only in the succeeding line. This is a technically called *tadmín* 'enjambment'.

One might add in parenthesis here that enjambment, which is roundly condemned by Arab native critics, is looked at differently in other literatures, especially classical European literature where it is considered as one of the easiest touchstones by which to test the orality of a poem.

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8. See, for example, Albert Lord, *The singer of tales* (New York, 1965), 130–1, 144–7.