

Omani Arabic: More than a Dialect*

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Abstract: This paper surveys several linguistic aspects of the varieties of the Omani Arabic dialect (OA). It starts with a discussion of the sociolinguistic situation in Oman and the factors that shaped it, as well as discussing the OA varieties and the languages spoken in the country. This is followed by a presentation of the OA consonant and vowel phonemes and their allophones. The paper also presents phonological aspects such as syllable structure and word stress as well as examples of processes like assimilation and emphasis spreading. Then, it presents the OA personal, demonstrative, possessive, and interrogative pronouns, as well as morphological issues such as subject agreement affixes, verbal forms, passive formation, and pluralization patterns. Next, it presents syntactic patterns including word order, negation, question formation, and relative clauses. Besides the survey, the paper provides examples that reveal similarity between some OA dialects and those of the pre-Islamic era, as evidenced by some of the documented and approved readings of the Holy Qurʾān. There is also discussion of some cases of grammaticalization and pronominal copulas.

Keywords: Omani Arabic dialects, phonemes and phonological processes, pronouns, verb structure, negation particles.

0. Introduction

This paper aims to demonstrate the richness and complexity of OA by presenting many of the properties and patterns of its various dialects and the differences between those dialects. Where possible, the paper also highlights the similarities and differences between OA and other varieties of Arabic, including Standard Arabic (SA), with respect to the

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examined structures and properties, with the goal of making OA available for comparative linguistic analysis. The OA dialects have almost the same syntax. The differences in terms of phonetics, phonology, and morphology are more noticeable. The discussion of the various linguistic issues will make reference to OA as one dialect, but it will mention which variety is relevant to the issue under discussion, and where the various varieties differ. Given its scope, the paper will not provide theoretical accounts of the data. Instead, it will highlight the potential areas for future investigation.

The Bāṭina sedentary dialect is the author's own, and the Dhofāri sedentary dialect is the author's spouse's. The following abbreviations are used:

Acc: accusative, **d:** dual, **f:** feminine, **Gen:** genitive, **Impf:** imperfective, **Impr:** imperative, **Ind:** indicative, **Interro:** interrogative, **m:** masculine, **Mod:** modal, **Nom:** nominative, **NPI:** negative polarity item, **Nu:** nunation, **p:** plural, **Part:** participle, **pron:** pronominal, **Prog:** progressive, **Pst:** past, **s:** singular, **1 2 3:** 1st 2nd and 3rd person.

1. Background

Like the other modern dialects of Arabic, OA differs from Classical Arabic (CA) to varying degrees in how sounds, morphemes, and words are combined, as well as in the sound inventory. Since this paper is not on the origin of OA or its relationship to CA, I will just assume that the two varieties are similar at least by virtue of belonging to the same language family, Semitic.^① I will also assume with Ryding (2005:4) and Holes (2004a:5) that CA and SA are different only in terms of phraseology and vocabulary. Thus, for purposes of comparison and contrast, I will be referring to SA.^②

1.1 Oman's location and the current linguistic situation

Glover (1988:1-2) states that the OA varieties emerged in the 2nd century A. D. when some nomadic Arabian tribes migrated from central (Najd) and southern (Yemen) parts of Arabia eastward (to present-day Oman), seeking water. Oman's geography (surrounded by Persia, the Indian Subcontinent, east African coasts, and Arabia) shaped much of its history, which had implications for the varieties of Arabic and languages its people speak. Given the commercial and cultural contacts that the Omani Arabs established with other nations in

^① On the relationship between the modern colloquial dialects of Arabic and CA, see Ferguson (1959), Holes (2004a), and Benmamoun & Hasegawa-Johnson (2013).

^② For an overview of the emergence, spread, and development of SA and the other modern dialects, see Watson (2002:6-9) and references therein. For an overview of the development of Arabic and views on when the modern varieties evolved as well as on their general characteristics, see Ryding (2005:1-6) and references therein.

Arabia and the Indian Ocean, the Omani linguistic context became quite rich given the relatively small population of Oman; the November 2015 census speaks of 4,301,825 people, 44% percent of whom are expatriates. Besides OA, which is also spoken in Kenya, Tanzania, and parts of the United Arab Emirates (Al-Aghbari, 2004a:17), some Omanis speak a number of indigenous (Modern South Arabian) languages like Mehri and Jibbāli/Šahri (each with several thousand speakers), as well as Hobyōt, Baḥari and Ḥarsūsi (each with a few hundred speakers). In addition, some Omanis speak non-indigenous languages including Baluchi (from Baluchistan), Fārsi/Persian, Šajmi, Kumzāri (from Iran), Zidjāli (from Pakistan), Kojki/Luwāti (from India), and Swahili (from East Africa). Zanzibar and Baluchistan as well as parts of Kenya, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates were parts of the Omani Empire (18th-19th century). The vast majority of the native speakers of these languages also speak a variety of OA, and they have assimilated into the Omani society, and are now Omani citizens. Moreover, the non-Arabic speaking workforce speak at least one of these languages: Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, Sindhi, Urdu, Punjabi, Sinhalese, Gujarati, Bengali, Tagalog, Korean, Thai, Nepalese, Chinese, and Indonesian, as well as English, French, German, and Dutch, on oil fields. The Arabic speaking expatriates speak other dialects of Arabic including Egyptian, Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian, Sudanese, Iraqi, Yemeni, Lebanese, Jordanian, Syrian, and Palestinian. These non-indigenous languages as well as Arabic dialects, including SA, have caused changes in OA.

1.2 Omani Arabic in contact with other dialects and languages

OA has long been influenced by other languages. The coastal varieties were much different from SA due to centuries-long contact with merchants and settlers from foreign countries, like Persia and the Indian Subcontinent. Some of the interior dialects were also influenced by Swahili since the Omanis returning from Zanzibar settled in the interior, but this happened in the latter half of the last century. The linguistic changes in OA in the last four decades are due to contact with expatriates, Arabs and non-Arabs alike. The policies adopted by the Omani leaders prior to 1970 had isolated the Omanis from the rest of the (Arab) world. In 1970, a new regime with different policies came to power. These policies included, for the first time in Oman, open economy, large-scale education, health services, and media. Thus dialect change was also caused by education/literacy programs (run in SA) as well as by contacts with speakers of other dialects of Arabic who spread all over the country, working in schools and hospitals.

The booming economy caused many Omanis from the interior to move to the coastal

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areas, especially the Capital area, to take advantage of the available economic opportunities. This resulted in changes in the interior dialect to conform to the coastal one, this being the variety of the majority, as well as in the coastal one being influenced by that of the new comers, both interior people and expatriates. The school teachers came from different Arab countries, which exposed the Omani youngsters to other Arabic dialects as well as to SA outside the mosque. Furthermore, exposure to SA in the media resulted in OA gaining some new vocabulary and losing some of the old words used by older generations, like *ṣrūq* ‘blood vessels’ which was replaced with *ṣarāyīn w ṭawridah* ‘arteries and veins’. Moreover, Holes (1989:449) states that the educated generations of Oman follow Gulf dialect tendencies like replacing feminine plurals with masculine ones, and also replacing the internal passive (section 4.8) with the /in/-passivizing prefix, as in *y-in-ktib* ‘it is (being) written’ instead of *yi-ktab*. This is seen most vividly in the Capital area as well as in the media (Holes, 2014), where expressions like Gulf-coast *tših* ‘like this’ and *ṣan jadd* ‘seriously’ are common. Although SA is the official language of Oman that is used in mass media, official ceremonies, public and religious speeches, as well as education and government written transactions, very few people learn it before school, in some educated households and mosque (Qurʾān) schools.

Shaaban (1977:11) states that “the linguistic contacts with Indians, Persians, Baluchis, and Africans have left traces in the speech of Omani Arabs, especially in the vocabulary. These foreign languages left phonological, morphological, and syntactic traces as well in the Arabic speech of the members of those foreign communities, creating communal dialects based on ethnic background rather than on religion or race”. The effect of these languages on OA is most vividly seen in the vocabulary, with borrowings like *gūniyyah* ‘sack’ and *bigli* ‘electrical torch’ from Hindi, *drīšah* ‘window’ and *sāmān* ‘stuff’ from Persian, *sēkal* ‘bicycle’, *batri/bētri* ‘battery’, *swīk* ‘switch’, and *bēb* ‘pipe’ from English, and *bandērah* ‘flag’ and *mēz* ‘table’ from Portuguese (Holes, 2014:9-10); the Portuguese occupied some coastal Omani towns between 1507-1624. The Swahili words in OA are food item names, like *mandāzi* ‘buns’. OA assigns these borrowings either sound feminine or broken plural forms.

The following table provides the plural forms assigned to these borrowings. Monosyllabic words receive sound feminine plural forms, and bi-syllabic words receive broken plural forms. Tri-syllabic words may follow either pattern.

Table 1. Plural Forms Assigned to the Borrowings

| | Language Borrowed from | Singular and Meaning | Plural Form |
|---|------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 1 | English | bēb ‘pipe’ | bēb-āt |

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| | | | |
|----|------------|---------------------------|----------|
| 2 | English | swīk ‘switch’ | swīk-āt |
| 3 | English | sēkal ‘bicycle’ | sayākīl |
| 4 | English | batri and bētri ‘battery’ | batāri |
| 5 | Hindi | gūniyyah ‘sack’ | gawāni |
| 6 | Hindi | bigli ‘torch’ | bagāli |
| 7 | Persian | drīšah ‘window’ | darāyiš |
| 8 | Persian | sāmān ‘things/stuff’ | |
| 9 | Portuguese | bandērah ‘flag’ | bandērāt |
| 10 | Portuguese | mēz ‘table’ | mēzāt |

Glover (1988) notes that the overall development (oil industry, introduction of automotives, construction, etc.) that Oman witnessed introduced into OA words from other languages, mainly English, and, conversely, the extensive exposure to SA resulted in replacing words borrowed from other languages by ones from SA. These include *kandēšan* ‘air conditioner’, which was later replaced with *mkayyaf*, *mōtar* ‘car’, which was later replaced with *siyyārah*, *ḡōtēl* ‘restaurant’, which was later replaced with *maḡḡam*, and *ḥafīs* ‘office’, which was later replaced with *maktab*.

Besides being a lingua franca that the minority language speakers use for communication, OA, with various dialects (to be discussed in the next section), is used for the documentation of popular folklore and poetry. For the last four decades, besides being widely used in commercial transactions, which usually involve non-Arabs, as well as being the only foreign language taught in public schools, English has been another lingua franca in Oman.

1.3 The Omani dialects of Arabic

The literature on the OA dialects consists mainly of descriptive and sociolinguistic accounts carried out by orientalist, grammarians, sociolinguists, and interested foreign personnel. The OA dialects that have been examined include the Muscat dialect (Praetorius, 1880; Jayakar, 1889; Shaaban, 1977; Glover, 1988; Al-Aghbari, 2004a), the Musandam dialect (Jayakar, 1903), the Dhofāri dialect (Rhodonakis, 1908, 1911), the Al-Buraimi dialect (Johnstone, 1967), the interior sedentary dialect (Reinhardt, 1894; Galloway, 1977), the Al-Xābūrah dialect (Brockett, 1985), the Al-Ristāq dialect (Prochazka, 1981), the Āl-Wahība Bedouin dialect (Webster, 1991), a Šawāwi (nomadic pastoralists in the northern mountainous interior) dialect (Eades, 2009a), and the Bedouin dialect of the Hidyīwī tribe in Al-Muḡaybi (Eades, 2009b). Besides, Clive Holes’ various writings (e.g. 1989, 1991, 1996, 1998, 2004b, 2007, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014) investigate and document

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various linguistic properties of OA.

Shaaban (1977:12) states that “the most important sociolinguistic distinction holds between coastal and interior OA” dialects, which coincides with the sedentary vs. Bedouin distinction. This criterion, nonetheless, he notes, has failed to stand the test of time as a result of dialect change. Holes (1989) proposes that the OA dialects spoken in northern and central Oman can be classified into four major varieties, two Bedouin, further divided into Bedouin 1 and Bedouin 2, and two Ḥaḍari or sedentary, further divided into Ḥaḍari 1 and Ḥaḍari 2. Holes’ division does not include the dialects spoken in Muscat (the Capital area) and Dhofār (southern Oman). He states that while the Ḥaḍari/sedentary dialects are spoken in “the towns and villages in and around the mountain massifs of the Jabal Akhdar and Eastern Ḥajar”, the Bedouin dialects are spoken by “the Badu nomadic or semi-settled populations of the western desert, the Jaddat al-Ḥarāsīs, and Wahība Sands” (p. 447). He though states that 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 Ḥaḍar and Badu groups, and in which both dialect types, or a ‘mixed’ dialect, can be heard” (p. 447). A good example of such an area is the Bāṭina coast, which is inhabited by speakers of Bedouin dialects (e.g. Al-Yaḥmadi, Al-Mālki, Al-Whībi, and Al-Mbēḥsi tribes, originally from eastern Oman), where the people refer to themselves as Badu, and also based on certain linguistic variables. It is also inhabited by speakers of sedentary dialects since many of the Omanis in the Bāṭina towns of Ṣuḥār, Ṣaḥam, Al-Xābūrah, and Al-Suwaiq descend from the northern mountains (e.g. Al-Bādī, Al-Miqbāli, Al-hōsni, and Al-Maṣmari tribes). There are also Omanis who originally came from Persia or the Indian subcontinent; these tribes are Al-Balūshi, Al-Fārsi, Al-Ṣajmi, and Al-Luwāti. This is also the case in another two Bāṭina towns, Barkā and Al-Muṣunṣah. These mixed areas result from “the longstanding contact between the H [sedentary] 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” (Holes, 1989:452).^① Indeed, Holes (2007:1) states that the “Bāṭina coast is a ‘mixed’ area where both types of dialect are encountered”. This variation also results from ‘transitional’ systems which Holes observes

^① As for the other two towns on the Bāṭina coast, Luwa and Ṣināṣ, I think they are (mainly) Bedouin dialect areas. Even the population segments that have descended from the northern mountains speak a Bedouin dialect. This is probably because they have been in the coastal area for a long time, and also because of the socioeconomic contacts and relations with the UAE people, most of whom speak Bedouin dialects.

in Ibrā and Al-Kāmil at the northern edge of the Wahība Sands, where the speakers have preserved the SA /q/ (a feature of sedentary dialects), but, due to contact with Bedouins, have replaced /g/ with /y/, see Eades (2011) for a report on a transitional dialect in northern Oman. Also, many of the communities have settled down and the dialects have been influenced by other OA and Arabic dialects. This shows that the OA dialects are merging, which calls for investigation and documentation of their properties before these are lost in the process of modernization.

According to Holes, the two Bedouin dialect types have the same syllable structure, and the two sedentary ones share the same syllable structure. However, each of the four dialect types behaves differently in terms of how they realize the SA consonants /q/, /k/, and /j/ (p. 449-452). Besides these two phonological variables, there are four morphological variables. First, while the Bedouin varieties have *yā-* as the imperfective prefix, as in *yā-kil* ‘he eats’, the sedentary varieties have *yō-* (or *yū-*), as in *yō-kil* (or *yū-kil*). Second, while the Bedouin varieties have *-ūn* and *-īn* for plural and singular feminine suffixes, as in *yā-kl-ūn* ‘they.m eat’ and *tā-kl-īn* ‘you.sf eat’, the sedentary varieties have *-u* and *-i*, respectively, as in *yō-kl-u* and *tō-kl-i*. Third, the object and possessive suffix in the Bedouin dialects is *-ah*, as in *y-kitb-ah* ‘he writes it’ and *ktāb-ah* ‘his book’, but it is *-uh* (or *-oh*) in the sedentary varieties, as in *y-kitb-uh* and *ktāb-uh*. Fourth, the first person plural prefix is *nti-* in the Bedouin dialects, as in *nti-xabbar* ‘we ask’, but it is *nit-* in the sedentary dialects, as in *nit-xabbar*. The division also points out dialectal similarities between the four types and other Arabic dialects spoken in the Arabian peninsula.

While I accept Holes’ classification of Omani dialects (as Bedouin and sedentary), I would like to stress his observation that each type, Bedouin vs, sedentary, comprises more than one variety. Therefore, I will assume that there are various dialects that could go under each dialect type. Thus, the OA sedentary varieties include the Bāṭīna sedentary dialect, the northern Oman sedentary dialect (in the northern mountains and valleys, Jabal ʔaxḍar), and the Dhofāri sedentary dialect (in the towns and mountains, similar to the bordering Yemeni one). The Bedouin varieties include the eastern Bedouin dialect (spoken in Ṣūr), the western Bedouin dialects (similar to those of southern Najd), the northwest and southeast Bedouin dialects (similar to those spoken on the Gulf coast), and the Dhofāri Bedouin dialect. As for the dialect spoken in the Musandam peninsula (farthest north), Ṣihhi, I think it is a mixed dialect, spoken in sedentary communities (mountains, valleys, and coasts), but shares properties with the Bedouin dialect spoken in the UAE. The variety spoken in the Capital area (Muscat) is mainly sedentary, but Bedouin varieties are also encountered as the

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population of Muscat is mixed. As Holes (1989:447) notes, the topography of Oman (mountains, deserts, coasts, plains) suggests dialectal variation. Besides these OA varieties, there has also developed a pidgin as a means of communication between the OA speakers and the non-Arabic speaking expatriates, especially those from the Indian Subcontinent. This pidgin is characterized by simplified word and clause structure and vocabulary taken from Arabic, English, Hindi, and Urdu. Most of the data and discussion will be based on the Bāṭina sedentary dialect (BSD), the Dhofāri sedentary dialect (DSD), and the Muscat dialect (MD). The following sections survey various phonetic, phonological, morphological, and syntactic aspects of the OA dialects spoken in the 61 towns and cities of Oman, each with several villages and neighborhoods.^①

2. Phonetics

2.1 Consonants

The various OA dialects have the 29 consonants in table 2 (Shaaban, 1977:35; Glover, 1988:37; Al-Aghbari, 2004a:25; Holes, 2007:2). The SA forms will be in parentheses, and phonetic transcription will be in brackets.

Table 2. OA Consonants

| | Bilabial | Labiodental | Dental | Alveolar | Palatal | Velar | Uvular | Pharyngeal | Glottal |
|------------|----------|-------------|--------|-------------|---------|-------|--------|------------|---------|
| Stops | b | | | t d ṭ | | k g q | | | ʔ |
| Fricatives | | f | θ ṯ | s z ṣ ṣ̣ | š | | x y | ħ | ʕ h |
| Affricates | | | | | č ĵ | | | | |
| Nasals | m | | | n | | | | | |
| Lateral | | | | l | | | | | |
| Trill | | | | r | | | | | |
| Glides | w | | | | y | | | | |

2.1.1 The emphatics

The SA /ṯ/, /ṣ̣/, and /ṭ/, the so-called emphatic (pharyngealized or velarized) consonants, are retained in all the OA dialects. The SA voiced alveolar emphatic stop /ḍ/ is available in the Šihhi dialect only (spoken in the towns of Xaṣab, Dibā, Madhā, and Buxā in the

^① It is worth mentioning that Muscat is the name of both the Capital city and the Capital governorate/area, the latter includes other cities and towns.

Musandam peninsula), and occurs in free variation with /ð/ and /z/, the latter not available elsewhere in OA. In the town of Xaşab variety, /d/ appears in SA words with /d/, as in *darab* ‘hit’ (*daraba*), as well as in SA words with /ð/, as in *dalōm* ‘darkness’ (*ðalām*) and *şalēt d-dəhr* ‘the noon prayer’ (*şalāt-u ð-ðuhr*). The /z/ consonant (found in Egyptian Arabic) is also heard in this dialect replacing /ð/ and /d/, so one can hear some native speakers of Šihhi (which is the main tribe in the four towns) say *ʔəz-zəhr* ‘noon’ (*ʔað-ðuhr*) and *ʔəz-zayt* ‘blood pressure’ (*ʔađ-dayt*). The variety spoken in the town of Dibā has the /ð/ sound, so one can hear *şalāt ð-ðəhr* ‘the noon prayer’. In all the other OA dialects, /d/ is replaced with /ð/.

2.1.2 The glottal stop

Like other modern Arabic dialects, most OA dialects have largely lost the glottal stop word-initially. For example, the imperative verb in all the OA varieties has lost the prefix *ʔV-* of SA (*ʔu-* or *ʔi-*). Holes (2007) also mentions examples of /ʔ/ in initial position being replaced with /w/, as in *waxxər* ‘go out of the way!’ and *wakkad* ‘to be certain of/to know well’ (but *ʔaxxar* ‘to postpone’ and *ʔakkad* ‘to confirm’ also exist in some sedentary varieties), as well as with /y/, as in *yadab* ‘discipline/manners’ (*ʔadab*) and *yāl* ‘offspring of’ (*ʔāl Saʕd* ‘offspring of Saʕd’). Most OA dialects preserve the glottal stop word-initially in contexts like the 1st person verb forms, as in *ʔa-qūl* ‘I say’ and *ʔa-rīd* ‘I want’, but dropped it in the 2nd person pronouns, so they have *ntah* ‘you.sm’ (*ʔanta*). Some sedentary varieties (both in Jabal ʔaxḍar mountains and Bāṭina) have preserved the glottal stop word-initially in certain words, like *ʔumūr/ʔamūr* ‘matters’ and *ʔašya* ‘things’.

Except for borrowings from SA, like *traʔʔas* ‘chaired (a meeting)’, the OA dialects have also lost the glottal stop word-medially and replaced it with either vowel length, as in *rās* ‘head’ (*raʔs*), *fās* ‘axe’ (*faʔs*), and *yākil* ‘he eats’ (*ya-ʔkul*), which applies in most dialects, or /y/, as in *wrāyak* ‘behind you’ (SA *warāʔak*) in DSD. In other dialects, the glottal stop is completely lost, as in *warāk* ‘behind you’.

This replacement of the glottal stop with vowel length word-medially is also observed in some readings of the Holy Qurʔān, like that of Warš (by way of Nāfiʕ), as the verses in (1-2) show. In most readings, *li-ta-akul-ū* and *yu-umin-ūna* are pronounced as *li-ta-ʔkul-ū* and *yu-ʔmin-ūna*, respectively. Vowel length is achieved by adding a short vowel, *a* or *u*, identical to the already available short vowel in the prefix, *ta-* and *yu-*, respectively. The verse in (2) also shows a case of glottal stop loss word-medially; *bi-l-āxirat-i* is pronounced as *bi-l-āxirat-i* in most readings.

(1) wa huwa l-laḏī saxxara l-baḥr-a

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| | | | | | |
|--------------|---------|----------|-----------------|-------------|--|
| and | He | the-who | Pst.subject.3sm | the-sea-Acc | |
| li-ta-akul-ū | min-hu | laḥm-an | ṭariyy-ā ... | (14:16) | |
| so-2-eat-pm | from-it | meat-Acc | fresh-Acc | | |

‘It is He Who has made the sea subject, that you may eat thereof flesh that is fresh and tender ...’

| | | | | |
|------------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------------|---------|
| (2) fa-l-laḏīna | lā | yu-umin-ūna | bi-l-āxirat-i | |
| as-the-those | Neg | Impf-believe-pm | in-the-hereafter-Gen | |
| qulūb-u-hum | | munkirat-un | wa hum mustakbir-ūn | (22:16) |
| hearts-Nom-their | | rejecting-Nom | and they arrogant-Nom | |

‘As to those who believe not in the Hereafter, their hearts refuse to know, and they are arrogant.’

Similarly, except for borrowings from SA, like *ḥayyāʔ* ‘biology’, the glottal stop is largely lost word-finally where it is realized as /y/ or /w/, as in *māy* ‘water’ (*māʔ*) and *ḏaww* ‘fire’ (*ḏawʔ*), as well as in verbs where the third radical is a glottal stop (hamzated), as in *y-qary-u* ‘they read’ (*ya-qraʔ-ūn*), *y-giyy-u* ‘they come’ (*ya-jīʔ-ūn*).

2.1.3 The reflexes of /q/

While the Bedouin dialect speakers pronounce /q/ as /g/, as in *y-gūl* ‘he says’ (*ya-qūl-u*) and *gaṣīr/gaṣīr* ‘short’ (*qaṣīr*), the speakers of DSD (Ṣalālah city) and some Bāṭina varieties (e.g. the center of Ṣohār city), as well as other sedentary dialect speakers, pronounce /q/ as /q/, as in *ḥaqqūti* ‘my/mine’, *mū qāl-it* ‘what did she say?’, and *yi-twahhaq* ‘he gets into trouble’. Speakers of sedentary dialects spoken in and around the northern mountains pronounce /q/ as /k/, as in *mū t-kūl* ‘what are you.sm saying?’ (*māḏā ta-qūl-u*) and *kahwah* ‘coffee’ (*qahwah*). Holes (2014) states that /q/ is pronounced as /j/ in Ṣūr (Bedouin) as well as in Ṣohār and Ṣaham (Bāṭina coast), as in *jiddām* ‘in front of’ (*quddām*) and *jirīb* ‘near’ (*qarīb*).

Based on personal observation, /q/ is also pronounced as /ɣ/ in Ṣūr, as in *ɣara* ‘read’ (*qaraʔa*) and *ɣaryah* ‘village’ (*qaryah*), this also happens in some Kuwaiti Arabic varieties, as in *ɣarš* ‘shark’ (*qirš*), as well as in Sudanese Arabic, as in *ʔanayyil* ‘I move’ (*ʔu-nqqil-u*). Many of the eastern dialect speakers (Bedouin) as well as those of the dialect spoken in the mountains of Dhofār pronounce /ɣ/ as /q/, as in *qurāb* ‘crow’ (*ɣurāb*) and *qazāl* ‘gazelle’ (*ɣazāl*) from Dhofār and *ʔa-bqi* ‘I want’ (*ʔa-byi*), *qāli* ‘expensive’ (*ɣāli*), and *qarīb* ‘stranger’ (*ɣarīb*) from Ṣūr. Glover makes similar observations about /q/ and /ɣ/ in MD (p. 39).

2.1.4 The palatal affricates

The voiced palatal affricate /j/ of SA is available in some OA dialects, mainly Bedouin, as in Al-Buraimi, Ṣūr, Ṣohār, and Ṣaham (section 2.1.3). It also appears in some northern

sedentary varieties, as in *jāj* ‘chicken’ from Al-Ḥamrā town. Glover (1988:38) states that in MD “the voiced palatal affricate /j/ is a free variant of /g/ in most words”, but that /j/ is starting to be restricted to speech with foreigners (sophisticated/educated) and for borrowings from SA. As for most dialects, /j/ is replaced with the velar stop /g/.

The voiceless palatal affricate, /č/, which is not available in SA, is heard in loanwords, like *lanč* ‘motorboat’, as well as in the Al-Buraimi dialect, replacing /k/, as in *bāčar* ‘tomorrow’ (*bākir*). This phenomenon is referred to as kashkasha; see Holes (1991).^① Holes (2014) states that the Al-Buraimi dialect (west) as well as the Šūr and Jaflān ones (east), all Bedouin, have /č/ replacing /k/, as in *simač* ‘fish’ (*samak*) and *čiswəh* ‘bride’s clothes’ (*kiswah*); this, however, does not apply to all Bedouin dialects in Oman, certainly not the one in Dhofār (south). He also provides examples of /č/ in Wādi Sahtan (sedentary), including *yčūn* ‘be’ (*ya-kūn-u*), *ʔačil* ‘food’ (*ʔakl*), and *ʔačθar* ‘more’ (*ʔakθar*). The same is found in the nearby town of Al-Ḥamrā, in which Al-Ḥabri tribe people say *čēčah* ‘cake’ (*kēkah*), *čēf hālač* ‘how are you.sm?’ (*kayfa hāluka*), *čēf hāliš* ‘how are you.sf?’ (*kayfa hāluki*), and *dəččān* ‘shop’ (*dukkān*), whereas Al-Šubhi tribe people, in the same town, pronounce ‘cake’ as *kēk*. Thus /č/ seems to be used in free variation with /k/. Nonetheless, while this affrication (from /k/ to /č/) occurs in the Bedouin dialects in the vicinity of front vowels, it is unconditional in the sedentary dialects (Holes, 2013).

2.2 Vowels

The vowel phonemes of OA are in table 3. Unlike SA, which has 6 vowels only, OA also has /ō/ and /ē/. These long mid vowels have historically been derived from diphthongs (Shaaban, 1977; Glover, 1988; Holes, 2007); thus *bēt* and *lōn* have come from *bayt* ‘house’ and *lawn* ‘color’, respectively. Al-Aghbari (2004a:27) also proposes that “both mid round vowels /o:/ and /ɔ:/ [/ō/ and ɔ] are possible and can occur in free variation”.

Table 3. OA Vowels

| | Front | | Central | | Back | |
|------|-------|------|---------|------|-------|------|
| | Short | Long | Short | Long | Short | Long |
| High | i | ī | | | u | ū |
| Mid | | ē | | | | ō |

^① Besides kashkasha, which is turning /k/ to /š/ or to /č/, there is also the opposite process. This is seen in BSD words like *kūlah* ‘kerosene camp stove’, which is *šōlah* in the Indian Pidgin as well as in DSD, and which refers to *šušlah* ‘fire torch’ in SA. Examples also include *kāhi* ‘tea’ (in some BSD varieties), which is *šāhi* in other OA dialects including DSD, and *šāy* in SA; also there is *kabāte*, which is *čabāti* ‘bread’ in Hindi. This process also applies to borrowings from English, as in *lank* ‘lanch’, *swīk* ‘key/switch’, and *sandawīkah* ‘sandwich’.

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| | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--|---|---|--|--|
| Low | | | a | ā | | |
|-----|--|--|---|---|--|--|

Shaaban (1977:43-44) and Holes (2007) discuss the allophones of these phonemes. The vowel /u/ has two more allophones, [ʊ], which occurs in unstressed syllables, as in *yi-ktub* [yi-ktʊb] ‘he writes’ and *kurfāyah* [kʊrfāyah] ‘bed’, and a lower one occurring in the vicinity of emphatic sounds, which is [ɔ], as in *tubb* [tɔbb] ‘magic/superstition’ and *šubb* [ʃɔbb] ‘pour!’; [u] occurs in words like *kull* ‘all’, as pronounced in DSD.

As for /a/, it seems to have different variants in different environments. Next to emphatics, this vowel is realized as a low back variant [ɑ], as in *maraʔ* [mɑrɑʔ] ‘to become sick’ and *talab* [tɑlɑb] ‘request’; the emphasis even reaches /l/. When flanked by laryngeals (ħ, ʕ, ʔ, and h) and uvular /q/, it is realized as a slightly different low back variant [a], as in *šaraq* [ʃaraq] ‘sweat’, *ħaraq* [ħaraq] ‘he burnt (something)’, and *qalam* [qalam] ‘pen’. The elsewhere variant is the low front/central [æ], shorter than the English counterpart, as in *ganb* [gæmb] ‘side’ and *kalb* [kælb] ‘dog’.

There is also the tendency of replacing /a/ with the mid-front variant [e] in word-final position when not preceded by emphatics or uvulars. Examples include *baʕad-na* [baʕadne] ‘after us’, *ʔahal-na* [ʔahalne] ‘our relatives’, and *kūrat-ha* [kūrat-he] ‘her ball’. This also applies to country names that end in /a/ in SA, like *lībye* (Lībya), *kīnye* (Kīnya), and *rūsye* (Rūsya). Holes (2007) discusses this tendency (known as ʔimālā) and states that /a/ may even be replaced with [i] in this context, as in *mistaʕfi* ‘hospital’ (SA *mustaʕfā*, and OA *mistaʕfa* and *məstaʕfa*) and *ħikam-hi* ‘he ruled it’ (SA *ħakama-hā*). In some dialects *tmassi bi-l-xēr* ‘have a good evening!’ is addressed to a man; in others, it is *tmassa bi-l-xēr*, where *tmassi bi-l-xēr* is addressed to a woman. This is common in Bedouin and sedentary dialects in Bāṭina.

This ʔimālā phenomenon found in some OA varieties is also witnessed in some readings of Holy Qurʔān, as in the verse in (3), according to the reading of Xalaf (by way of Ḥamzah), and the verse in (4), according to the reading of Ḥafṣ (by way of ʕāšim). Other readers pronounce ‘qalē’ in (3) as ‘qalā’; in other SA contexts, ‘majrē-hā’ in (4) is pronounced as ‘majrā-hā’.

- (3) mā waddaʕa-ka rabb-u-ka wa mā qalē (3:93)
 Neg Pst.leave.3sm-you lord-Nom-your and Neg Pst.hate.3sm
 ‘Your Guardian-Lord has not forsaken you, nor is He displeased (with you).’
- (4) wa qāla ʔ.rkab-ū fī-hā bi-sm-i Allāh-i majrē-hā
 and Pst.say.3sm Impr.2.ride-pm in-it in-name-Gen God-Gen moving-its
 wa mursā-hā (41:11)

and at.rest-its

‘So he [Noah] said: “Embark you on the Ark, In the name of Allah, whether it move or be at rest! ...”’

Likewise, /i/ is realized as retracted [ɪ] in medial position, as in *bint* [bɪnt] ‘girl’, and *gimbi* [gɪmbi] ‘my side’ in DSD. In word-final position, it is the close front [i], as in *bēti* [bēti] ‘my house’. Holes also states that “before /b, m, f, r, q/ and the emphatics, particularly when these are in final position, it is backed and (with the labials) rounded, e.g. [za:hɒb] ‘ready’” (p. 3). While this is true of the sedentary varieties in and around the Capital area, it is realized as /ə/ or even /i/ in other sedentary varieties, especially those in Bāṭina; the same word may be heard as [za:həb] or [za:hib]. In and around the Capital area, one hears proper names like SA *ʕāmir* and *Sālim* as [ʕāmɔr] and [sālɔm]; in other parts of the country, they are heard as [ʕāmɪr] and [sālɪm] or even [ʕāmɪr] and [sālɪm].

Besides backing, emphatics (as well as /r/ and uvulars) lower /ū/ to /ō/, when in the same syllable. So the SA *sūq* ‘market’ is *šōq* in MD (Glover, 1988:55); *šōq* is also heard in DSD. However, in Bāṭina, one can hear *sūq* and *sōq* (as in *Šoḥār*), *sūg* (as in all coastal communities, Bedouin), and both *sūk* and *sōk* (by speakers originally descending from northern mountains). Emphatics also lower /ī/ to /ē/, as in *y-šēḥ* ‘he cries’ and *y-tēḥ* ‘he falls down’, this is not an effect of the guttural /ḥ/, since this lowering also happens in *y-tēr* ‘he flies’ and *y-šēr* ‘it works’. Finally, [ə] is a possible variant in different dialects for all three short vowels when they are in unstressed syllables (Shaaban, 1977:44).

3. Phonology

3.1 Syllable structure

Syllables in OA must begin with a consonant. With the exception of /ʔ/, any consonant may occur syllable-initially, -medially, or -finally. Syllables with three consonants in the onset may occur word-initially, as (11-12) in table 4 show, but never word-medially or -finally (Al-Aghbari, 2004a:31). In word-medial position, a single consonant is syllabified with the following syllable, thus *katab* ‘write’ is syllabified as *ka#tab*. However, a word-medial cluster of two or three consonants is broken such that only one consonant is left for the onset of the following syllable (Glover, 1988:59). While Glover’s example for a medial cluster of two consonants, *gar#gūr* ‘shark’, is good for the case since OA has syllables where /r/ is followed by /g/, as in *rgaʕ* ‘come back!’, her example of a cluster of three consonants, *xubz#ha* ‘her bread’, may be accounted for based on the fact that the accepted syllable boundary is also a morpheme boundary; the same applies to *bint#kum*

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‘your.pn daughter’.

While geminates may occur word-medially, as in *ħassab* ‘think’, they do not occur word-finally except in active participial forms, as in *mādd* ‘extending’ and *lāmm* ‘gathering’. Their occurrence in word-initial position is usually a result of assimilation, as in *l+rās* ‘the head’ becoming *rrās*, and *l+təffāħah* ‘the apple’ becoming *təffāħah*. OA has the syllable types illustrated in table 4, from Shaaban (1977:45) and Holes (2007:3). The types 6-11 occur only word-initially. Shaaban states that form (12) is restrictive, occurring only with the stated consonants in the onset. Similarly, the form in (13) is restricted to the active participle form of geminate verbs. These syllable forms are allowed in OA as a collection of dialects; each variety exhibits some or all of them.

Table 4. OA Syllables

| | Syllable Shape | Free Form | Word-initial | Word-medial | Word-final |
|----|----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | CV | | qa#rūh ‘they read it’ | maṭ#ʕa#mak ‘your restaurant’ | bē#ti ‘my house’ |
| 2 | CVC | kil ‘eat!’ | laʕ#bu ‘they played’ | sā#baq#hum ‘he raced them’ | ktā#bak ‘your book’ |
| 3 | CVCC | ħarb ‘war’ | ʕuft#hum ‘I saw them’ | ða#rabt#na ‘you have hit us’ | ka#bart ‘I have grown up’ |
| 4 | C \bar{V} | mū ‘what?’ | gā#lis ‘he is sitting’ | qa#rū#ha ‘they read it’ | rā#hū ‘they went’ |
| 5 | C \bar{V} C | rāh ‘he went’ | sēf#hum ‘their sword’ | bat#rūh#loh ‘she will go to him’ | bat#sīr ‘will you go?’ |
| 6 | CCV | mša ‘he went/walked’ | šta#yal ‘he got a job’ | | |
| 7 | CCVC | ðrub ‘hit!’ | ħtar#rit ‘it got hot’ | | |
| 8 | CC \bar{V} | mšī ‘walk!’ | mqā#bar ‘grave yards!’ | | |
| 9 | CC \bar{V} C | blād ‘a country’ | ʕṭāb#it ‘she got sick’ | | |
| 10 | CCVCC | ħtart ‘I was confused’ | xtart#ha ‘I chose it’ | | |
| 11 | CCCVC | štyil | stlum#ha | | |

| | | | | | |
|----|-------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| | | 'work!' | 'receive it!' | | |
| 12 | stCVC | stqām 'it straightened' | strāh 'he rested' | | |
| 13 | CVCC | rādd 'returning' | rādd l-bēt 'returning home' | | |

3.2 Word stress

Shaaban (1977:77) states that "stress in OA is fixed and predictable". It falls on the long syllable in a word, where a long syllable is one with a long vowel followed by at least one consonant (CVC), or one with a short vowel and at least two consonants in the coda (CVCC). Thus the first syllable is stressed in *kāt#bah* 'she is writing' and *zār#hum* 'he has visited them', whereas the second is stressed in *ka#tābt* 'I have written' and *xab#bārt* 'I have informed (someone)'. If a word is mono-syllabic, whether the syllable is long, like *šayy* 'thing', or short, like *min* 'from', stress falls on that single syllable/vowel, resulting in *šáyy* and *mín*. If a word is bi-syllabic and both syllables are long, stress falls on the second (ultimate) syllable, as in *kāt#bīn* 'we are writing' and *rāy#hāt* 'we.f are leaving'. If the bi-syllabic word has no long syllables, then stress falls on the first (penultimate) syllable, as in *māg#mar* 'incense burner' and *kā#tab* 'he has written'. If a word is poly-syllabic with one long syllable, then that syllable is stressed, as in *ǝa#rābt#na* 'you have hit us' and *da#šā#dīs#hum* 'their clothes'. If the poly-syllabic word has no long syllables, like *mār#ka#bak* 'your boat', *bār#kah* 'a blessing', and *sā#ma#kah* 'a fish', then stress falls on the antepenultimate syllable. As Holes (2007:4) observes, such forms are reduced by deleting the second vowel, resulting in bi-syllabic ones, *mār#bak*, *bār#kah*, and *sām#kah*, respectively.

3.3 Phonological processes

This section discusses examples of assimilation, spread of emphasis, metathesis, and ablaut. As Holes (2007:4) points out, all the OA dialects behave like SA with regard to assimilation of the /l/ of the definite article (*ʔal-*) to the first consonant in the noun, this also applies to adjectives. Thus, the definite of *gdīd* 'new' is *ʔil-gdīd* (or *lə-gdīd*), and the definite of *šams* 'sun' is *ʔiš-šams*. In this regard, OA behaves differently from Egyptian Arabic where the definite of *gidīd* 'new' is *ʔig-gidīd*, and the definite of *kalb* 'dog' is *ʔik-kalb*. Another interesting tendency he mentions is the assimilation of the /h/ of the feminine possessive pronoun *-ha* to the /t/ in the nominal form. While in most OA dialects 'its price' is *qīmit-ha*, it is *qīmat-te* (or *qīmat-ta*, or even *gīmat-te*) in some Bāṭina Bedouin varieties, the same applies to *ʔaxat-ha* 'her sister' which is pronounced as *ʔaxat-te*. In some

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Levantine Arabic varieties, 'its price' is pronounced as *ʔīmit-tā*. The definite article in OA has two forms, *(ʔi)l-* and *(ʔa)l-*. It is *l-* in connected speech, unless the first syllable of the noun is open with an unstressed /i/ or /u/, in which case the definite article is *lə-*; for example, the definite form of *kitāb* is *lə-ktāb*. This is also the case if the word is monosyllabic with the form CCVC, as in *wlād* 'children' whose definite form is *lə-wlād*, and *byūt* 'houses', whose definite form is *lə-byūt*.

In addition, obstruents assimilate in voicing when in a cluster of two obstruents, resulting in two voiced or voiceless obstruents. For example, *ʔijtimāʕ* 'meeting' becomes *ʔičtimāʕ* (or *ʔištimāʕ*), *masgid* 'mosque' becomes *mazgid*, *tzawwag* 'he got married' becomes *dzawwag*, and *mugtahid* 'hardworking' becomes *muktahid* in some BSD varieties. Moreover, when two obstruents identical except for voicing are adjacent across word boundaries, the first assimilates to the second in voicing, resulting in a geminate, as in *malḥ ʕrēši* 'raw salt' which is pronounced as *malʕ ʕrēši*, and *r-rās zēn* 'the head is good' which is pronounced as *r-rāz zēn*. Furthermore, the labials /m/, /f/, and /b/ turn a following /n/ into /m/, as in *ganb* 'side', which becomes *gæmb*, *yinfax* 'blow', which becomes *yimfax*, and *min bētuh* 'from his house', which becomes *mim bētuh*. Also, /n/ assimilates to /r/ when followed by /r/, as in *mən rasab* 'who failed?' which becomes *mər rasab*.

Besides assimilation, OA dialects also exhibit the spread of emphasis, or velarization in the vicinity of emphatics. For example, /s/ is pronounced as /ṣ/ when around /t/ as in *ṣaṭḥ* 'roof' (*saṭḥ*) and *ṣalaṭah* 'salad' (*salatah*), as well as in the proper name *ṣulṭān* (Sulṭān); these examples also show that /l/ has an emphatic allophone, /ḷ/, which appears in many of the Bedouin dialects in the vicinity of emphatics as well as uvulars, as in *ya-štayil-u* 'he works' (*ya-štayil-u*), *mašxaḥ* 'sieve', and *məqlāh* 'frying pan' (*miqlāh*). Also, /t/ is pronounced as /ṭ/ when around /ṣ/ as in *ṭṣabbar* 'have patience!' as well as in the tribal name *ṭaṣ-ṣaḥṭi* (it is *ṭaṣ-ṣalti*, after Imam ṭaṣ-ṣalt bin Mālik Al-Xarūṣi); in Egyptian Arabic, SA *ṣudāʕ* 'headache' is pronounced as *ṣudāʕ*. Also, /n/ is pronounced as /ṇ/ before /k/ as in *ʔinḳasar* 'it broke' and *yinḳabb* 'it pours', as well as before /g/, as in *yinḡrah* 'he gets injured' and *yinḡāb* 'it is brought'. Moreover, Glover notes that /r/ also has an emphatic allophone that appears in the vicinity of emphatic consonants, as in *maraṭ* 'he pulled out' (p. 38).

Examples of metathesis in DSD include *Allah y-naʕl-oh* 'may God curse him' from *Allah y-laʕn-oh*, *mʕalqaḥ* 'spoon' from *milʕaqah*, and *gzāz* 'glass' from *zgāg*. BSD has *golb* 'light bulb' from *globe*, and *karhaba* 'electricity' from *kahrabāʔ*. In the Šūr dialect, there is *mityawza* 'married' from *mitzawga*, where /g/ is realized as /y/ in most Bedouin dialects, as

in *yib-na* ‘we brought’ (*gib-na*) and *daray* ‘stairs’ (*darag*). The distinction between past tense and imperative verbs is exhibited through ablaut in some OA dialects. For example, the imperative of *xāz* ‘went away’ is *xūz*; the imperative of *xaḏ* ‘took’ is *xoḏ*; the imperative of *šāf* ‘saw’ is *šūf*; and the imperative of *rāh* ‘go’ is *rūh*.

3.4 Phonotactics

Some OA dialects allow certain sound combinations that are not allowed in other dialects. For example, MD allows clusters of 3 consonants word-initially, as in *strīh* ‘rest!’ and *stlim* ‘receive!’, and word-medially, as in *yi-strīh* ‘he rests’ and *ni-stlim* ‘we receive’. In contrast, some northern mountains varieties (sedentary) break the cluster, as in *sitrīh* ‘rest!’ and *y-sitrīh* ‘he rests’. Also, BSD breaks the cluster, as in *yə-stārīh* and *yə-stilim* ‘he receives’.

Shaaban (1977:82) observes that when the suffix starts with a consonant in MD, the first vowel in the stem is deleted, as in *qatal-ti* ‘you.sf killed’ from *qatal+ti*. By contrast, when the suffix starts with a vowel, the second vowel is deleted, as in *qatl-it* ‘she killed’ from *qatal+it*. This is also true of DSD, where *qatal* ‘he killed’ becomes *qatl-et* ‘she killed’ and *qatl-ti* ‘you.sf killed’. In BSD, however, while the vowel-initial suffix causes the stem to lose its second vowel, as in *qatl-it* ‘she killed’, the consonant-initial suffix does not cause the stem to lose the first vowel, as in *qatal-ti* ‘you.sf killed’. This is also true of the Jaʿlān variety (Bedouin) where *gital* ‘he killed’ becomes *gitl-at* ‘she killed’ and *gital-ti* ‘you.sf killed’. In the Šūr variety (Bedouin), the vowel-initial suffix does not cause the stem to lose its second vowel, as in *waṣal-an* ‘we arrived’ (from Holes, 2013). Another pattern is observed in the Al-Muḏaybi variety (mixed) where whether the suffix is consonant-initial or vowel-initial does not affect the stem since *qatal* ‘he killed’ becomes *qatal-it* ‘she killed’ and *qatal-ti* ‘you.sf killed’.

Unlike some modern Arabic dialects, the perfective form of stems with geminates, like *ḥabb* ‘loved’ and *ḥall* ‘solved’, and ones with long vowels, like *ṣām* ‘fasted’ and *lām* ‘blamed’, does not always involve epenthesis when followed by a consonant-initial affix. This is shown by *ḥabb-ni*, *ḥabb-na*, *ḥabb-kum*, *ḥabb-kin*, *ḥabb-hum*, *ḥabb-hin*, *ḥabb-ha*, *ḥabb-oh*, *ḥabb-ak*, *ḥabb-iš*. For the 1st person, while it is *ḥabb-eni* in Egyptian Arabic, it is *ḥabb-ani* in some Saudi varieties (Ḥijāz).

Finally, while MD doubles the consonant in the subject affix before the vowel-initial object suffix, as in *katb-it-t-oh* ‘she wrote it’, some BSD and northern mountains sedentary varieties have *katbi-t-oh*. Also, while DSD deletes unstressed short vowels in open non-final syllables, as in *glast* ‘I sat down’ and *wqaft* ‘I stood up’, BSD does not delete that

vowel, the corresponding forms are *galast* and *waqaft*.

4. Morphology

This section presents several aspects of the morphology of OA. Forms are either sedentary or Bedouin, sometimes the name of the town in which the form is used is indicated. Sometimes the form is hard to identify with a specific town, but it certainly exists in an OA dialect since I have encountered it in the 15 year-long contact with speakers of several OA dialects. As is clear in some tables, some sedentary forms are identical to the corresponding Bedouin ones, which reflects the fact that the dialects are converging.

4.1 Personal pronouns

The forms in table 5 are the masculine subject and object personal pronouns; the pronouns in table 6 are the feminine ones. Like all the modern dialects of Arabic, OA does not mark the dual in the pronominal system. The different forms come from different dialects; where known, the name of the city/town (in parentheses) follows the respective form, which could also be used in other parts of the country. It should be noted that while the subject pronouns are free morphemes, the object pronouns are suffixes.

Table 5. Masculine Personal Pronouns

| | 1 st Person Singular | 1 st Person Plural | 2 nd Person Singular | 2 nd Person Plural | 3 rd Person Singular | 3 rd Person Plural |
|---------------------|--|--|---|---|--|--|
| Subject Pronouns | <i>Sedentary:</i> ʔana ʔāni (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> ħnu(h) ħanū(h) ihna ħana naħnu (Sīb) naħna (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> ʔintah nta(h) ʔinta (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> ʔintū(h) ntū(h) ʔintu (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> huwwa huwwo(h) ho (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> humma(h) hum hūm (Ṣalālah) |
| | <i>Bedouin:</i> ʔani ʔana | <i>Bedouin:</i> ħan ħana naħan nəħən ħanna | <i>Bedouin:</i> ʔint ʔintəh | <i>Bedouin:</i> (i)ntu (i)ntaw | <i>Bedouin:</i> hū(h) hu huwwo(h) | <i>Bedouin:</i> hum hummə(h) |

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| | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Object Pronouns | <i>Sedentary:</i> -ni | <i>Sedentary:</i> -na | <i>Sedentary:</i> -ak | <i>Sedentary:</i> -kum -čim | <i>Sedentary:</i> -oh -uh | <i>Sedentary:</i> -hum -him |
| | <i>Bedouin:</i> -ni -āni -ānyəh | <i>Bedouin:</i> -na -āna -ānne | <i>Bedouin:</i> -ak -āk | <i>Bedouin:</i> -kom -ākum | <i>Bedouin:</i> -ah -āh | <i>Bedouin:</i> -hom -āhum |

Table 6. Feminine Personal Pronouns

| | 1 st Person Singular | 1 st Person Plural | 2 nd Person Singular | 2 nd Person Plural | 3 rd Person Singular | 3 rd Person Plural |
|---------------------|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| Subject Pronouns | <i>Sedentary:</i> ʔana ʔāni (Şalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> ħnu(h) ħanū(h) iħna ħana naħnu (Seeb) naħna (Şalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> ntī(h) ʔinti (Şalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> ʔintan ntan ʔintin (Şalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> hiyya(h) hi (Şalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> hinnah hin hēn (Şalālah) |
| | <i>Bedouin:</i> ʔani ʔana | <i>Bedouin:</i> ħan ħana naħan nəħən ħanna | <i>Bedouin:</i> nti (i)ntay | <i>Bedouin:</i> ntin ntan | <i>Bedouin:</i> hiyya(h) hi hī(h) hiyyə(h) | <i>Bedouin:</i> hēn hin hinnəh |
| Object Pronouns | <i>Sedentary:</i> -ni -āni | <i>Sedentary:</i> -na -āna | <i>Sedentary:</i> -iš -āš | <i>Sedentary:</i> -kin -ākin -čim | <i>Sedentary:</i> -ha -āha | <i>Sedentary:</i> -hin -āhin |
| | <i>Bedouin:</i> -ni -ānyəh (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> -na -ānne (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> -ič -iš -ik -āk (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> -kan -kin -ākin (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> -he -hi (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> -hin -āhin (Suwaiq) |

4.2 Demonstrative pronouns

The different OA varieties have different forms for the demonstrative pronoun which corresponds to the SA *hāḏā* ‘this’ and its forms for masculine and feminine as well as singular and plural, as in table 7. Demonstrative pronouns in OA may also follow the noun, as in *mā šaf-t-oh r-riggāl hāḏā* ‘I have not seen this man’.

Table 7. OA Demonstrative Pronouns

| | Proximal Masculine Singular | Proximal Masculine Plural | Distal Masculine Singular | Distal Masculine Plural |
|-----------|--|---|--|--|
| Masculine | <i>Sedentary:</i> hāḏa hāḏi (Şalālah) ha ḏa ḏohoh (northern mountains) | <i>Sedentary:</i> haḏēla/hāḏēle ḏēla/ḏēle ha haḏōna (Şalālah) ḏēlhoh (northern mountains) | <i>Sedentary:</i> hāḏāk ḏāk ʔaḏāk(ah) haḏāk(ah) hāk (Şalālah) haḏāk-əh (Al-Ħamra) | <i>Sedentary:</i> hāḏēlāk hāḏōna hāḏalāk (Al-Ħamra) hiyy-hum (Al-Ħamra) ḏēlāk haḏōnak (Şalālah) |
| | <i>Bedouin:</i> ḏē(h) ha haḏē (Bidiyya) ʔaḏē (Şūr) hāḏiya (Şūr) ʔē (Şūr) hāḏēh (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> ʔāllā(h) Şūr ha hāḏēla (Suwaiq) ḏēla | <i>Bedouin:</i> hāḏāk ḏāk (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> ʔāllāk hāḏēlāk ḏēlāk (Suwaiq) |
| Feminine | <i>Sedentary:</i> hāḏi (Şalālah) ha ḏi ḏihoh | <i>Sedentary:</i> haḏēla/hāḏēle ḏēla/ḏēle ḏēlhoh (northern mountains) haḏēna (DSD) | <i>Sedentary:</i> hāḏīk ḏīk ʔaḏīka(h) haḏīka(h) hāk (Şalālah) haḏīk-əh (Al-Ħamra) | <i>Sedentary:</i> hāḏēlāk hāḏōna ḏēlāk haḏēnak (Şalālah) hiyy-hin (Al-Ħamra) |

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|--|---|---|--|
| <i>Bedouin:</i> ha ʔaḏīha(h) haḏīha(h) ʔī (Al-Muḏaybi) hāḏī ḏī (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> ʔāllā(h) Ṣūr ha ḏēla hāḏēla (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> hāḏīk ḏīk (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> ʔāllāk ḏēlāk (Suwaiq) |
|--|---|---|--|

4.3 Possessive pronouns

As in SA, possession in OA is expressed by possessive pronouns suffixed to the noun, as table 8 shows.

Table 8. OA Possessive Pronouns

| | 1 st Person Singular | 1 st Person Plural | 2 nd Person Singular | 2 nd Person Plural | 3 rd Person Singular | 3 rd Person Plural |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Masculine | <i>Sedentary:</i> -i | <i>Sedentary:</i> -na | <i>Sedentary:</i> -ak -ač | <i>Sedentary:</i> -kum | <i>Sedentary:</i> -oh -eh -uh | <i>Sedentary:</i> -hum |
| | <i>Bedouin:</i> -iyəh (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> -ni | <i>Bedouin:</i> -ək | <i>Bedouin:</i> -kum | <i>Bedouin:</i> -ah -əh | <i>Bedouin:</i> -hum |
| Feminine | <i>Sedentary:</i> -i | <i>Sedentary:</i> -na | <i>Sedentary:</i> -iš | <i>Sedentary:</i> -kin -kan | <i>Sedentary:</i> -ha -he | <i>Sedentary:</i> -hin |
| | <i>Bedouin:</i> -iyəh (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> -ni | <i>Bedouin:</i> -ič (Al-Buraimi) -ik (Āl-Wahība) | <i>Bedouin:</i> -kin | <i>Bedouin:</i> -ha -hi | <i>Bedouin:</i> -hin |

It is noteworthy that the 1st person singular possessive pronoun of the Bedouin dialect of the town of Suwaiq on the Bāṭina coast is reminiscent of that used on words in the Qurʔānic verses 19-20:69 and 25-26:69, “kitāb-iyah” ‘my book’ and “hisāb-iyah” ‘my account’, as well as in the verses 28-29:69, in (5-6). This ‘yah’ is called hāʔu-s-sakt in Sībawayhi’s Kitāb (8th century).

(5) mā ʔaynā ʕannī māl-iyah (28:69)
Neg Pst.benefit.3sm from.me money-my

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‘My wealth has not availed me.’

(6) halaka ʕanni sulṭān-iyah (29:69)

Pst.perish.3sm from.me authority-my

‘My authority has abandoned me.’

It is also worth mentioning that *-ak* and *-iṣ* (singular possessive pronouns), as used in some Bedouin varieties, have two forms. For example, while ‘your.sm book’ is *ktāb-ak*, ‘your.sm car’ is *sayyārat-k*. Similarly, while ‘your.sf book’ is *ktāb-iṣ*, ‘your.sf car’ is *sayyārat-ṣ*. It seems that when the last vowel in the noun stem is long, the longer (vowel-initial) form of the pronoun is used. This is supported by the fact that ‘your.sm cars’ in these Bedouin varieties is *sayyārāt-ak* and ‘your.sf cars’ is *sayyārāt-iṣ*; *sayyārāt-k* and *sayyārāt-ṣ* are illicit.

That this is on the right track is supported by words like *markab* ‘boat’, ‘your.sm boat’ is *markab-k* and ‘your.sf boat’ is *markab-ṣ*. By contrast, the two possessive pronouns have the same form in the sedentary dialects, as in *ktāb-ak*, *markab-ak*, *siyyārt-ak*, and *siyyārāt-ak*; this also applies to *-iṣ*.

Ownership is expressed in OA by the free morpheme *māl*, which takes the possessive pronoun as a suffix, thus *(ʔi)l-ktāb māl-i* means ‘my book’ or ‘the book of mine’, *ḥāl* has the same meaning of *māl*, but it is used differently, we say *(ʔi)l-ktāb bū ḥāl-i* ‘the book of mine/the book which belongs to me’. *(ʔi)l-ktāb ḥāl-i* means ‘the/this book is mine’, a full sentence.

The southern dialects have the free morpheme *ḥaqq* (also found in some of the Yemeni dialects), thus ‘the book of mine/my book’ is *(ʔi)l-ktāb ḥaqq-i*. While *māl* in the northern dialects realizes plural number and feminine gender optionally, as in *māl-t-i* (*ʔis-siyyārah māl-i/māl-t-i* ‘my car’) and *māl-ā-t-i* (*ʔis-siyyārāt māl-i/māl-ā-t-i* ‘my cars’), it must realize both number and gender of the possessee in DSD, thus there is *māl-i*, *māl-t-i*, and *māl-ū-t-i*, as in *(ʔi)l-ʔawrāq māl-ū-t-i* ‘my papers’. Likewise, *ḥaqq* must realize gender and number of the possessee, thus ‘the car of mine’ is *ʔis-siyyārah ḥaqq-ət-i*, and ‘the cars of mine’ is *ʔis-siyyārāt ḥaqq-ū-t-i*. It is possible that *māli* comes from SA, analyzed as *mā-l-i*, where *mā* is a relative pronoun meaning ‘what’, *-l-* is the preposition meaning ‘for/of’, and *-i* is the 1st person singular possessive pronoun, together amounting to ‘what is for me/what belongs to me’, *māl-i* and *ḥaqq-i* correspond to SA *xāṣṣatī*.

4.4 Interrogative pronouns

This section presents the different interrogative pronouns in the various OA dialects, in table 9. Some of the interrogative pronouns corresponding to ‘what’ are composed of *ʔa-*

(whose glottal stop has transformed into either *w-* or *y-* or *h-* in different varieties), which may be the first syllable of the SA *ʔa-yyu* ‘which’, and *-š*, which may arguably be a grammaticalization of the OA noun *šay* ‘thing’ (*šayʔ* in SA). Thus ‘what’ is basically ‘which thing’. Likewise, some of the pronouns corresponding to ‘why’ are composed of the same structure of ‘what’ plus the prefixal preposition *l-*, meaning ‘for’, or the possessive *hāl*, which means ‘for’ (as in *l-ktāb bū hāli* ‘my book/the book which is for me’), amounting to ‘what for’. Other patterns are observed in the other pronoun forms.

Table 9. OA Interrogative Pronouns

| Wh-word | OA Equivalents |
|----------|--|
| What | ʔēš; wēš; hēš; šū; mū(h); yīš; mhu; kūn (Suwaiq) |
| Who | min; mən; man; min-hu; min-u |
| Where | wēn; hēn |
| When | mata; məta; mita; miti (Suwaiq) |
| Why | lēš; hāl-mū(h); hāl-hēš; hāl-wēš; min-wēš; ʕala-mū; hāl-kūn (Suwaiq); ʔa-mūh (Al-Ḥamra) |
| How | kēf; kama-mū (like what) |
| How many | kam; kam-min; š-gadd (what amount/size) |
| Whose | hāl-min; māl-min; b-hāl-min (Al-Ḥamra) |
| Which of | hēn-min(-hum/-hin); wēn-min(-hum/-hin); mū-min(-hum/-hin); hēš-min(-hin); kūn-min(-hin) (Suwaiq) |

4.5 Plural marking in OA nouns

Many of the nouns in OA have both a sound plural form and a broken one. For example, the sound plural form of *siyyārah* ‘car’ is *siyyārāt* (sound plural feminine), but it also has the form *sayāyīr* (broken); the sound plural form of *sāʕah* ‘watch’ is *sāʕāt*, but there is also *syaf*; *ḥurmah* ‘woman’ has four plural forms *ḥurmāt* (when with numerals), *ḥarīm*, *ḥrīm*, and *ḥram*. The singular form for ‘seashells’ in BSD is *maḥḥārah* and the plural is *maḥḥār*; the singular in DSD is also *maḥḥārah* but the plural is *maḥāḥīr*; the singular in MD is *muḥḥār* and the plural also is *maḥāḥīr*. The plural of *ʔinsān/ʔansān* ‘human being’ is *nās* in all the OA dialects, but DSD also has *nīs*. DSD and MD are probably the most peculiar with regard to their pluralization patterns, a topic which lends itself to thorough examination and analysis; table 10 presents some of the most notable examples.

Table 10. Notable Pluralization Patterns

| | Singular and Meaning | DSD | MD | Bāṭina | Other Dialects |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | ʔustāḏ ‘teacher’ | ʔustāḏ-īn, ʔasātīḏ | ʔasātīḏ | ʔasātḏah, ʔasātīḏ | ʔasātīd, ʔustādīn |
| 2 | šurṭi ‘policeman’ | šurṭiyy-īn, šurṭah | šurṭah, šurṭiyy-īn | šurṭah | šarṭah |

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|----|--|--------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 3 | bāb 'door' DSD: bāb; bīb | bībān, bwīb | bībān | bībān | (ʔa)bwāb |
| 4 | Zgāg 'glass' | zgīg (pieces) | zgāg | zgāg | zgāg |
| 5 | dgāgah 'chicken' DSD: dgāgah; dgōgah Bedouin: dyāyah | dəgīg, dgōg | dgāg | dgāg, dyāy | dyāy, diyāy |
| 6 | gdār 'wall' | gidwār | gidrān | gidrān | gidər |
| 7 | ḥṣāh; ḥṣāh 'stone' DSD: ḥḡārah | ḥḡwār | ḥḡṣyāt, ḥṣyāt | ḥṣa | ḥṣi |
| 8 | nʕāl 'shoes' | naʕālāt | nuʕlān | niʕil | niʕlān, nʕūl |
| 9 | maṭbax 'kitchen' | mṭābax | maṭābax, maṭābox | maṭābəx | maṭābox |
| 10 | ḥallāgah 'fridge' | ḥallāgāt | ḥalālīg | ḥallāgāt | |
| 11 | kōb 'cup' | kōbāt, kwīb, kūbīt | kībān | kōbāt | (ʔa)kwāb |
| 12 | ḥaṣīr 'mat' DSD: ḥaṣīr; simmah | ḥəṣrān, smām | ḥaṣāyar | ḥəṣrān | ḥəṣər |
| 13 | gabāl 'mountain' | gbal, gbāl | gbāl | gbāl | |
| 14 | gamāl 'camel' | gmāl, gmāl, ʔibil | gmāl | gmāl, bōš | hīn (SA hijīn, higin in OA) |
| 15 | zlāy 'sock' DSD: dālāy MD: dlāy | dalāyāt | dilyān | zlāyāt | |
| 16 | ktāb 'book' | kutbāt, kutub | ktub | kutub, kitib | |
| 17 | qalam 'pen' | qalmāt | qlāmāh | ʔaqlām, qlāmāh | |
| 18 | ʕors; ʕirs 'wedding' DSD: ʕoros | ʕarsāt | ʕrūsāt | ʕrūsāt | ʔaʕrās |
| 19 | nāqah 'female camel' | nāq | | | nūg, nāqāt |
| 20 | riggāl 'man' DSD: riggīl; riggāl | rgīl | rgāl | rgāl, rgāgīl | ragāgīl, riyāyīl |

4.6 Verb forms and structure

Unlike SA, which has 15 trilateral verb forms and 4 quadrilateral forms, OA has 9 trilateral forms (lacking 4 and 11-15) and 2 quadrilateral ones (lacking 3 and 4). Shaaban (1977:51-52) states that MD lacks Form IX, and that Form IV verbs are rare, except for borrowings from SA. Though rare, Form IX is available in BSD, which lacks Form IV.

Form IX is sometimes replaced with participles, and Form IV by Form I verbs, unless borrowed from SA. Table 11 provides the forms with examples.

Table 11. OA 11 Verb Forms

| Forms | SA Metrics | OA Examples |
|----------------|------------|--|
| Tri-Form I | faʕala | katab ‘write’; laʕab ‘play’ |
| Tri-Form II | faʕʕala | kallam ‘talk to’; rawwah ‘leave’ |
| Tri-Form III | fāʕala | šārak ‘participate’; sāmah ‘forgive’ |
| Tri-Form V | tafaʕʕala | tšawwaf ‘see’; twassaʕ ‘widen’ |
| Tri-Form VI | tafāʕala | thāwan ‘recover’; tšāwan ‘cooperate’ |
| Tri-Form VII | ʔinfaʕala | ʔinqalab ‘flip’; ʔinsahab ‘withdraw’ |
| Tri-Form VIII | ʔiftaʕala | ʔigtahad ‘work hard’; ʔimtahan ‘take a test’ |
| Tri-Form IX | ʔifʕalla | ʔiftarr ‘skid/slide’; ʔištamm ‘become deaf’ |
| Tri-Form X | ʔistafʕala | ʔistaxdam ‘use’; ʔistaʕbaʕ ‘ignore’ |
| Quadri-Form I | faʕlala | zaxraf ‘decorate’; saytar ‘control’ |
| Quadri-Form II | tafaʕlala | tʔaqlam ‘get used to’; txarbaʕ ‘mess up’ |

Shaaban (1977:126) states that the basic perfective stem in MD is always CaCaC, thus the perfective form for *kataba* ‘write’ in MD is *katab*. By contrast, it is *kitab* in some Bāṭina Bedouin varieties, *ktab* in DSD, and both *kitab* and *ktab* are found in different eastern varieties. The basic imperfective stem takes the form CCVC. For a tri-consonantal verb (sound), like *katab*, the imperfective is either *yi-ktib*, as in most OA dialects, or *yi-ktob*, as in DSD and some northern mountains varieties. Shaaban (1977:141-142) states that the MD imperfective form of glide-initial verbs (assimilated) like *waṣal* ‘arrive’ and *yabas* ‘dry up’ is *yū-ṣal* and *yī-bas*, respectively, where the glide turns into a long vowel. DSD and BSD, however, allow the glide to surface, as in *yu-wṣal/yə-wṣal* and *yə-ybas*. As for bi-consonantal verbs with a glide/long vowel in between (hollow), like *ṭāl* ‘lengthen’, while the imperfective in MD is *y-ṭūl*, it is *yə-ṭwal* in other dialects. As for verbs with the form CaCa and a glide as the third radical when inflected in SA (defective), like *nasa* ‘forget’, the imperfective in MD is *yi-ns-u* ‘they forget’, whereas it is *y-nisy-u* in other dialects, like the one spoken in Sīb in the Capital area. While the BSD imperfective form of *ga* ‘come’ is *y-g-u* ‘they come’ and of *ṭyadda* ‘take lunch’ is *yi-ṭyadd-u* ‘they are taking lunch’, the MD variety spoken in Sīb city has *y-giyy-u* and *yi-t-yaddy-u*, and one northern mountains dialect (sedentary) has *yi-t-yadday-u*, allowing the glide to surface; Holes (2007, 2014) states that the preservation of /y/, a feature not available in many other Omani and Arabic dialects, is only found in OA sedentary dialects. The fact that some dialects allow a glide to

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surface in assimilated, hollow and defective verbs argues against Shaaban (1977:125) who states that the superficially bi-consonantal forms are actually formed of two consonants, without a glide in their underlying representation “since there is no independent motivation synchronically for positing underlying glides”.^①

4.7 Subject agreement affixes

This section presents the subject agreement affixes in perfective, imperfective, and active participle paradigms for both genders, in tables 12, and 13, respectively. Since different dialects have slightly different verbal forms, and also different affixes, the subject affixes are presented affixed to the verb *katab* ‘write’. See Shaaban (1977:125-207) for the suffixes of all the verbal form patterns in MD. Some forms appear in both dialect groups, sedentary and Bedouin, reflecting dialect convergence and mixing.

Table 12. Masculine Subject Agreement Affixes

| | 1 st Person Singular | 1 st Person Plural | 2 nd Person Singular | 2 nd Person Plural | 3 rd Person Singular | 3 rd Person Plural |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|--|
| Subject Affixes in the Imperfective | <i>Sedentary:</i> ʔa-ktib ʔa-ktob (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> ni-ktib nə-ktob (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> ti-ktib tə-ktob (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> t-kitb-u t-kitb-ūn (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> yi-ktib yi-ktob (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> y-kitb-u yi-kitb-u y-kitb-ūn (Ṣalālah) |
| | <i>Bedouin:</i> ʔa-ktib | <i>Bedouin:</i> na-ktib ni-ktib | <i>Bedouin:</i> ta-ktib ti-ktib | <i>Bedouin:</i> t-kitb-ūn t-katb-ūn t-katb-u | <i>Bedouin:</i> ya-ktib yi-ktib | <i>Bedouin:</i> y-kitb-ōn y-katb-u y-katb-ūn y-kitb-ūn |
| Subject Affixes in the Perfective | <i>Sedentary:</i> katab-t ktab-t ktib-t (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> katab-na ktab-na ktib-na (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> katab-t ktab-t ktib-t (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> katab-tu ktab-tu kətb-u (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> katab ktab ktəb (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> katb-u ktab-u kətb-u (Ṣalālah) |

^① See Shaaban (1977:54) and Glover (1988:165) for the perfective and imperfective verb forms and affixes in MD. As for most of the other dialects, the verbal forms and affixes will differ mainly in whether consonant clusters, gemination, vowel lengthening, or epenthesis is involved.

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| | <i>Bedouin:</i> kitab-t ktab-t kitab-it | <i>Bedouin:</i> kitab-na ktab-na kitab-ni (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> kitab-t kitab-it (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> ktab-taw ktab-tu kitab-tu kitab-taw | <i>Bedouin:</i> ktab kitab | <i>Bedouin:</i> ktab-u ktab-aw ktib-u (i)ktib-aw katb-aw (Suwaiq) |
|--|--|--|--|---|----------------------------------|---|

Table 13. Feminine Subject Agreement Affixes

| | 1 st Person Singular | 1 st Person Plural | 2 nd Person Singular | 2 nd Person Plural | 3 rd Person Singular | 3 rd Person Plural |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| Subject Affixes in the Imperfective | <i>Sedentary:</i> ʔa-ktib ʔa-ktob (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> ni-ktib nə-ktob (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> t-ktib-i t-kutb-īn (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> t-ktib-in t-ktib-an t-kutb-en (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> ti-ktib tə-ktob (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> y-ktib-in y-ktib-an yə-ktub-en (Ṣalālah) |
| | <i>Bedouin:</i> ʔa-ktib | <i>Bedouin:</i> na-ktib n-ktib ni-ktib (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> t-ktib-ay (Ṣūr) t-ktib-i t-katb-īn t-ktib-īn (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> t-katb-an t-ktib-an (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> ta-ktib t-ktib ti-ktib (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> y-katb-an y-ktib-an (Suwaiq) |
| Subject Affixes in the Perfective | <i>Sedentary:</i> katab-t ktab-t ktib-t (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> katab-na ktab-na ktib-na (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> katab-ti ktab-ti ktəb-ti (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> katab-tin katab-tan ktab-tin ktab-tan ktəbt-en (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> katb-it katab-it katb-at kutb-et (Ṣalālah) | <i>Sedentary:</i> katb-in katb-an ktab-in kutb-en (Ṣalālah) |

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|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| | <i>Bedouin:</i> ktab-t kitab-t kitab-it | <i>Bedouin:</i> ktab-na kitab-na kitab-ni (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> ktab-ti kitab-ti ktab-tay kitab-tay (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> ktab-tan kitab-tan | <i>Bedouin:</i> ktab-it (i)ktib-at kitb-at katb-at (Suwaiq) | <i>Bedouin:</i> ktib-an ktab-an katb-an (Suwaiq) |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|

Table 14 presents some of the active participial subject and object suffixes.^① As Holes (2007) points out, *-in(n)* is infixed if the participle has verbal force. If it is used as a noun, the infix is not used, e.g. *Ali mʕallmⁱⁿⁿ-oh* ‘Ali has taught him’ vs. *Ali mʕallm-oh* ‘Ali is his teacher’. There are, however, some OA dialects where this infix is not used, as in the DSD form; see also Holes (2011) for a discussion of this morpheme.

Table 14. Participial Subject and Object Affixes

| | Bāṭina and Muscat | Northern Mountains Sedentary Dialects | DSD | Bedouin |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Masculine Subject and Masculine Object | kātb-inn-oh kātb-inn-eh | kātb-inn-uh | kātb-u(h) | kātb-inn-eh kātb-inn-əh (Suwaiq) |
| Masculine Subject and Feminine Object | kātb-in-ha | kātb-in-ha | kātib-ha | kātb-in-ha kātb-in-hi (Suwaiq) |
| Feminine Subject and Masculine Object | kātib-t-inn-oh kātib-t-inn-eh | kātb-it-n-oh kātb-it-inn-uh | kātb-āt-u(h) | kātib-t-inn-eh kātib-t-inn-əh (Suwaiq) |
| Feminine Subject and Feminine Object | kātib-t-in-ha kātb-it-in-ha | kātb-it-in-ha | kātb-āt-ha | kātib-t-in-ha kātib-t-in-hi (Suwaiq) |

4.8 The passive form

The apophonic passive (internally derived by transfixing the vowels *u-i* in SA) was documented in Reinhardt (1894). A century later, Holes (1998) documents examples from three sedentary OA dialects, those spoken in Wādi Saḥtan, Al-Muḍaybi, and Qalhāt. The examples include forms like *yisamma* ‘it’s called’, *yigāb* ‘it’s brought’, *yibāf* ‘it’s sold’,

^① This is when the subject is singular; when it is plural, dialects vary. According to Holes (2007), the plural masculine participial form is *kātbⁱⁿⁿ-uh*. Nonetheless, this consonant doubling, though present in other sedentary varieties, does not take place in my BSD variety, where the form is *kātbⁱⁿ-oh*.

and *yiṭlag-an* ‘they (camels) are released’. Eades (2009b) finds examples of the apophonic passive in the Bedouin dialect of the Hidyīwī tribe in the town of Al-Muḍaybi, as in *yiyāb* ‘is brought’, *ḍibḥat* ‘was slaughtered’, *yiṭayyan* ‘clay is applied’, and *yīšabb* ‘set on fire’. A brief survey indicates that the internal passive is available in many Omani cities and towns in central Oman (as also pointed out by Holes p.c.), as in Samāyil (*y-qalla* ‘it’s fried’, *yi-ṭṭam* ‘it’s fed’), Al-Ḥamra (*y-wadda* ‘it’s taken’, *y-sawwa* ‘it’s made’), Nizwa (*yi-ṭḥan* ‘it’s ground’, *y-ṣallaq* ‘it’s hung’), Naxal (*y-ṣaqq* ‘it’s thrown’, *y-ṣallaḥ* ‘it’s repaired’, *y-ṣarrax* ‘it’s torn’), Snāw (*y-ṣabb* ‘it’s poured’, *yi-ṣwa* ‘it is grilled’, *t-qaṣṣ* ‘it is cut’, *y-ākāl* ‘it is eaten’), and Manāḥ (*yi-trak* ‘it’s left’, *y-ṣall* ‘it’s carried’, *y-xāz* ‘it’s removed’).

Besides the apophonic passive, many OA dialects use verb Forms V and VII to express the passive, depending on the number of consonants in the root. If the verb is trilateral, like *katab* ‘write’, its passive is formed by prefixing *ʔin-* to it (Form VII), as in *ʔin-katab*; the passive of *ḍarab* ‘hit’ is *ʔin-ḍarab*. If the verb is trilateral-plus, whether by gemination like *wazzaṣ* ‘distribute’ or quadrilateral, the passive is expressed by prefixing *t-* to the stem (Form V). The passive of *wazzaṣ* is *t-wazzaṣ* and of *ṣallaḥ* ‘repair’ is *t-ṣallaḥ*. The passive of quadrilateral stems like *daḥrag* ‘roll’ is *t-daḥrag*, and of *kahrab* ‘electrify’ is *t-kahrab*.

The passive of superficially bi-consonantal stems like *šara* ‘buy’ and *qara* ‘read’ is expressed by prefixing *ʔin-*, giving *ʔin-šara* and *ʔin-qara*, respectively, or by the passive participle, *mašrāy* and *maqrāy*, respectively, the latter strategy being common in the OA sedentary dialects (Holes, 2014). The passive of trilateral stems with a long vowel, like *sāḥad* ‘help’ and *sāmah* ‘forgive’ is expressed by the active equivalent construction; thus the passive of *sāḥad* is *ḥadd sāḥd-oh* ‘someone helped him’, or alternatively by the active participle with object pronominal agreement, as in *msāḥdīn-oh* ‘he has been helped’. Shaaban (1977) also notes that the passive is also expressed by a combination of the copula *stawa* ‘became’ and the passive participle form of the verb, so ‘was cut’ is *stawa maqtūṣ*, literally ‘became cut’. He states that his consultants accepted the non-apophonic OA passive forms to mean ‘got + past participle’ rather than ‘was + past participle’. I accept this judgment.

4.9 Other verbal forms

This section presents how the future, the causative, the imperative, and the intensified forms of the verb are formed in OA. Many OA dialects mark futurity on the verb by prefixing *ha-* to the imperfective stem; Egyptian Arabic has *ḥa-*. Thus the future of *katab* ‘write’ is *ha-yi-ktib*, and the future of *nām* ‘sleep’ is *ha-y-nām*. BSD as well as other dialects marks futurity with the prefix *ba-*, thus the future of *kal* ‘eat’ is *ba-yā-kil*, and the

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future of *qara* ‘read’ is *ba-yi-gra*.^① Besides, some northern mountains dialects (sedentary) use *ʔa-*, as in *mata ʔa-t-sēr-o* ‘when will you go?’.

A rare pattern of causation in OA follows SA in doubling the middle consonant (Form II). Thus the causative of *katab* is *kattab*, and of *qara* is *qarra*. Nonetheless, most OA dialects express causation by combining verbs with the causative verb *xalla* ‘make’. Thus the causative of *sāq* ‘drive’ is *sawwaq* in some dialects and *xalla-ah y-sūq* ‘made him drive’ in many others; the causative of *rakab* is *xalla-ah yi-rkab* ‘made him ride’. Different OA dialects have different causative forms; while some have *nawwam* and *qawwam* for *nām* ‘sleep’ and *qām* ‘stand up’, respectively, others have *nayyam* and *qayyam*.

The imperative verb in all the OA varieties has lost the affix *ʔV-* of SA, which is *ʔu-* if the root vowel is *u*, as in *ʔu-ktub* ‘write!’, or *ʔi-* if the root vowel is *i* or *a*, as in *ʔi-ḥmil* ‘carry!’ and *ʔi-lḥab* ‘play!’, respectively. The imperative form of *katab* ‘write’ in both Bedouin and sedentary OA dialects is *ktib*, except for DSD where it is *ktob*. Some of these dialects may have the *ʔi-* prefix only in careful formal speech.^② The imperative of *qāl* ‘say’ is *qūl* and *kūl* in the sedentary dialects, but *gūl* and *gəl* in the Bedouin dialects.

Also, partial reduplication is used for the purpose of intensification. For example, *y-miss* ‘touch’ becomes *y-massis* or even *y-masmis* to mean ‘touch a lot/on purpose’; *y-ḥiss* ‘feel’ becomes *y-ḥassis* ‘to feel by touching’ or even ‘to be sensitive’; *y-ḥizz* ‘to rock’ becomes *y-hazhəz* to mean ‘to rock/shake continuously’; *y-fərr* ‘throw/flip’ becomes *y-farfər* to mean ‘flip quickly/continuously’.

5. Syntax

5.1 Word order

Like many other modern dialects, as well as SA, OA allows both the VSO and SVO orders, as (7-8) respectively show. Unlike SA, and like many modern dialects, OA verbs surface with full subject agreement (person, gender, and number) marking in both orders.

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------|------------------|
| (7) <i>katb-inn-oh</i> | <i>l-banāt</i> | <i>l-wāgib</i> |
| Pst.write-3pf-3sm | the-girls.Nom | the-homework.Acc |
| ‘The girls wrote/have written the homework.’ | | |
| (8) <i>l-banāt</i> | <i>katb-inn-oh</i> | <i>l-wāgib</i> |
| the-girls.Nom | Pst.write-3pf-3sm | the-homework.Acc |

^① On the various functions of the *b-* prefix in the Gulf dialects, including OA, see Persson (2008) who argues that it is “a generalized marker of the irrealis mood” (p. 26) that also denotes futurity.

^② See the imperative verb forms of MD in Glover (1988:182).

‘The girls wrote/have written the homework.’

Al-Aghbari (2004b), who is a native speaker of MD, points out that SVO is more frequent than VSO in daily conversation,^① and that objects never surface sentence-initially in OA, as (9-10) show. While these observations are also true of BSD and DSD, thematic objects can surface sentence-initially, but as left-dislocated elements, as (11-12) show, dislocation being signaled by the resumptive pronoun on the verb.

- (9) *kum-t-oh Ali fasax
 cap-f-his Ali.Nom Pst.take.off.3sm
- (10) *kum-t-oh fasax Ali
 cap-f-his Pst.take.off.3sm Ali.Nom
- (11) š-syēr-īn ʔumm-hum ǧarb-it-**hum**
 the-child-p.Nom mother.Nom-their.m Pst.hit-3sf-3pm
 ‘The children, their mother hit them.’
- (12) š-syēr-īn ǧarb-it-**hum** ʔumm-hum
 the-child-p.Nom Pst.hit-3sf-3pm mother.Nom-their.m
 ‘The children, their mother hit them.’

Like those of other colloquial Arabic dialects, OA nouns do not carry morphological case. Despite this, I will assume that they carry the same Case values that their SA counterparts realize. Also, like those of most modern Arabic dialects, OA singular nouns have largely lost the final *-n*, so-called tanwīn/nunation. Nonetheless, remnants of tanwīn can be seen in the slow sophisticated speech of some especially Bedouin dialects, as (13-14) illustrate, as well as in poetry, on this, see Holes (2013, 2014).

- (13) štarē-na siyyār-t-**in** gdīd-ah/-t-**in**
 Pst.buy-1p car.Acc-f-Nu new.Acc-f/-f-Nu
 ‘We bought a new car.’
- (14) Salim šind-eh bšīr-**in** rakkāḏ/-**in**
 Salim.Nom with-him male.camel.Nom-Nu running.Nom/-Nu
 ‘Salim has a fast-running male camel.’

In addition to full subject agreement, OA verbs realize full object agreement marking in both orders and in the presence of a lexical DP object, as (15-16) show; this is also shown in (7-8). Thus OA differs from SA, where object agreement does not co-exist with a lexical object, as the contrast between (17) and (18) illustrates.

- (15) katb-ū-**hin** l-ʔawlād wāgb-ā-t-hum

^① This contrasts with the situation in Egyptian Arabic, which is predominantly VSO (Tucker, 2010:8).

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- Pst.write-3pm-3pf the-boys.Nom homework.Acc-p-f-their.m
 ‘The boys wrote/have written their homework.’
- (16) l-ʔawlād katb-ū-**hin** wāgb-ā-t-hum
 the-boys.Nom Pst.write-3pm-3pf homework.Acc-p-f-their.m
 ‘The boys wrote/have written their homework.’
- (17) *kataba-**hā** l-ʔawlād-u wājib-ā-t-i-hum SA
 Pst.write.3sm-3sf the-boys-Nom homework-p-f-Acc-their.m
- (18) kataba-hā l-ʔawlād-u SA
 Pst.write.3sm-3sf the-boys-Nom
 ‘The boys wrote/have written them.f.’

5.2 Negation

This section surveys the negative particles used in various OA dialects. The negation system in the OA dialects is quite rich, which calls for a theoretical analysis. Most dialects use *mā* in deictic, generic/habitual, past tense, future time, verbless sentences, and tenseless conditionals, as (19-24) respectively show; these examples are from BSD.

- (19) Ahmad mā yi-ktib l-wāgib
 Ahmad.Nom Neg Impf-write.3sm the-homework.Acc
 ‘Ahmad is not writing the homework.’
- (20) mā yi-ktib Ahmad wāgb-ā-t-oh
 Neg Impf-write.3sm Ahmad.Nom homework.Acc-p-f-his
 ‘Ahmad does not write his homeworks.’
- (21) Ahmad mā rāh l-madrasah
 Ahmad.Nom Neg Pst.go.3sm the-school.Acc
 ‘Ahmad did not go to school.’
- (22) Ahmad mā ba-y-rūh l-madrasah
 Ahmad.Nom Neg Fut-Impf-go.3sm the-school.Acc
 ‘Ahmad will not go to school.’
- (23) Ahmad mā marīḏ
 Ahmad.Nom Neg sick
 ‘Ahmad is not sick.’
- (24) ʔiḏā mā t-ḏākər ba-ti-sqaṭ
 if Neg 2-study.sm Fut-2-fail.sm
 ‘If you do not study, you will fail.’

The Dhofāri dialects also have the negative particle *mū* and the enclitic *-š*, as (25-26)

from DSD show; (26) shows that a sentence may have two negative elements; this is also observed in other Arabic dialects, like Egyptian and Moroccan. The *-š* Neg enclitic in DSD may also appear as a free morpheme, as in (27-28).^①

- (25) Ahmad mū mrīḏ
 Ahmad.Nom Neg sick
 ‘Ahmad is not sick.’
- (26) Ahmad mu-š mrīḏ
 Ahmad.Nom Neg-Neg sick
 ‘Ahmad is not sick.’
- (27) Ahmad mū mrīḏ šī
 Ahmad.Nom Neg sick Neg/at all
 ‘It is definitely the case that Ahmad is not sick.’
- (28) mā nim-t šī
 Neg Pst.sleep-1s Neg/at all
 ‘I did not sleep at all/there was no sleeping for me...’

The eastern (Bedouin) dialects use *ʔa-b*, *ma-b*, *ma-hu*, and *ma-hu-b*, as (29-33) show. Given comparison with negative particles used in northern Oman (sedentary) dialects (to be discussed shortly), *ʔa-b* seems to be composed of the Neg particle *ʔa-* and the suffix *-b*,

^① These data may suggest that *šī* is a grammaticalized form of the noun *šī* ‘thing’ in the Dhofāri dialects (*šayʔ* in SA), used to negate the applicability/truth of the predicate (the negation of the predicate is asserted). This proposal, however, will have to account for negative sentences in other OA dialects (sedentary northern) where *-š* appears without a negative particle, but doubled, as in (i-ii). I leave this here; *šay* may also serve as an existential quantifier, as in (iii).

- (i) šī-šī ʔanim
 thing-Neg goats
 ‘Are there no goats?’
- (ii) šī-š ʔanim
 thing-Neg goats
 ‘There are no goats.’
- (iii) mā šay siyyār-ā-t
 Neg thing car-p-f
 ‘There are no cars.’

This *-š* enclitic, which also appears in Moroccan Arabic, as in (iv), couples with the Neg particle *ma-*. Unlike Moroccan Arabic, the sedentary northern variety of OA may establish negation without *ma-*, as (v) shows.

- (iv) ma-mʔallim-š
 Neg-teacher/teaching-Neg
 ‘I am not a teacher/teaching (at all).’
- (v) ʔa-ʔraf-š
 1s-know-Neg
 ‘I do not know/I know nothing (at all).’

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which seems to be a negative polarity item (NPI);^① *-b* is also used in some Gulf dialects, as (34) from Kuwaiti Arabic shows; *ʔa-b* also appears in expressions like *ʔa-b kīh* and *ʔa-b kāk* ‘(it is) not like this/not like that’. The Bāṭina Bedouin dialects also have *mu* and *ma-hu*; *-hu*, which is also seen in other negative particles in other dialects (to be discussed soon), seems to be a pronominal (SA *huwa*), sometimes with copular functions.^② Another Bedouin variety spoken by Al-Magṣali tribe (a branch of the Al-Junaibi tribe) in the town of Manaḥ in the interior, a typical region for sedentary varieties, uses another particle, *ʔam*, as in (35-36).

- | | | | | |
|------|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------|
| (29) | Ahmad | ʔa-b | hnīh | |
| | Ahmad.Nom | Neg-NPI | here | |
| | ‘Ahmad is not here.’ | | | |
| (30) | ʔa-b | Ahmad | hnīh | |
| | Neg-NPI | Ahmad.Nom | here | |
| | ‘It is not Ahmad who is here.’ | | | |
| (31) | s-sayyāra-h | ma-b/mā-b | zēn-ah | alhīn |
| | the-car.Nom-f | Neg-NPI | good-f | now |
| | ‘The car is not good now.’ | | | |
| (32) | Ahmad | ma-hu/mu-hu | marīḏ | |
| | Ahmad.Nom | Neg-pron | sick | |
| | ‘Ahmad is not sick.’ | | | |
| (33) | Ahmad | ma-hu-b/mā-hu-b | marīḏ | |
| | Ahmad.Nom | Neg-pron-NPI | sick | |
| | ‘Ahmad is not sick.’ | | | |
| (34) | Ahmad | mu-b | marīḏ | |
| | Ahmad.Nom | Neg- NPI | sick | |
| | ‘Ahmad is not sick.’ | | | |
| (35) | ʔam | rāyh-ah | maṣ-ik | |
| | Neg | going-sf | with-you.sf | |
| | ‘I am not going with you.sf.’ | | | |

^① The suffix *-b* in the Bedouin OA dialects seems to have a cognate in SA, the prepositional element prefixed to the predicate in (i), licensed by the negative particle *mā*.

(i) mā ʔaṭ-ṭālib-u bi-mujtahid-in
 Neg the-student-Nom NPI-hardworking-Gen
 ‘The student is not hardworking.’

^② Eid (1983), among others, argues that pronouns in Egyptian Arabic have copular functions.

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- (36) Ahmad ʔam māši ʔalhīn
 Ahmad.Nom Neg going.sm now
 ‘Ahmad is not going now.’

In addition to *mā*, one northern mountains sedentary dialect has *-š*, as a Neg particle (enclitic), which must be phonetically attached to some element as (37-39) show. In (39-40), *-š* is attached to the future morpheme/particle *ha-*, that *ha-* marks futurity is shown by (41). This is also supported by the ungrammaticality of (42) which has two future morphemes, as well as that of (43) since adjectives are not marked for tense/time.

- (37) Ahmad marīḏ-š
 Ahmad.Nom sick-Neg
 ‘Ahmad is not sick.’

- (38) Ahmad-š marīḏ
 Ahmad.Nom-Neg sick
 ‘It is not Ahmad who is sick.’ / ‘Isn’t it Ahmad who is sick?’

- (39) hā-š ʔa-ʕī-k li-ktāb
 Fut-Neg 1s-give-you.sm the-book.Acc
 ‘I will not give you the book.’

- (40) Ahmad hā-š y-sīr
 Ahmad.Nom Fut-Neg Impf-go.3sm
 ‘Ahmad will not go.’

- (41) Ahmad ha-y-sīr
 Ahmad.Nom Fut-Impf-go.3sm
 ‘Ahmad will go.’

- (42) *Ahmad hā-š ha-y-sīr
 Ahmad.Nom Fut-Neg Fut-Impf-go.3sm

- (43) *Ahmad hā-š marīḏ
 Ahmad.Nom Fut-Neg sick

The yes/no question negative particle in this northern sedentary dialect is *ho-ʔoh*, as (44) shows; *ho-ʔoh* seems to be composed of the pronominal *ho-* and the Neg particle *-ʔoh* (which corresponds to the Neg particle *ʔa-* seen in the eastern Bedouin dialects), where *ho-* arguably comes from the first syllable of the 3rd person pronouns in Arabic. Thus (44) may be translated as ‘Is Ahmad sick? he-not’, where *ho* may have copular functions. This dialect is spoken by people in Ṣaḥam and Ṣoḥār cities on the Bāṭina coast, but the speakers originally come from the northern mountains of Oman.

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- (44) Ahmad mrīḏ? ho-ʔoh
 Ahmad.Nom sick pron-Neg
 ‘Is Ahmad sick? No/he’s not.’

Besides, another northern sedentary dialect has the Neg particle *hā-ʔah/hā-ʔoh*, which does not appear in sentential negation, but only in replies to yes/no questions, as (45) shows; *hā-ʔah* and *ho-ʔoh* may well be the same element; *mā* is used for sentential negation in this dialect. The particle *hā-ʔah*, too, seems to be composed of two elements, *hā-*, the pronominal element, and the Neg particle *-ʔah*, which is found in the eastern Bedouin dialects (*ʔa-*) as well as the one spoken in Ṣaḥam and Ṣoḥār.

- (45) Ahmad mrīḏ? hā-ʔah/hā-ʔoh
 Ahmad.Nom sick pron-Neg
 ‘Is Ahmad sick? No/he’s not’

The Šihhi OA dialect exhibits a different negation pattern, as (46) shows, where the Neg particle follows the predicate; (46) can also take the same structure observed in the other OA dialects, as (47) shows. The structure in (46) is more common among older generations. With a verbal predicate, as in (48), the Neg particle could be either one, but only *lā* can follow the verb, as (49) shows.

- (46) Ahmad marēḏ lā
 Ahmad.Nom sick Neg
 ‘Ahmad is not sick.’
- (47) Ahmad mā marēḏ
 Ahmad.Nom Neg sick
 ‘Ahmad is not sick.’
- (48) Ahmad mā/lā qare lə-ktēb
 Ahmad.Nom Neg/Neg Pst.read.3sm the-book.Acc
 ‘Ahmad did not read the book.’
- (49) Ahmad qare *mā/lā lə-ktēb
 Ahmad.Nom Pst.read.3sm Neg/Neg the-book.Acc
 ‘Ahmad did not read the book.’

As for negative imperatives, while most OA dialects use the prohibitive particle *lā*, others, like the northern sedentary dialects, use *mā* and *ʕan*, as (50) shows, and yet others use a more elaborate/assertive form, as in (51). The Šihhi dialect uses the structure in (50) with *lā* only as well as the one in (52), with two occurrences of the Neg *la*.

- (50) lā/mā/ʕan t-kitb-u ʕa lə-gdār

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- Neg.Impr 2-write-pm on the-wall.Gen
'Don't (you.pm) write on the wall!'
- (51) *ʃan* t-b-u t-kitb-u ʃa lə-gdār
Neg.Impr 2-want-pm 2-write-pm on the-wall.Gen
'Don't (you.pm) even attempt to write/think about writing on the wall!'
- (52) *ti-kitb* la ʔa lə-gdōr la
2-write.sm Neg on the-wall.Gen Neg
'Don't (you.sm) write on the wall!'

As indicated earlier, this paper will not include a theoretical account of these facts; this is left for another venue. Now, we move to question formation.

5.3 Question formation

Like SA as well as the other dialects of Arabic, OA varieties exhibit wh-movement (to Spec, CP) in forming wh-questions, as (53-56) show.

- (53) *min* *kal* *l-mōzah?*
who Pst.eat.3sm the-banana.Acc
'Who ate the banana?'
- (54) *mū* *kal-u*
what Pst.eat-3pm
'What did they eat?'
- (55) *wēn* *haṭē-t* *lə-ktāb*
where Pst.put-2sm the-book.Acc
'Where did you put the book?'
- (56) *mita* *ba-y-gi* *Ahmad*
when Fut-Impf-come.3sm Ahmad.Nom
'When will Ahmad come?'

Besides wh-movement, OA forms wh-question in-situ, as (57) shows. When the wh-question is embedded under an ECM predicate, the wh-word may stay in-situ, or undergo wh-movement to the embedded Spec, CP, or even to the matrix Spec, CP, as (58-60) respectively show.

- (57) *kal-u* *mūh*
Pst.eat-3pm what
'What did they eat? / They ate what?'
- (58) *ti-ʃtiqid* [ʃ-ʃyēr-īn *kal-u* ʔēš]
2-believe.sm the-children.Nom Pst.eat-3pm what

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‘What do you believe the children ate?’

(59) ti-ʕtiqid [ʔēš ʕ-ʕyēr-īn kal-u t]
 2-believe.sm what the-children.Nom Pst.eat-3pm

‘What do you believe the children ate?’

(60) ʔēš ti-ʕtiqid [ʕ-ʕyēr-īn kal-u t]
 what 2-believe.sm the-children.Nom Pst.eat-3pm

‘What do you believe the children ate?’

OA does not have the SA yes/no question particles, *hal* and the bound morpheme *ʔa-*. Holes (2007:8) mentions some particles that feature in some northern mountains varieties, like *ʕay/ʕi* and the clitic *-ə*, as well as the tag-question particle *lā* (or *lāh*) when attached to the end of a sentence, as (61-62) show.

(61) qūm-i gīb-ī-h, ʕī
 Impr.get.up-sf Impr-bring-sf-it, Interro.Neg
 ‘Get up and bring it, won’t you?’

(62) ʔabū-k ba-y-gī, lāh
 father-your Fut-Impr-come.3sm, Interro.Neg
 ‘Your father is coming, no/isn’t he?’

For most OA dialects, the declarative sentence in (63) and the interrogative one in (64) seem to have the same structure, the difference being only in intonation.

(63) qafl-it l-bāb
 Pst.lock-3sf the-door.Acc
 ‘She locked/has locked the door.’

(64) qafl-it l-bāb
 Pst.lock-3sf the-door.Acc
 ‘Did she lock/Has she locked the door?’

While most OA varieties use *naʕam* (SA yes) as a positive reply to yes/no questions, some dialects use *hēh*, *hīh*, whereas others use *hēwah* and *ʔaywa*, and yet others use *ʔē(h)* and *ʔilla*. Holes (2007) also mentions *ī*, *ē*, *kē*, *ila*, *hi*, and *ē naʕam*. Negative replies include *la*, *lāla*, *hāʔah*, *hoʔoh*, *bhaww* and *ʔabhaww*; *ħaʕa* ‘not at all’ (SA *ħāʕā*) is also used as a stronger form of negation.

5.4 Relative clauses

Unlike SA, whose relative pronouns inflect for number, gender and case, the OA dialects have two relative pronouns, *ʔilli* and *bu*, which do not inflect; Holes (2007:7), who states that *bu* is more common in sedentary varieties, also mentions *illaḏi*, which is the SA one

(*ʔallaḏī*), as well as *il*, which is like a contracted form of *ʔilli*. Both *ʔilli* and *bu* carry the default agreement specification, 3rd person singular masculine; (65-68) provide examples of *ʔilli* and *bu*.^①

- (65) ga l-walad ʔilli/bu ʔa-ʕarf-oh
Pst.come.3sm the-boy.Nom whom/whom 1s-know-3sm
‘The boy whom I know came.’
- (66) g-u l-walad-ēn/ l-ʔawlād ʔilli/bu nagħ-u
Pst.come-3pm the-boy-d.Nom/the-boys.Nom who/who Pst.succeed-3pm
‘The two boys/boys who succeeded came.’
- (67) gā-t l-bint ʔilli/bu ʔa-ʕarf-ha
Pst.come-3sf the-girl.Nom whom/whom 1s-know-3sf
‘The girl whom I know came.’
- (68) g-in l-bint-ēn/ l-banāt ʔilli/bu nagħ-in
Pst.come-3pf the-girl-d.Nom/the-girls.Nom who/who Pst.succeed-3pf
‘The two girls/girls who succeeded came.’

As for *bu*, it seems to be a grammaticalization of the SA noun meaning ‘father’, *ʔabū*; (69) is a question addressed to me by a sedentary dialect speaker from Suwaiq on the Bāṭina coast.

- (69) bēt-ak ʔabu fi lmaʕbēleh zahab?
house-you which in Mabela Pst.complete.3sm
‘Your house, which is (you are building) in Mabela, is it completed/ready?’

Besides, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) nicknamed one of his companions (ʕabdur-Raḥmān bin ʕaxr ʔad-dūsī) *ʔabū Hurayrah* (the one with a cat) because that companion used to carry a small cat around and play with it during the day-time. SA has another pronoun which can be used in relative clauses, *ḏū*, as (70) shows.^②

- (70) ʔar-rajul-u ḏū l-qubbaʕat-i ya-ṭlub-u l-bītzā
the-man-Nom that.has the-hat-Gen Impf-order.3sm-Ind the-pizza.Acc
‘The man in the hat has ordered a pizza.’

^① SA has the following relative pronouns, from Wright (1896:270-272); the underlined forms are archaic for Nom-marked relative pronouns.

| | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Singular masculine: | <u>ʔallaḏū</u> / ʔallaḏī | Singular feminine: | ʔallatī |
| Dual masculine: | ʔallaḏāni / ʔallaḏayni | Dual feminine: | ʔallatāni/ʔallatayni |
| Plural masculine: | <u>ʔallaḏūna</u> / ʔallaḏīna | Plural feminine: | ʔallātī or ʔallāʔī |

^② Arabists know that *ʔabū* and *ḏū* are members of the so-called ʔal-ʔasmāʔ-u l-xamsah ‘the five nouns’, which also include *ʔaxū* ‘brother’, *hamū* ‘father-in-law’, and *fū* ‘mouth’. These nouns form a homogenous group because they are Nom-marked with *-ū*, Acc-marked with *-ā*, and Gen-marked with *-ī*.

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SA *ḍū* can be *ʔabu* (SA ‘father’) and *ʔumm* (SA ‘mother’) in OA, depending on the gender of the possessee, as (71-72) show.

- (71) *ḍāk* *r-riggāl* *ʔabu* *l-mšar* *lə-hmar*
that the-man of the-turban the-red
‘That man in the red turban.’
- (72) *ḍīk* *l-bint* *ʔumm* *ʔəl-šyūn* *z-zarqa*
that.f the-girl of the-eyes the-blue
‘That girl who has blue eyes.’

5.5 Tense, aspect, and mood

OA verbs exhibit almost the same tense and aspect denotations that SA verbs have. For example, the so-called perfective form conveys past tense as well as the English present perfect interpretation, as (73) shows.^① The so-called imperfective paradigm verbs convey both deictic and generic interpretations, depending on word order (as well as on whether the verb is eventive or stative). In the SVO order, the imperfective verb conveys deictic interpretation, as (74) shows. It conveys a generic (habitual) reading in the VSO order, as (75) shows; these examples are from BSD.

- (73) *katb-u* *š-šyērīn* *l-wāgib*
Pst.write-3pm the-children.Nom the-homework.Acc
‘The children wrote/have written the homeworks.’
- (74) *l-ʔawlād* *y-kitb-u* *wāgb-ā-t-hum*
the-boys.Nom Impf-write-3pm homework.Acc-p-f-their
‘The boys are writing their homeworks (now).’
- (75) *y-kitb-u* *l-ʔawlād* *wāgb-ā-t-hum*
Impf-write-3pm the-boys.Nom homework.Acc-p-f-their
‘The boys write their homeworks (usually).’

The deictic reading corresponds to the progressive aspect, which can also be conveyed by a special progressive morpheme, as in (76). The progressive morpheme is the active participle form of the verb *galas* ‘to sit’, which is *gālis*. The Dhofāri dialects use a bound morpheme to indicate progressive aspect, as in (77); this morpheme is also available in Egyptian Arabic, as (78) shows. The imperfect aspect is also conveyed by a special free morpheme *bašad* ‘still/yet’, as (75) shows.

- (76) *l-ʔawlād* *gāls-īn* *y-kitb-u* *wāgb-ā-t-hum*

^① For tense, aspect, and mood in some OA varieties, see Eades (2012), Eades and Watson (2013), and Persson (2008).

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the-boys.Nom Prog-pm Impf-write-3pm homework.Acc-p-f-their

‘The boys are (in the process of) writing their homework.’

(77) naħnā b-nā-kul

we Prog-1p-eat

‘We are eating (right now).’

(78) ?ihna b-nā-kul ?ahoh

we Prog-1p-eat here.and.now

‘We are eating right now (see!).’

(79) l-?awlād baʿad-hum mā katb-ū wāgb-ā-t-hum

the-boys.Nom yet/still-3pm Neg Pst.write-3pm homework. Acc-p-f-their

‘The boys have not yet written their homeworks.’

Holes (2007) also mentions the use of *gāʿid* (the active participle of the verb *gaʿad* ‘to sit’ in other, usually Bedouin, OA varieties; SA *qaʿada*) as a means for expressing continuous or iterative processes; *gāʿid* is found in many Gulf varieties, as in (80) from Kuwaiti Arabic. The perfect aspect can be conveyed by a free morpheme, *xallas* ‘done/finished’, followed by the active participle form, as in (81).

(80) š-gāʿd-īn t-saww-ūn

what-Prog-pm 2-do-pm

‘What are you doing?’

(81) l-?awlād xallš-u kātb-īn wāgb-ā-t-hum

the-boys.Nom finished-3pm Part.write-pm homework.Acc-p-f-their

‘The boys have finished writing their homeworks.’

OA verbs also convey the so-called prospective aspect, as (82-83) show; *rāyih*, which is found in the Bāṭina varieties, and *qāyim*, which is found in the northern sedentary varieties (interior of Oman), are both the active participle forms of *rāh* ‘to go’ and *qām* ‘to stand up’, respectively. Like SA participles, both *rāyih* and *qāyim* inflect for number and gender, but not person. The Bedouin counterpart of (83) is in (84), where the progressive aspect is carried out by the participle. As (85-86) show, both *rāyih* and *qāyim* may be the main predicate of a sentence, but with their literal meanings.

(82) ħna mā rāyh-īn nə-qra l-ktāb l-yōm

we Neg going-pm 1p-read the-book.Acc the-day

‘We are not going to read the book today.’

(83) ?ana mā qāyim ?a-qra l-ktāb l-yōm

I Neg going.sm 1s-read the-book.Acc the-day

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‘I am not going to read the book today.’

- (84) ?ana mǝ-b-gāri l-ktāb l-yōm
I Neg-NPI-reading the-book.Acc the-day

‘I am not going to read/reading the book today.’

- (85) ?ana rāyih s-sūq
I going the-market.Acc

‘I am going to the market.’

- (86) ?ana qāyim mǝn n-nōm
I going from the-sleep.Gen

‘I am getting up (from bed)/ already up.’

The OA varieties differ as to whether their imperfective verb forms inflect for what Wright (1896) calls ‘mood’ marking.^① Singular present tense verbs in all the OA varieties do not carry ‘mood’ marking; OA varieties lost the dual marking in the verbal system. As for the plural verbal forms, while the verb in the Dhofāri and Bedouin varieties appears with ‘indicative mood’ marking, as (87-88) show, it does not in the other varieties, as (89) shows.

- (87) l-?awlād yi-tʕaʕšš-ū-n DSD
the-boys.Nom Impf-take.dinner-3pm-Ind
‘The boys are taking dinner.’

- (88) lǝ-wlād yi-tʕaʕšš-ō-n Eastern Bedouin
the-boys.Nom Impf-take.dinner-3pm-Ind
‘The boys are taking dinner.’

- (89) l-?awlād y-kitb-u wāgb-ā-t-hum BSD
the-boys.Nom Impf-write-3pm homework.Acc-p-f-their
‘The boys are writing their homeworks.’

Finally, besides the *ba-*, *ha-*, and *?a-* prefixes of the future (discussed in section 4.9), modality in OA is expressed by the particles *lāzim* ‘must’ and *yimkin* ‘may/might’, as (90-91) show. Other modality particles include *ybā-loh* and its DSD counterpart *byā-loh*, which roughly mean ‘should’, as (92-93) show.

- (90) ʕ-ʕallāb lāzim y-rūh-u l-madrasah
the-students.Nom must Impf-go-3pm the-school.Acc
‘The students must go to the school.’

^① See Fassi Fehri (1993) and Al-Balushi (2013) for alternative views on what these suffixes mark.

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- (91) yimkin y-gi sēl baʿdēn
may Impf-come.3sm rain.Nom later
‘It may rain later.’
- (92) ʃ-syērīn ybā-lak t-wadī-hum s-sūq
the-children.Nom should-you.sm 2-take-them the-market.Acc
‘You should take the children to the market.’
- (93) byā-lak ti-štīrī siyyārah ʔakbar
should-you.sm 2-buy.sm car.Acc bigger
‘You should buy a bigger car.’

6. Final remarks

The preceding sections have shown that the Omani dialect of Arabic is a rich one, having several varieties. The variation, most vividly seen in negation, pluralization patterns, personal, demonstrative, and possessive pronouns, as well as sound interactions, speaks of a productive research program. Most of the research on the OA dialects has been of a descriptive and sociolinguistic nature, which calls for theoretical accounts of these facts.

Theoretical treatment is required for a number of topics. For example, the preference for SVO over VSO in MD may have implications for information structure issues. Also important is the morphosyntactic function of full subject and object agreement on OA verbs, investigated in Al-Balushi (to appear). Equally important is a morphosyntactic analysis of negation in the various OA dialects, as well as the possible copular functions of pronouns. Besides, the various pluralization patterns in OA dialects as well as those of borrowed words may have implications for theories of morphology and phonology. Likewise, it is important to examine the conditions regulating free variation in the phonology of the various OA dialects (e.g. /z/, /ð/, and /d/ if the Šihhi dialect is to be considered one dialect). Also important for verb structure is the issue of glide-restoration.

In addition, it is crucial to provide description and documentation of the OA dialects before their distinctive features are lost as a result of convergence and leveling. Also important are the implications of the passive verb form retention for the history of the OA dialects (being older or recent compared to other dialects in Arabia). It is also crucial to provide descriptive accounts of the other languages and Arabic dialects spoken in Oman, as well as theoretical accounts of their syntactic, morphological, and phonological, influences on the OA dialects. It is, for example, recognized that the Baluchi community in Muscat speak a variety of Baluchi slightly different from that spoken on the Bāṭina coast, which

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indicates that the varieties of Baluchi spoken in Oman may be slightly different from those spoken in Baluchistan (in both Iran and Pakistan); this may also apply to the other languages.

Furthermore, an intriguing sociolinguistic phenomenon is the slow switch from sedentary dialects to Bedouin ones, an observation already made in Holes (2014), witnessed in the televised media in Oman. This may be because of the predominant Gulf and Jordanian drama (aired in the 1980s and 1990s) in which forms of Bedouin dialects are spoken. This, however, is contradicted by the fact that not only is the Omani drama delivered through sedentary dialects (being the dialect of the actors), but also the fact that the royal family in Oman speaks a sedentary dialect; the question is still open nonetheless. On the local social level, it is very common to hear some sedentary dialect speakers pronounce words with Bedouin morphophonological features, where /q/ is pronounced as /g/. The factors conditioning this switch make an interesting question. Also, the similarity between the OA dialects and the pre-Islamic ones can certainly make a very interesting question. Finally, Holes (1989) states that the word for 'coffee' is *ghawah* and *gahwah* in Bedouin dialects, but *kahwah* and *qahwah* in the sedentary ones. Besides these, *ghawwah* is heard in the (Bedouin) dialect of Bidiyyah and *ghewa* is heard in the Dhofāri Bedouin dialect, indicating the existence of other variants in the other towns/varieties. These and other equally interesting topics are left for other occasions.

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