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Arabic Linguistics
A Historiographic Overview

Abstract

The study of Arabic language seems to have started under the driving need to establish a correct reading and interpretation of the Qurʾān. Notwithstanding the opinions of some writers about its origins one should stress that the script and spelling of the Holy Writ derives directly from the Nabataean cursive. Aramaic Nabataean script was used to write Old Arabian since the first century A.D., also at Taymāʾ and Madāʾin Ṣaʿlīḥ, in the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula. Variant readings and divergent interpretations of Qurʾānic sentences, based on ancient Arabic dialects, are not expected to disturb the Arabic grammatical tradition, which was possibly influenced to some extent by Indian theories and Aristotelian concepts. It served as foundation to modern European studies and was then expanded to Middle Arabic, written mainly by Jews and Christians, and to the numerous modern dialects. From the mid-19th century onwards, attention was given also to pre-classical North-Arabian, attested by Ṣafaitic, Ṭamūdic, Liḥyanite, and Ḥasæan inscriptions, without forgetting the North-Arabian background and the loanwords of Nabataean Aramaic, as well as the dialectal information from the 7th–8th centuries, preserved in Arabic sources.

Keywords: Arabic language, Linguistics, Grammar, Qurʾān, North-Arabian

The study of Semitic grammar, either Arabic, Syriac or Hebrew, started under the driving need to establish a correct reading and a proper interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, the Qurʾān and the Bible, both in their formal and semantic dimensions. In the first centuries of Islam, the lack of a vowel system and of diacritical signs distinguishing
some consonants, as well as the territorial expansion of the Arabs to countries with a population speaking other idioms, required a grammatical and semantic analysis of problematic passages in the Qur’an and in the Ḥadīth\(^1\). Besides, the Qur’an was basically written in the Hiḡāзи idiom used in the Qurayš tribe for poetry and perhaps also for writing in general. Its language was regarded as close to a classical form of Arabic, the purity and clarity of which had to be preserved.

1. The Qur’an and Classical Arabic

According to the Muslim tradition, Muḥammad did not collect himself the revelations of the Qur’an, “recited” to him by Allāh or by his angel. This was done, after various attempts, about twenty years after the Prophet’s death in 632 A.D. The first comprehensive written version is attributed by the tradition to Zayd Ibn Ṭābit, who has been Muḥammad’s secretary. He was instructed in the reign of Abū Bakr (ca. 573–634 A.D.) to collect the scattered records in one volume. This manuscript passed to ‘Umar (ca. 581–644 A.D.) and, at his death, to his daughter Ḥafṣa, one of Muḥammad’s widows. When in the reign of ‘Uṯmān (ca. 574–656 A.D.) quarrels arose as to the true form of the Qur’an, Zayd was again appointed by the caliph, together with three members of the Qurayš tribe, to prepare an authoritative version, obviously based also on oral tradition. Copies of this were sent to the main cities of the empire, and all earlier written versions or transcripts, except the text of Ḥafṣa, were ordered to be burned. The recension of ‘Uṯmān thus became the only standard text for the whole Muslim world up to the present day. Its absolute value was guaranteed by the *tadwīn*, a term used in the 10th-century Rasā’il Iḥwān as-Ṣāfa\(^2\) to describe the divinely inspired editing of the Qur’an.

The final result of this tradition broadly corresponds to the opinion of Western scholars who generally accept Theodor Nöldeke’s and Friedrich Schwally’s conclusion that the written Qur’an was not sent into general circulation among the Muslims until some time after the death of Muḥammad\(^3\). In the meantime, however, the political situation of the Arab world had so profoundly altered that Günther Lüling, a German Arabist, assumed that ‘Uṯmān’s recension amounted to nothing less than a reworking of the Qur’an

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1 This other Islamic holy writ was at least partly put in writing in the 8th century, probably earlier. Cf. I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* II, Halle 1890 (reprints, Hildesheim 1971, 2004), pp. 1–274.


3 Th. Nöldeke’s original *Geschichte des Qorāns* was published at Göttingen in 1860, but its second edition is generally used nowadays: Th. Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorāns* I–III, 2nd ed., Leipzig 1909–1938 (6th reprint, Hildesheim 2008). Vol. I (1909), dealing with the origins of the Qur’an, was revised by F. Schwally; vol. II (1919), concerning its compilation, was completely rewritten by F. Schwally; vol. III (1926), the history of the text, was reworked by G. Bergsträsser and O. Pretzl. The indices to the three volumes were prepared by A. Gottschalk-Baur and issued in 1938.
texts\textsuperscript{4}. His thesis and the forwarded arguments are unconvincing, while the presence of such a precept as Sura XXIV, 2, contradicting the Islamic death penalty for adultery, shows that the preservation of the original contents was the main concern of the redactors, possibly of Zayd Ibn Ṭābit.

Lüling’s ideas are paralleled to a certain extent by the views of John Wansbrough who dates the basic codification of the Qur’ān from the 9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.\textsuperscript{5} Few readers seem to have embraced this opinion. In fact, Chapter 101 of the Dialectica, written by St. John of Damascus (ca. 675–752) in the first half of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century, refers to the Qur’ān, which no doubt constituted a well-known work at that time\textsuperscript{6}. Its existence in the mid-8\textsuperscript{th} century or at an earlier date is implied also by two Arabic papyri from Egypt, going probably back to the time of Theodore Abū Qurra (ca. 740–820)\textsuperscript{7}, bishop of Harran, and paraphrasing some passages of the Qur’ān. Moreover, titles of Suras appear already in Dialectica 101 and in the papyri in question, indicating that the Qur’ān had a relatively firm shape at that time\textsuperscript{8}. This does not mean of course that variants and free copies or paraphrases did not exist or have disappeared completely with the introduction of the standard version. The fragments of the so-far oldest Qur’ānic text, a palimpsest discovered at Ṣan‘ā’ (Yemen) in the 70’s of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and probably dating from the first half of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century A.D., show different sequences of Suras and verses, omissions and additions, as well as some different vowel letters\textsuperscript{9}. Such fragments do certainly not imply that the edition of a standard version is a utopian idea. As for the Arabic script, its perfect development in the early 8\textsuperscript{th} century is shown for instance by the inscription engraved on the capital from Al-Muwaqqar (Jordan), shown here below. Its date, 104 A.H., i.e. 723 A.D., is inscribed on the shaft of the column.


\textsuperscript{5} J. Wansbrough, Quranic Studies. Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation, Oxford 1977; id., The Sectarian Milieu, Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History, Oxford 1978.


\textsuperscript{7} First published by G. Graf in F. Bilabel and A. Grohmann (eds.), Griechische, Koptische und Arabische Texte zur Religion und religiösen Literatur in Ägyptens Spätzeit, Heidelberg 1934, pp. 1–24 (No. 112) and pp. 24–31 (No. 113).


However, a serious question can be raised because of the lack of diacritics and vowel signs in the early manuscripts of the Qur’ān. The shape of one character has no less than five reading possibilities (b, t, ṭ, n, y), if the diacritical dots are missing, while other have three (ḡ, ḥ, h) or two possibilities (d and ḍ, r and ž, s and š, ẓ and ṭ, ż, ‘ and ǧ). This situation results from the use of the cursive post-Nabataean script\(^{10}\) to write the Qur’ān in the mid-7th century. This Aramaic script was not distinguishing a number of phonemes existing in spoken Arabic; besides, it was lacking diacritics and vowel signs. Both were progressively introduced, following the Syriac example\(^{11}\). The earliest attestation of diacritics in Arabic is found in an inscription from 58 A.H. and their use was slowly generalized in the 8th and 9th centuries\(^{12}\). In the early Islamic period, two types of Arabic writing existed, known as Kufic and cursive nāshīr. The former was discontinued except for formal purposes, where cursive writing could not be employed. The nāshīr is the parent of usual and modern Arabic writing.

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\(^{10}\) Cf. E. Lipiński, Émergence et diffusion des écritures alphabétiques, “Rocznik Orientalistyczny” 63/2 (2010), pp. 71–126, in particular pp. 116–117 with earlier literature. All Arabic characters are similar to the cursive Nabataean ones, and ten are similar to Nabataean only, not to Syriac. The question can thus be regarded as finally resolved.


Considering the problematic or obscure Qur’anic passages one should accept the possibility of mistakenly added diacritics. For instance, St. John the Baptist is called *Yahyā* in the present punctuation of the Qur’ān, but the consonants also allow the reading *Yūḥannā*, which probably corresponds to an early pronunciation of the name. In fact, when the Mandaeans introduced John the Baptist in their literary tradition to show to the Muslims that they have a Prophet recognized in the Qur’ān, they first called him *Yōḥannā*, as shown by his mentions in the *Ginza*, their earliest sacred book. Later, in the so-called *John-Book*, they mainly use the name *Yahyā*. This punctuation was very likely chosen by Muslim scholars because *Yūḥannā* does not appear in Arabic onomastics, while *Yahyā* is a well attested name, occurring already in Ṣafaitic inscriptions.

Some twelve years ago, Christoph Luxenberg (a pseudonym) suggested a number of repunctuations of Qur’ānic words, referring sometimes to Aramaic or Syriac. The most spectacular case is supposed to occur in Sura XLIV, 54 and LII, 20, where the happy afterlife of the pious dead is described also by the phrase: “We coupled them (zungāhum) with nymphs (*ḥūrīāt*)”. Luxenberg proposes changing the diacritics in order to read *rawwaḥnāhum*, “we gave them rest”, while the *ḥūrīāt* become “white”, in Aramaic *hiwwārāt*. However, he hardly pays attention to the *y* of *ḥūrīāt* and to the use of the variant *rayyāha* or of Stem IV *arāḥa* in the sense “to give rest”, while *rawwaha* could rather mean “to revive the spirits”. There are errors in Luxenberg’s transcriptions of Syriac words, but it is pointless to discuss them because the basic idea of a Syriac

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13 Sura III, 34/39; VI, 85; XIX, 7.
15 G.L. Harding, *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions* (Near and Middle East Series 8), Toronto 1971, p. 662: *YHYY*.
background lacks any factual support. Besides, as a matter of principle, one should reckon with ancient Arabian dialects, as done by Chaim Rabin\(^{18}\), and with the North-Arabian inscriptions\(^{19}\) before using Aramaic, whose vocabulary influenced Arabic, as shown already in the 19th century by Sigmund Fraenkel (1855–1909)\(^{20}\), but mainly at a somewhat later stage. This is a basic methodological question undermining Luxenberg’s approach. The language of the Qur’an certainly exhibited differences from the spoken dialects, but it was also supposed to contain real or assumed dialectal words\(^{21}\). Moreover, one should not forget that Arabic script derives from Nabataean cursive, not from Syriac. Also the non-classical feminine ending -\(\dot{a}\) is indicated by -\(\dot{h}\) like in Nabataean, e.g. \(nh\h\), “estate”, \(s’h\), “hour”, contrary to Syriac, which always uses the \(\ddot{a}l\)af.

One should still stress here that some statements of Luxenberg and of authors defending similar ideas are historically incorrect, for instance when stating that the personal name Muhammad does not appear before year 67 A.H., i.e. towards the end of the 7th century A.D. In reality, this name is attested already hundreds of years earlier in Sabaic and in Ṣafaitic, which was a pre-Classical Arabic dialect\(^{22}\). Also the name ‘Abd-Ilah of Muhammad’s father is well attested in Ṭamūdīc, Ṣafaitic, and South-Arabian onomastics\(^{23}\). Such examples can be multiplied.

Arab commentators of the Qur’an knew its internal problems, and their early treatises demonstrate that ambiguous and variant readings did indeed occur across the whole range of lexical and morphosyntactic issues: from simple pronunciation variants through different case endings or verbal forms, synonyms or near synonyms, to interpretations of whole phrases. A state of the art is presented in the Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an\(^{24}\), where one should consult not only the article on Qur’anic readings\(^{25}\), but also the contributions dealing with textual criticism\(^{26}\), grammar\(^{27}\), and exegesis\(^{28}\).

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19 Cf. here below, pp. 37–47.
20 S. Fraenkel, Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen, Leiden 1878 (reprint, Hildesheim 1982). Cf. also A. Mingana, Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kur’an, “Bulletin of the John Rylands Library” 11 (1927), pp. 77–98. Since Mingana regards ‘\(\ddot{a}l\)dh, k\(\dot{h}\)in, n\(\dot{f}\)s, Qur’an’, etc., as words derived from Syriac, one should approach his article with a critical mind. A plural like sfrh, “scribes”, in Sura LXXX, 15, goes certainly back to Aramaic, but it could be Syriac as well as Jewish Aramaic. In any case, one must remember that Nestorian missionaries have reached South Arabia in the 5th century A.D. at the latest.
21 Now, one must remember that it was often impossible for the Arabic script to express genuine dialect forms, just as it is inadequate today for writing the colloquial forms of speech.
22 G.L. Harding, An Index and Concordance (n. 15), p. 531.
23 Ibid., pp. 397, 400.
Among the problematic passages best known are “the seven variant readings” or qirāʿāt, described by Abū Bakr Ibn Muğāhid (d. 935 A.D.)\textsuperscript{29}, but phonological, semantic, and grammatical analyses of problematic passages in the Qurʾān are more important than simple lists of variants to establish the “true” meaning of the text. Hence the endeavour of early Arab philologists to explain rare or difficult Qurʾānic words in works quoted later under the name Kitāb al-uglifyat, “Book on the Dialects”, or the like. We possess one of these monographs, the Risāla (“Treatise”) ascribed to Abū ‘Ubayd Qāsim Ibn Sallām al-Harawī\textsuperscript{30}. The purpose of those lexicographers was somewhat similar to that of the oldest linguistic treatise preserved in India: the Nirukta (“Etymology”) of Yāska, a Sanskrit scholar of the 5th century B.C.\textsuperscript{31} He provides brief explanations of Rigvedic words which had become obscure. As a matter of fact, Abū ‘Ubayd’s Risāla was written when the study of Arabic grammar was already established as an independent discipline, traditionally represented by the Kufan and Basran schools\textsuperscript{32}.

Farrā’ (d. 822 A.D.) from Kufa (12 km north-east of An-Naḡaf, Iraq) analyzed problematic Qurʾānic passages from the phonetic, morphological, and contextual points of view in his “Meanings of the Qurʾān”\textsuperscript{33}. Without presenting a complete study of syntactic structures, he examined the sense of various words in larger components, sometimes above the level of the sentence. This approach records the Indian treatises following the Mahābhāṣya (“Great Commentary”) of Patañjali (ca. 150 B.C.). Farrā’ was extremely detailed as to questions of pronunciation and morphology, while scarcely touching syntax. Instead, a considerable attention was given to the syntax in the Basran school of Arabic grammar, whose main representative is Sibawayhi (d. 793 A.D.)\textsuperscript{34}, who studied at Basra under Al-Ḥalīl Ibn Ahmad Ibn ‘Amr (710–786 A.D.)\textsuperscript{35}. Al-Ḥalīl was the leader of the Basran school and the compiler of the first Arabic dictionary, the Kitāb al-‘Ayn, “The

\textsuperscript{29} Abū Bakr Ibn Muğāhid, Kitāb as-sab’a ft al-qirāʿat, ed. Šawqi al-Dayf, Cairo 1979.
\textsuperscript{30} Abū ‘Ubayd Qāsim Ibn Sallām al-Harawī (d. 838 A.D.), Risāla ft-mā warada ft al-Qurʾānī al-Kartmi min luğat al-qabā’ili, Cairo 1310 A.H.
\textsuperscript{31} For a comparison of ancient Semitic and Sanskrit semantic speculations, see W. van Bekkum, J. Houben, I. Sluiter, and K. Versteegh, The Emergence of Semantics in Four Linguistic Traditions: Hebrew, Sanskrit, Greek, Arabic, Amsterdam 1997. The classical grammar of Panini was published and translated by O. Börthl, Panini: Grammatik, Leipzig 1887 (reprint, Hildesheim 1977).
\textsuperscript{34} Sibawayhi is the nickname of Abū Bišr ‘Amr Ibn ‘Uṯman Ibn Qanbar. He was a Persian client of an Arab tribe.
\textsuperscript{35} W. Reuschel, Al-Ḥalīl ibn Ahmad, der Lehrer Sibawayhīs, als Grammatiker, Berlin 1959.
Book of the Eye”36. The work was compiled with the help of Al-Layt Ibn al-Muzaffar, a Khorasani. Al-Ḥaflī paid attention also to dialectal usages, listing roots separately in accordance with the number of letters they contained: two, three, four or five. He also invented a special alphabetic order based on phonetic principles, beginning with the gutturals and ending with the labials. This suggests Sanskrit grammatical influence37, but no direct contacts are known. However, Basra was a harbour trading with India and its area was inhabited also by Mandaeans, among whom we find names such as Ḥyndw and Ḥyndwyty’, revealing relations with Northwestern India38. Some knowledge of Sanskrit grammar could thus reach Al-Ḥaflī quite easily.

The same can be said about Sibawayhi’s Kitāb39, the first known full-scale Arabic grammar, on which all subsequent Arabic grammars were based. Like Sanskrit, which makes a perfect distinction between nouns and verbs, the Kitāb distinguishes the categories of noun and verb, but adds a third part of the speech, viz. the particle, while Sanskrit includes the indeclinable words in the category of nouns. The Kitāb applies both to nouns and to verbs the notion of ‘irāb, literally “Arabization” in the sense of “accidence” or inflection of words. This appellation seems to be suggested by the Greek use of ἐλληνισμός to designate the correct Greek speech. Instead, Sanskrit grammarians termed inflection vibhakti-, “modification”, as being a change in the bare stem-form. Greek influence on Sibawayyi is appearing also in the use of some other grammatical terms and in the choice of particular words for the paradigms of the nouns. Such influence is likely to have been carried into Arabic by the early converts from the conquered territories, many of whom belonged to educated social classes. The parts of speech and their syntactic use are dealt with in the Kitāb in great detail, with supporting quotations from the Qur’ān and from Arabic poetry. Instead, Sibawayhi shows little interest in the dialects40 and he mainly mentions such dialectal usages that were permissible in the lugā faṣīḥā, the “correct speech” as he conceived it.

Similarities in some terminology do no answer the question of the origins of the Arabic grammatical tradition41, which as early as ca. 800 A.D. had a depth and precision

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41 The debate among Western scholars have been presented several times by J. Owens, The Foundations of Grammar: An Introduction to Medieval Arabic Grammatical Theory, Amsterdam 1988; id., Early Arabic Grammatical
unexplainable in terms of borrowing. Its earlier stage was scrutinized by Raphael Talmon on the basis of twenty-seven scattered texts\textsuperscript{42}, but none stands as a work of pure grammar and one can hardly follow him in assuming the existence of a full-fledged “Old Iraqi School”, reformulated by Al-Ḥalil and Sībawayhi\textsuperscript{43}.

Arabic grammar and linguistics have generally been regarded by native scholars as a science elaborated by Arabs independently from a foreign model during the first centuries of the Islam. Modern scholarship has concurred with this view to a large extent and Henri Fleisch only admitted the influence exercised by a few concepts of Aristotelian logic\textsuperscript{44}. Against this view, C.H.M. Versteegh maintained that the Greek impact on the nascent Arabic grammar should not be traced to the Aristotelian logic, still unknown in the 8th century among Arab grammarians\textsuperscript{45}, but that “the real influence was exercised by Hellenistic education institutes with their long-standing tradition of grammar-teaching”\textsuperscript{46}. The sudden appearance of a complete grammatical system with Al-Ḥalil and Sībawayhi at Basra should thus be explained by direct contacts with schools of Greek rhetoric and grammar. Instead, the influence of Aristotelian logic, presupposing the translation of Greek philosophical texts into Arabic, did not become apparent before the 10th century, when some grammarians of Arabic introduced Aristotelian notions, methods, and arguments in their writing. The basic system of Arabic grammar was then elaborated since two centuries.

Versteegh’s basic hypothesis of “growing acquaintance with Greek grammatical practice”\textsuperscript{47} lacks any evidence and one cannot accept his sheer assumption that Arab grammarians failed to mention any Greek grammarians because of their hostility to foreign culture\textsuperscript{48}. Rather, the mode of transmission of Aristotelian concepts and of some Greek grammatical elements must have been similar to that of Christian influences on early Muslim law and theology, as exposed already by J. Schacht\textsuperscript{49}. Such influences were carried into Islam by converts from cities in conquered territories, many of whom belonged to the educated classes. One should refer here especially to Syriac-speaking

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\textsuperscript{42} R. Talmon, \textit{Eighth-Century Iraqi Grammar} (n. 32).
\textsuperscript{45} The hypothesis of early Arabic translations of Greek logical treatises lacks so far a solid basis. It was formulated both by F. Rundgren, \textit{Über den griechischen Einfluss auf die arabische Nationalgrammatik}, “Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis”, n.s. 2 (1976), pp. 119–144, and by R. Talmon, \textit{Eighth-Century Iraqi Grammar} (n. 32).
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 18
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p. 120.
people, either having access to Syriac translations of Aristotelian philosophical writings, like that of the *Categories*, going back to the 6th century\(^{50}\), or trying to prevent an inappropriate reading of the Holy Scripture by introducing the vocalic signs\(^{51}\). This system was in fact adopted by Arab scribes in the 8th century and further research should look for other elements of Syriac origin in early Arabic grammar without running off the rails like Luxenberg and company.

Arabic system of grammar as a whole, however, was developed without foreign influence. The latter is appearing in some lexicographic conceptions, in an apparently similar terminology, in reflexes of Aristotelian logic\(^{52}\), but basic grammatical notions seem to presuppose a native understanding of the spoken language. This is exemplified by the absence of an univocal concept of subject in mediaeval Arabic linguistic theory. This is no sign of its inferiority, as stated by Henri Fleisch, but the correct assessment of the different role of the subject in a verbal and in a nominal clause. The logical subject of the verbal clause, *al-fāʿil*, “the acting one”, seems in fact to go back to the *casus agens* of an ergative grammatical system, while the subject of the nominal clause, *al-mubtadaʿ bihi*, “the one with whom one begins”, goes apparently back to the *casus patientis*. These are remote traces of ergativity the characteristic feature of which is that the object of transitive verbs is the same case as the subject of intransitive verbs, whereas the subject of transitive verbs is in a particular case, the ergative. In Berber dialects, this difference appears also in stative and fientive sentences, e.g. *a-ġyul immut*, “the donkey is dead”, and *immut u-ġyul*, “the donkey died”.

The grammars of the post-Sībawayhi period were more transparent than the *Kitāb*. The centre of grammatical studies shifted in the mid-9th century to Baghdad, the seat of the caliphate, and some creative activity lasted there until the end of the 10th century, influenced undoubtedly by Aristotelian logical principles.\(^{53}\) With Abū ʿAlī al-Qāfī, still known as al-Baġdādi, the Arabic grammatical tradition migrated to Cordoba, in Spain, while various summaries of reference grammars were then written. Nevertheless, the Arabic grammatical tradition remained basically unchanged\(^{55}\), and it served as foundation to the modern European grammars of Classical Arabic, the first one being Guillaume Postel’s (1510–1581) *Grammatica Arabica*, issued in 1538. It was followed by the grammar of

\(^{50}\) D. King, *The Earliest Syriac Translation of Aristotle’s Categories: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus 21), Leiden 2010. In the same period, Τεχνι γραμματική of Dionysius Thrax was translated into Syriac by Joseph Ḥūzāyā.

\(^{51}\) See here above, pp. 24–25.

\(^{52}\) Cf. here above, p. 28.


Thomas Erpenius (1584–1624)\textsuperscript{57}, reedited several times, among others by Jacob Gool in 1656.

The remarkable achievement of George Sale (ca. 1697–1736) should be mentioned here, although this was no linguistic publication. Sale was a lawyer, but his heart lay in oriental scholarship and he had a European reputation as an orientalist. Having studied Arabic for some time in England alongside Arab scholars who had come to London to assist in the Arabic version of the New Testament to be used by Syrian Christians, he became the chief corrector of this work, begun in 1720 by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. But Sale’s main accomplishment was an admirable English translation of the Qur’\textsuperscript{ā}n, printed in 1734\textsuperscript{58}. It was the first English version based on the original Arabic text and it surpassed earlier works of the kind in the quality of translation. Sale’s Qur’\textsuperscript{ā}n remained the best available English version of the Holy Writ until the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.

Erpenius’ “immortal grammar” was followed by the works of Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838)\textsuperscript{59}, of Heinrich G.A. Ewald (1803–1875)\textsuperscript{60}, Carl Paul Caspari (1814–1892)\textsuperscript{61}, Albert Socin (1844–1899)\textsuperscript{62}, M.S. Howell\textsuperscript{63}, N.V. Yushmanov (1896–1946)\textsuperscript{64}, M. Gaufroy-Demombynes and R. Blachère (1900–1973)\textsuperscript{65}, C. Brockelmann (1868–1956)\textsuperscript{66}, B.M. Grande\textsuperscript{67}, W. Fischer\textsuperscript{68}, Janusz Danecki\textsuperscript{69}. The majority of European

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\item 58 G. Sale, \textit{The Koran, commonly called The Alcoran of Mohammed}, London 1734; 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 1764.
\item 59 A.I. Silvestre de Sacy, \textit{Grammaire arabe} I-II, Paris 1810; 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 1831; 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 1904.
\item 62 A. Socin, \textit{Arabische Grammatik} (Porta Linguarum Orientalium 4), 4\textsuperscript{th} ed., Berlin 1899; 6\textsuperscript{th} ed., 1909; 9\textsuperscript{th} ed. by C. Brockelmann, 1925.
\item 64 Н.Б. Юшманов, \textit{Грамматика литературного арабского языка}, Leningrad 1928.
\item 67 Б.М. Гранде, \textit{Грамматическое таблицы арабского литературного языка}, Moscow 1950; id., \textit{Курс арабской грамматики в сравнительно-историческом освещении}, Moscow 1963.
\end{footnotes}
Arab scholars were active also in the field of lexicography. A particular problem is created there by the *aḍḍād*. A *ḍidd* is a word or a root with supposed two opposite meanings. An instructive analysis of *aḍḍād* has been provided by David Cohen\(^{71}\), who distinguishes “false *aḍḍād*” from real “antithetic meanings”. The first group contains not only unnoticed textual errors and misspellings, but also apparently opposite meanings resulting from syntagms using different prepositions, like *raġiba ft*, “he turned to”, and *raġiba ‘an*, “he turned away from”, providing seemingly contrary meanings: “to like” and “to dislike”. Disregard of dialectal differences, popular idioms, technical or professional language, semantic development lead also to the creation of alleged *aḍḍād*. Instead, actually opposite meanings result from metaphors and euphemisms, like *baṣīr*, “seeing”, to denote a blind man, from extrapolations, like in the case of *bay‘a*, “commercial transaction”, what can mean either “sale” or “purchase”, and mainly from extra-linguistic factors, like traditional, dogmatic or theological interpretations of passages in the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth. Although these contrary meanings were interpretative in their origin (“this means that ...”), they were conceived by Arab lexicographers as *aḍḍād* and projected into the semantic sphere.

The fifteen volumes of Ibn Manẓūr’s (1232–1311 A.D.) *Lisān al-‘Arab* contain about 80,000 entries\(^{72}\), but the main organizing principles within the lemmas, representing a root, were semantic with little or no attention to the morphology. In Europe, one had to wait until the early 17th century to have a proper dictionary of the Arabic language. Pedro de Alcála’s *Vocabulista* of 1505 was a Spanish-Arabic glossary in transcription only, and the Arabic lemmas of Valentin Schindler’s (d. 1604) *Lexicon pentaglotton*, published in 1612, were printed in Hebrew characters. The first dictionary of the Arabic language in Arabic characters to be printed was the *Lexicon Arabicum* of Franciscus Raphelengius (1539–1597), the son-in-law of Plantin and collaborator of the Antwerp Polyglot Bible. He became printer to Leiden University in 1586 and was appointed professor of Hebrew in 1587. His dictionary was published by his sons after his death, and was composed with the Arabic types specially cut for him in 1595 by Hondius. Thomas Erpenius added an important section of philological *Observationes in Lexicon Arabicum* (pp. I–LXVII)\(^{73}\).

The Arabic lexicon of Jacobus Golius (Gool, 1625–1667)\(^{74}\) dominated the field until Georg Wilhelm Freytag’s dictionary appeared\(^{75}\). The next large-scale modern Arabic


dictionary was the Arabic-English lexicon of Edward William Lane (1801–1876), which has hardly been superseded. However, the lexicon is incomplete and only sketches remain after the beginning of letter kāf. The International Congress of Orientalists adjudged the completion of the work as a matter of high priority, but only the letters kāf and lām have so far been published in order to fill the gaps in Lane’s work. Among the major dictionaries of Classical Arabic used nowadays, one can mention the volumes prepared by R. Blachère, C. Pellat, M. Chouémi, and C. Denizeau, and the dictionaries of H. Wehr, Ch.K. Baranov, J. Kozłowska and J. Danecki, Jerzy Łacina. There are also specialized dictionaries, as the one concerning the Aristotelian terminology of Al-Fārābī (ca. 870–950) or the Arabic translations of Galen’s medical work De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus, translated ca. 800 by Al-Bīṭṭāq and ca.

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76 E.W. Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, 8 vols, London-Edinburgh 1863–1893 (reprints, 1955–1956, 1968). Parts 6–8 were edited by his nephew S. Lane-Poole.


78 R. Blachère, C. Pellat, M. Chouémi, and C. Denizeau, Dictionnaire arabe-français-anglais (langues classique et moderne), Paris 1963 ff. The modern language is, of course, the Standard Literary Arabic.


870 by Hunayn Ibn Ishāq\textsuperscript{84}. Comparison of these two versions, as well as of translations of other Gallen’s works, of Hypocrates, Dioscurides Pedanius, Philomenus of Alexandria, Aristoteles, etc., enables M. Ullmann to follow the development of Arabic scientific terminology from its beginnings to its maturity. One should also mention the Greek and Arabic lexicon in progress\textsuperscript{85}.

\section*{2. Middle Arabic and Arabic Dialects}

Grammatical study of Classical and Standard Literary Arabic represents only one aspect of Arabic linguistics as practiced on a scholarly level since the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Modern colloquial Arabic in its multiple forms, spoken from Central Asia (Uzbekistan)\textsuperscript{86} and the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean, is an important field of linguistic research\textsuperscript{87}, promoted in the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century by J. Cantineau, Ph. Marçais, etc. The recent introduction to the geography of Arabic dialects can be helpful here\textsuperscript{88}, while studies of particular modern dialects are published, among others, in the series \textit{Semitica Viva}\textsuperscript{89}. Useful information on the linguistic situation in the Maghrib is provided by Gilbert Grandguillaume\textsuperscript{90}.

Arabic-speaking societies are continuously confronted with problems arising from the so-called diglossia, i.e. the simultaneous existence of regional dialects of low social status and a rather different literary language of high prestige, the modern form of Classical Arabic: the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), symbol of the Arabic cultural heritage. The latter is mastered more or less perfectly after many years of studying, while the dialect, acquired by children as a first language, generally remains the language one thinks in.


\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Semitica Viva}, Wiesbaden 1987 ff.

\textsuperscript{90} G. Grandguillaume, \textit{Arabisation et politique linguistique au Maghreb}, Paris 1983.
The interferences are thus frequent and their importance depends mainly on social factors and situations. This Arabic bilingualism or diglossia has phonological, morphological, syntactical, and lexical aspects, as well as literary and cultural ones. The concrete problems differ from country to country. Arabic diglossia in Syria, Lebanon, and Cairo has been admirably studied and its complexity clearly presented by Werner Diem\(^91\) in the line of Uriel Weinreich’s theoretical study of languages in contact\(^92\).

Some fifty years ago, C.A. Ferguson developed the theory that mediaeval and modern Arabic dialects have developed from a single *koiné* after the Islamic conquest\(^93\). In the light of studies on Arab dialectology, this theory is simply unacceptable, as stressed already by Joshua Blau\(^94\): “the picture would seem to be that of a great variety of Bedouin and Middle Arabic dialects existing from the very beginning of the conquests”\(^95\). One can certainly go up to the Byzantine and Roman times, pointing at the varieties of Śafaīitic and Ṭamūdic dialects. Also David Cohen’s\(^96\) hypothesis of modern dialects emerging from a number of *koinés* in different centres seems to be unacceptable. The dialects of the Bedouin and of the country people existed independently from the various urban vernaculars, and local *koinés* rather developed from regional dialects. Of course, innovations in modern Arabic dialects can result from external influences, especially in bilingual societies. This is certainly the case of the Cypriot Maronite Arabic, where the protracted linguistic influence of Greek is perceptible, especially in phonology and vocabulary\(^97\). A similar situation occurs in Maltese Arabic\(^98\).

The modern idioms can be morphologically quite different from the Classical language, even so the dialects spoken in the interior of the Arabian Peninsula, although they preserve some archaic features\(^99\). Middle Arabic, known thanks to mediaeval sources, is closer to the colloquial forms of Arabic than is the idiom used in Muslim literature, which is a classical form. These sources are generally either Christian or Jewish. Christian Arabic texts comprise documents, translations from Greek, Syriac, etc., and original compositions like the theological treatises of Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī (893–974), the language of which is almost classical\(^100\). The reference grammar to Christian Arabic, published in 1965–1967


\(^{95}\) Ibid., p. 226.


by Joshua Blau\textsuperscript{101}, could of course not take recently discovered texts into account, like the 155 Christian Arabic manuscripts found in 1975 in St. Catherine’s Monastery at Mount Sinai, some of which date from the 9\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{102}.

Judeo-Arabic texts, either Rabbanite or Karaite, have the peculiarity of being written in Hebrew characters. A large number of such Karaite manuscripts from both Firkovitch collections are in St. Petersburg and many fragments of the kind have been found in the Cairo Genizah. The Judeo-Arabic language has been studied by J. Blau\textsuperscript{103}. A further linguistic study, characterized by a diachronic approach and based on mediaeval and post-mediaeval letters from the Cairo Genizah, is provided by Esther-Myriam Wagner\textsuperscript{104}. It mainly aims at describing the features of epistolary Arabic from different periods, as distinguished from both the vernacular and literary languages. Beside Judeo-Arabic, there is a lexicon of Andalusian Arabic, composed by Pedro de Alcalá and analyzed by F. Corriente\textsuperscript{105}, who also studied the grammar of some Andalusian Arabic compositions\textsuperscript{106} and provided a dictionary\textsuperscript{107}.

One should record here the existence of \textit{garshuni} texts, written in Arabic but in Syriac script. It was used by Christians, just as Jews were writing Arabic in Hebrew script, and by no means indicates that Arabic writing system was not yet fully developed. Its beginning can be dated to the 9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D., when Arabic has become the dominant language in northern Mesopotamia. Its earliest known example seems to be provided by a \textit{garshuni} receipt, written exceptionally in \textit{estrangela} script, in the manuscript Add. 14644 of the British Library\textsuperscript{108}. This \textit{garshuni} text is undoubtedly a transcription of an original \textit{nasḥī} text, written without diacritics, as shown by some erroneous readings. The earliest

\textsuperscript{101} J. Blau, \textit{A Grammar of Christian Arabic based mainly on South-Palestinian Texts from the First Millennium} (CSCO 267, 276, 279), Louvain 1965–1967.


dated garshuni text would instead date from 1402\textsuperscript{109}. It is only towards the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century that attention was attracted by B. Carra de Vaux to these linguistically and thematically interesting Arabo-Christian texts. Orthography, vocabulary, and syntax are in general conform to Classical Arabic, but vowels can be added, revealing the actual pronunciation. There are, for instance, funerary inscriptions, various manuscripts\textsuperscript{110}, as well as fragments of a Christian commentary to the Qur’\textsuperscript{ā}n\textsuperscript{111}. The latter’s original goes probably back to the 9\textsuperscript{th} century.

3. Pre-Classical North-Arabian

Pre-Islamic North-Arabian dialects are known thanks to the early Arab philologists, who have preserved some dialectal information from the 7\textsuperscript{th}–8\textsuperscript{th} centuries A.D. As far as recorded in ancient Arabic sources, they have been examined by C. Rabin and F. Corriente\textsuperscript{112}. Thousands of Ṣafaitic graffiti from southern Syria, Jordan, and northern Saudi Arabia, in part still unpublished, provide an older source for the Old Arabian dialects. Written in a variant of the South-Arabian alphabet, they date from the 1\textsuperscript{st} century B.C. through the 4\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. They are called Ṣafaitic because they belong to a type of inscriptions first discovered and copied in 1857 by Cyril C. Graham in the basaltic desert of Ṣafā’, southeast of Damascus\textsuperscript{113}. The following year, in 1858, J.G. Wetzstein, the Prussian consul in Damascus, copied 379 texts in the Harra region, ten of which he published in his report\textsuperscript{114}. On his travels in Syria, Melchior de Vogüé (1829–1916) copied 402 inscriptions, which he published in 1869–1877\textsuperscript{115}. Attempts to decipher them were then made by O. Blau and D.H. Müller, but it is Joseph Halévy (1827–1917) who managed in


\textsuperscript{112} C. Rabin, Ancient West-Arabian (n. 18); F. Corriente, From Old Arabic to Classical Arabic through Pre-Islamic Koine: Some Notes on the Native Grammarians’ Sources, Attitudes, and Goals, “Journal of Semitic Studies” 21 (1976), pp. 62–96.


\textsuperscript{114} J.G. Wetzstein, Reisebericht über Hauran und die Trachonen nebst einem Anhange über die Sabäischen Denkmäler in Ostsyrien, Berlin 1860. Further inscriptions were published by D.H. Müller in 1876 and by H. Grimme.

\textsuperscript{115} Ch.E.M. de Vogüé, La Syrie centrale: Inscriptions sémithiques, Paris 1869–1877.
1882 to identify sixteen letters correctly\(^\text{116}\). The remaining seven letters were identified in 1901 by Enno Littmann\(^\text{117}\), and almost 1,500 new inscriptions were published in 1901–1904 by R. Dussaud, F. Macler\(^\text{118}\), and E. Littmann himself\(^\text{119}\). They are all included in the largest corpus of Ṣafaitic graffiti, published in 1950 by Gonzague Ryckmans (1887–1969) as *Pars quinta* of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, containing 5,380 inscriptions in its first instalment, the only one published so far\(^\text{120}\). Further inscriptions were edited by E. Littmann\(^\text{121}\), G.L. Harding\(^\text{122}\), F.V. Winnett\(^\text{123}\), A. Jamme\(^\text{124}\), W.G. Oxtoby\(^\text{125}\), and M.C.A. Macdonald\(^\text{126}\). About 1,500 inscriptions are included in the Ph.D. dissertation of V. Clark\(^\text{127}\), 304 in Mahmoud M. Rousan’s\(^\text{128}\), more than 1,000 in the publication of Mohammad I. Ababneh\(^\text{129}\). Further graffiti from Wadi Salma were edited by S. Abbadi\(^\text{130}\).


\(^{120}\) *CIS. Pars V Inscriptiones Saracenicas continens I/1 and Tabulae 1*, Paris 1950–1951.

\(^{121}\) E. Littmann, *Ṣafaitic Inscriptions* (Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904–1905 and 1909. Division IV, Section C), Leiden 1943, with 1,302 graffiti.


\(^{123}\) F.V. Winnett, *Ṣafaitic Inscriptions from Jordan*, Toronto 1957, with 1,009 new texts.


\(^{128}\) M.M. Rousan, *New Epigraphical and Archaeological Materials from Wadi Salma* (Northern Jordan), Ph.D. King Saud University, ar-Riyadh 2002, with 304 new inscriptions.


and 425 inscriptions from Al-Fahda and Wādī al-Aḥīm have been published by Ali Yunes Khalid al-Manaser\textsuperscript{131}, while Ṣafaitic graffiti from the Hauran were issued by H. Zeinadden\textsuperscript{132}. Other publications of Ṣafaitic inscriptions are listed in M. Rousan’s dissertation\textsuperscript{133}.

About 20,000 Ṣafaitic inscriptions are known at present, but hundreds of them are not yet published, although most have been copied. Their decipherment by E. Littmann was followed by a grammatical study joined to his publication of other Ṣafaitic inscriptions\textsuperscript{134}. Regarding the syntax, one should notice the regular use of formal syntactic parataxis instead of subordinate relative clauses, e.g. \textit{l-ḥd bn nṣr bn grm’l bn kn w-wgm ‘l ‘mh\textsuperscript{135}}, “By\textsuperscript{136} Ḥadda, son of Naṣr, son of Ğaram’īl, son of Kanna, who is grieving over\textsuperscript{137} his mother”; \textit{l-kddh bn s’mrt w-t‘r\textsuperscript{138}}, “By Kudāda, son of Shamrit, who is keeping watch”. This construction is a particular case of the widespread use of parataxis to express logical hypotaxis\textsuperscript{139}. Ṣafaitic has been compared to Classical Arabic by W.W. Müller\textsuperscript{140} and situated by M.C.A. Macdonald in the general frame of ancient North-Arabian\textsuperscript{141}.

To a large extent, Ṣafaitic graffiti are memorial inscriptions that mention the name of the person involved and of his ancestors, often indicate his job or the circumstances of his passage at the site, and call on a deity to protect the inscription and ensure peace to him. Since the Ṣafaitic graffiti have been found on the Nabataean territory and are contemporaneous with Nabataean Aramaic inscriptions, some of them are likely to be written in Nabataean Arabic. In any case, the Nabataeans are mentioned in Ṣafaitic inscriptions, but are often regarded as enemies\textsuperscript{142}. This notwithstanding, Ṣafaitic texts do not belong to a single dialect, as shown e.g. by the use of two different articles, namely \textit{h}-, which is very common in Ṣafaitic inscriptions, and \textit{al}, which is widely used

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\textsuperscript{134} E. Littmann, \textit{Safaitic Inscriptions} (n. 121), pp. XII–XXIV: “The Language”.

\textsuperscript{135} M.M. Rousan, \textit{New Epigraphical and Archaeological Materials} (n. 128), No. 11.

\textsuperscript{136} The translation of the preposition \textit{l} by English “by” corresponds to our conception of a text written by somebody. Instead, the preposition \textit{l} basically expresses a relation of dependence and signifies here that the writer is the “owner” of his inscription, which should not be “stolen” by defacing or changing it.


\textsuperscript{138} M.M. Rousan, \textit{New Epigraphical and Archaeological Materials} (n. 128), No. 55. Cf. other examples in E. Lipiński, \textit{Semitic Languages} (n. 32), § 55.8.

\textsuperscript{139} E. Lipiński, \textit{Semitic Languages} (n. 32), § 55.5-7.


in Nabataean proper names but appears exceptionally in names attested by the Ṣafaitic graffiti.

In spite of their Arab origin, the Nabataeans used an Aramaic literary dialect as their written language, but their colloquial language was Arabic, what is reflected to some extent by their proper names143, by Arabic loanwords144, and by four inscriptions in Aramaic Nabataean script145. The bilingual inscription, found in 1979 at Oboda (‘En ‘Avdat, Israel), should probably be dated between A.D. 88/9 and 125/6. Its lines 1-3 and 5 are written in Aramaic, while lines 4-5 are obviously North-Arabian146. The first sentence, read by the writer fa-yaf’al lā fidā’ wa-lā ṣatarā147, is important from the linguistic point of view because the old preterite, corresponding to Akkadian iprus, seems to be used there after the conjunction fa- as a narrative past tense148, like wa-yqtl in Hebrew, Moabite, Phoenician, Old Aramaic, South-Arabian, and even Arabic.

These inscriptions testify to the evolution of the Arabic language. While the case endings of the nouns are still used correctly in the bilingual from Oboda, dated ca. 100 A.D., there was no longer a fully functioning case system in the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. This appears from an inscription of Ḥegrā’ (Madā’in Śaliḥ, Saudi Arabia), dated in A.D. 267/8149, and from the epitaph of “Mar’ al-Qays Ibn ‘Amr, King of all the Arabs”, found at An-Namāra (Syria) and bearing a date corresponding to A.D. 328. The inscription was discovered in 1901 by René Dussaud and deciphered by Charles Clermont-Ganneau,

147 Line 4: p-yaf’al ̀l ̀pd ̀w-l ̀r, “And he acted neither for reward nor by self-interest”.
148 E. Lipiński, Semitic Languages (n. 32), § 38.11.
who recognized that it was written in Arabic. The inscription was published by R. Dussaud in 1902\textsuperscript{150}, and Felix Peiser immediately noticed that Mar’ al-Qays Ibn ‘Amr was the Laḥmid king of Al-Ḥīra, known from Arab tradition\textsuperscript{151}.

There is a fourth inscription, found in 1884 by Charles Huber and Julius Euting in the oasis of Taymā’ (Saudi Arabia) and housed at present in the Louvre museum\textsuperscript{152}. It is written in a particular and irregular Nabataean script variety and it is engraved with embossed letters like the Taymā’ stele of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century B.C. (\textit{CIS} II, 113). Its various decipherments are not convincing, even impossible, especially the readings of the first word, \textit{qṣr’}, ‘\textit{mr’} or \textit{ḥgr’}, and of the beginning of line 3, read either \textit{ltr/dh} or \textit{lmnwh}, although it obviously does not begin with \textit{l}. The X-shape of the final \textit{aleph} in line 4, misread in previous decipherments, suggests dating the inscription from the first century B.C. or A.D., while its vocabulary indicates that it is written in an Old Arabian dialect, except for the ligature \textit{br} in line 2 and the stereotyped formula ‘\textit{l ḥy}’ in line 4.


\textsuperscript{152} AO 26599, published in \textit{CIS} II, 336, with a facsimile.
Taymā’ inscription (Louvre, AO 26599)

1) mbr’ z qrb  This building (was) offered (by)
2) Mzmw br Rgz  Mzmw, son of Rgz,
3) ml l’lm Lht z  (in) full title for feasting this Goddess,
4) ‘l hy’  for the life of
5) [ ... ]  [ ... ]

The noun mbr’, “building” (line 1), and the syntagm ’lm lht, “to hold banquet for Lāhat” (line 3), with the divine name in the accusative, are well attested in South-Arabian153. Besides, the patronymic Rgz (line 2) occurs in Sabaic as a tribal name Rgz154, while the proper name Mzmw of the dedicator is attested in Šafaitic155. The demonstrative adjectives ḏā (line 1) and ḏī (line 3) are simply written z, although Arabian ḏ was usually indicated in Aramaic script by d, already in an inscription from Eliachin (Israel), going back to the 5th century B.C.156 The verb qrb (line 1) is obviously used here in the fa’ala form; it is a characteristic Arabian term signifying that one presents something to God as offering157. The noun māl, “property” (line 3), is the second object of the verb qrb and must here mean “in full title”, as the result of the “offering”. The syntagm ‘l hy’ (line 4) corresponds to Nabataean Aramaic ‘l hyy, but we find the spelling with final aleph here, like in the construct state of many Palmyrene and Hatraean inscriptions158. If this is a construct state also at Taymā’, as one can assume, a further written line is

155 G.L. Harding, An Index and Concordance (n. 15), p. 543: MZM.
158 This formula was studied by K. Dijkstra, Life and Loyalty, Leiden 1995.
broken off at the bottom of the inscription. The structure of the verbal clause in lines 1-2 is typically Arabic: the direct object (mbr’ z) precedes the verb (qrb), which is followed by the subject (Mzmw). The vocabulary of the inscription apparently witnesses a dialect with North- and South-Arabian lexemes, but a larger North-Arabian corpus with a richer lexicon would be needed to formulate a judgement. The theonym Lht is still spelled in such a way in Liḥyanite.

The building dedicated by Mzmw was a dining room or triclinium with two or three couches which must have served to celebrate ritual banquets in honour of the goddess Lāhat. It was very likely built in the precinct of her sanctuary at Taymā’.

One could still refer here to the inscription from Eliachin, mentioned above, since it is written in Old Arabian, except br and the final zy b-Šrn’. The second object of the verb qrb is br’, obviously corresponding to Sabaic brd, a kind of offer. Instead of assuming that the spelling br’ implies an Aramaic intermediary, one could simply point at the pharyngealized character of the emphatics, which led to the notation of dād by ‘ayin because of the lack of an appropriate character. As noticed already by Ph. Marçais, the articulation of ‘ayn concerns “la même région arrière de la langue que la construction d’emphase”.

\[
\text{dw qrb } \text{zmt br nn}
\text{br’ l’srn zy bšrn’}
\]

“What ʿAzmāt, son of ʿŪn, brought as offering for ʿAshtarum who is in the Sharon (plain)”.

The so-called Ţamūdic graffiti form another group of North-Arabian inscriptions, deciphered by Enno Littmann. They are named after Ţamūd, one of several Arabian tribes mentioned in Assyrian annals (Tamudī) and Neo-Babylonian letters. A mention of Ţamūd occurs later in a bilingual Graeco-Nabataean temple foundation text, dating


160 See n. 156.

161 This was assumed by the writer: E. Lipiński, The Cult of ‘Ashtarum (n. 156), p. 318.


from 166/169 A.D. and found at Rawwafah, in northern Al-Hişāz\(^{165}\), then in a 5th-century Byzantine source referring to a cameleer corps on the north-eastern frontier of Egypt, also in North-Arabian graffiti from the Taymā’ region, in many passages of the Qur’ān, and in writings of Arab geographers\(^{166}\).

Tamūdic epigraphy is greatly indebted to travellers of the 19th century who have collected hundreds of inscriptions. Charles Montagu Doughty (1843–1926) spent two years in Arabia (1876–1878)\(^{167}\), marching with the Mecca pilgrims in the ḥaqq caravan as far as Madā’in Šāliḥ, where he studied the Nabataean monuments and inscriptions, which he later published\(^{168}\). Then he wandered all over the Nağd-Ḥişāz borderland, visiting Taymā’, where he discovered the famous stele afterward acquired by C. Huber for the Louvre. The following year he travelled to Ḥayil and, after many perils and arduous journeys, managed to visit Tā’if and finally reached the coast at Jedda.

Charles Huber travelled through Arabia in 1878–1882\(^{169}\), and in 1883–1884 he set off again with Julius Euting (1839–1913) on an expedition to Central Arabia aiming at seeking out traces of pre-Islamic history, such as inscriptions and monuments\(^{170}\). From these travels Huber brought hundreds of copies of Ţamūdic inscriptions. The three expeditions of J.A. Jaußen O.P. and R. Savignac O.P. to Madā’in Šāliḥ, Al-‘Ulā, Taymā’, and Al-Ḥiğr in 1907, 1909, and 1910 yielded 761 Ţamūdic graffiti beside the hundreds of Minaic, Nabataean, and Libyanite inscriptions\(^{171}\).

These sources indicate that the Ţamūdaeans were living between Mecca and Taymā’. However, the word \(t\)-\(m\)-\(d\) occurring in graffiti from this area and interpreted as “Tamūd” rather means “pool” or “puddle”, and occasionally can be a “broken plural” \(t\text{imād}\). The word is etymologically related to Mishnaic Hebrew \(t\text{md}\), “sour liquid”. It is already attested at Qumran in 3Q15, col. IX, 14–15, mentioning a \(b\text{yt tmd}\), “a receptacle of sour water”, and in the Mishnah\(^{172}\). Besides, one cannot identify the supposed Ţamūdaeans of North

\(^{165}\) The Greek text, mentioning a \(Thamoudenon ethnos\), was published by H. Seyrig, \(Antiquités syriennes\), “Syria” 34 (1957), pp. 249–261 (see pp. 259–261), while the fragmentary Nabataean text, referring to \(š\text{rkt tmwdw}\), was deciphered by J.T. Milik, \(Inscriptions grecques et nabatéennes de Rawwafah\), “Bulletin of the Institute of Archaeology” (University of London) 10 (1971), pp. 54–58 and pls. (see pp. 54–57). No convincing new data emerge from \(DNWSI\), p. 1193, but see also K. Dijkstra, \(Life and Loyalty\) (n. 158), pp. 77–80.

\(^{166}\) For details of these sources, see A. Van den Branden, \(Histoire de Thamoud\) (Publications de l’Université Libanaise. Section des études historiques 6), Beyrouth 1960; 2nd ed., 1966, pp. 1–20, to be used with caution.


\(^{168}\) Ch.M. Doughty, \(Documents épigraphiques recueillis dans le nord de l’Arabie\), Paris 1884, edited by E. Renan.


\(^{170}\) C. Huber, \(Journal d’un voyage en Arabie (1883–1884)\), Paris 1891; J. Euting, \(Tagebuch einer Reise in Inner-Arabien\), Leiden 1896–1914 (reprint, Hildesheim 2004); the second part of the diary was published posthumously by Enno Littmann.


\(^{172}\) \(Maaseroth\) V, 6; \(Maaser Sheni\) I, 3; \(Hullin\) I, 7.
Arabia with the Banū Ṭamad of Saba, mentioned by Al-Hamdānī. In other words, the name Ṭamūdic was incorrectly applied to various types of graffiti found throughout Arabia, dating from the 6th century B.C. to the 3rd or 4th century A.D. and belonging to different dialects. Some inscriptions found in the Negeb and in the surrounding areas are described as “Ṭamūdic” as well. Their script shows differences, revealing diverse scribal traditions and various periods. According to Winnett’s first classification one should distinguish Ṭamūdic A-B-C-D-E, but he later reduced this fivefold grouping to three categories.

The Ṭamūdic graffiti often contain only proper names and patronymics. The names or, at least, their elements are known from the pre-Islamic Arabian onomasticon. Considering such a small basis, the grammatical study of the inscriptions cannot lead easily to firm results. One should notice that even phonology presents difficult problems. The phonetic interpretation of some signs is controversial, as in the case of {ḍ}, {g}, and {ṭ} in the majority of “Ṭamūdic” E or Tabuki inscriptions. Geraldine King rightly reached the conclusion that {ḍ} represents the etymological /ṯ/ in these graffiti. However, where writing is not based on a solid scribal tradition, the signs represent articulated words and names, not etymological forms. One should thus admit a shift in the articulation of /ṯ/, as stated by E. Lipiński, and assume that {ḍ} stands possibly for a pharyngealized palato-alveolar [Ø], considering the original value /š/ of {ḍ} and the well-known change ṣ > š. As for {g} and {ṭ}, E.A. Knauf’s opinion is perhaps correct. He argued in several articles that the grapheme {ṭ} represents etymological /g/ with a pronunciation [g].

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176 F.V. Winnett, A Study of the Lihyānite and Thamudic Inscriptions, Toronto 1937.
177 F.V. Winnett and W.L. Reed, Ancient Records (n. 174), pp. 69–70.
179 E. Lipiński, Semitic Languages (n. 32), § 13.9.
while the grapheme \{g\} represents etymological \(/g/\) with a pronunciation foreign to the dialects in question and only occurring in loanwords and loan names. In “Tamûdic” D, some graffiti begin with the demonstrative \(zn\), “this”, but \(d\) occurs in proper names of the same inscriptions, e.g. \(dmrsbr\). The problem \(d:d:z\) is not yet solved in a satisfactory way.

An older stage of North-Arabian is represented by the Liḥyanite inscriptions from the 6th–4th centuries B.C., engraved in a variety of the South-Arabian script\(^{181}\). Liḥyanite is the local dialect of the oasis of Al-‘Ula, ancient Dedân, that had its own king in the 6th/5th century B.C. Nabonidus defeated a king of Dedân (\(šarru šá Da-da-nu\))\(^{182}\) and a Liḥyanite epitaph mentions “Kabar’il, son of Mati’il, king of Dedân”\(^{183}\). The Liḥyanite inscriptions were dated by W. Caskel about 300 years later than is commonly accepted\(^{184}\), while evidence of Babylonian rule is provided by the date-formula of Jaussen-Savignac 349 lih: “At the time of Geshem, son of Šahr, and of ‘Abd, governor of Dedân” (\(b’ym Gšm bn Šhr w-‘bd flt Ddn\)). Šhr is a royal name, since it appears as Šhrw on a coin from Samaria, probably indicating a Liḥyanite king or king-governor of the 4th century B.C.\(^{185}\) At least seven kings of Liḥyan in the 4th–early 2nd centuries B.C. are identified by Saba Farès-Drappeau\(^{186}\).

Liḥyanite should not be distinguished from the idiom of the so-called “Dadanite” inscriptions, which are somewhat older\(^{187}\). The language is represented by a series of graffiti\(^{188}\) and of mainly monumental inscriptions engraved in a variety of the South-Arabian script\(^{189}\), in an alphabet counting 28 letters. The available epigraphic material was increased twelve years ago by the excellent publication of 189 new inscriptions by Alexander Sima\(^{190}\). This work is an important tool for the study of North-Arabian in the 5th–2nd centuries B.C.

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\(^{181}\) W. Caskel, Liḥyan und Liḥyanisch (n. 159); cf. W.W. Müller, Das Frühnordarabische (n. 140), pp. 20–22.


\(^{183}\) A. Jaussen and R. Savignac, Mission archéologique en Arabie (n. 171), No. 138 lih.


\(^{189}\) A. Jaussen and R. Savignac, Mission archéologique en Arabie (n. 171), have collected 379 Liḥyanite inscriptions. They have been recently analyzed by S. Farès-Drappeau, Dédan et Liḥyān (n. 186).

Finally, Ḥasaean is the name given to the language of the inscriptions written in a variety of the South-Arabian script and found mainly in the great oasis of Al-Ḥasā’, in the east of Saudi Arabia. Ḥasaean inscriptions were first published by A. Jamme. A new edition was provided by A. Sima. As a matter of fact, North-Arabian words occur also in other texts written in South-Arabian script.

4. Bibliographic researches

Bibliographic research, required by a more detailed historical survey of Arabic linguistics, was greatly enhanced by the work of J.H. Hospers, the two bibliographies of Mohammed Hasan Bakalla, and by the specialized bibliography of Werner Diem, who quotes Persian titles and M.A. theses from Cairene universities. One could add the sociolinguistic bibliography compiled by Richard W. Schmidt and, of course, the Index Islamicus, the usefulness of which is increased by the Bio-bibliographical Supplement and by the Concise Biographical Companion. One should further record the Abstracta Islamica, as well as the Journal of Arabic Linguistics, edited from 1978 onwards by Hartmut Bobzin and Otto Jastrow. It deals with all the historical stages of the language, as well as with the regional and social variants of Arabic up to Modern Standard Arabic. A rich bibliography is offered by Wolfdietrich Fischer in his grammar of Classical Arabic and in the most important synthesis on Arabic philology that has appeared in the late 20th century thanks to him and to H. Gätje.