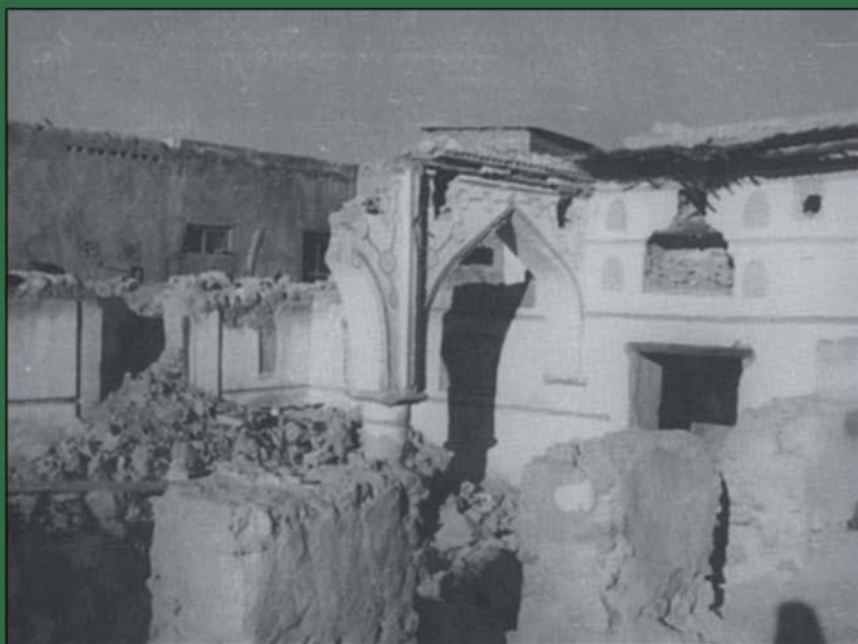


Library of Arabic Linguistics



# Language and linguistic origins in Bahrain

The Baḥārnah dialect of Arabic



Mahdi Abdalla Al-Tajir

Monograph No. 5



Routledge  
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# Library of Arabic Linguistics

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*Library of Arabic Linguistics*

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## **Language and linguistic origins in Baḥrain**

# Library of Arabic Linguistics



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In memory of my beloved parents

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## Editor's note

Dialectology is the systematic study of dialect: its origin, history, procedures, methods, notions and concepts. This study concerns itself with findings about dialect singly or in groups. These are studied in various ways: synchronically, diachronically, historically or comparatively. They can also be studied geographically, socially, folkloristically and according to various sociological variables and continua. Early (or traditional) dialect studies placed emphasis on rural dialects. More recent works, however, have concentrated on urban dialects.

Dialects are said to be 'the various different forms of the same language'. Thus the word for 'fish' in Modern Standard Arabic and Meccan Arabic is *samak*, but in Bahřaini *simač*. These variants are considered forms of the same language, i.e. Arabic. In other words, the term *dialect* covers any combination of observable variable features of a language, involving bundles of geographical or social isoglosses.

Over the past two decades or so a great deal of research has been undertaken on the use of language in a social context and interest in this field has grown rapidly. Dialectology is considered a branch of sociolinguistics today, since it has become more seriously concerned with the study of language in society. It deals with, among other things, the diagnosis of social dialects, social or religious groups. It also includes discussion of data collection and analysis. This trend is exemplified by J. K. Chambers and Peter Trudgill's recent book *Dialectology*, published in the Series of Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics, Cambridge University Press, London, etc., 1980.

The present book falls within the boundaries of sociolinguistic framework, particularly applied to the Arabic dialects of Bahřain. It discusses these dialects in terms of their linguistic levels indicating the various factors which have influenced them. Evidence from history and genealogy is brought forward to explain the variations and differences which already exist in the dialects under investigation. Statistical data are incorporated to show the diffusion of the population of Bahřain and the distribution of the speakers of its dialects.

### Editor's note

Linguistic research on Bahrain is still in its infancy despite the fact that it was once an important region. Two works have been published quite recently. The first is a research paper by Clive Holes entitled 'Phonological Variation in Bahraini Arabic: the [j] and [y] allophones of [j]', published in *Zeitschrift für Arabische Linguistik (ZAL)*, Volume 4, Wiesbaden, 1980. In 1981 he completed his doctoral dissertation on the sociological aspects of Bahraini Arabic. The second is a book in Arabic by Dr Abdul Aziz Matar entitled *Phonological Study of the Bahraini Dialects*, published by <sup>Ā</sup>Ayn Shams University Press, Cairo 1980. In this work Dr Matar discusses certain phonological variations of Bahraini dialects both descriptively and comparatively. More recently also T. Prochazka has compared the dialects of Bahrain with the dialect of al-Ristāq in *ZAL*, Volume 6, 1981.

The main body of Dr Al-Tajir's book is essentially a synchronic analysis of the Bahārnah dialect of Arabic. Comparative data is also included to illustrate the close relationship between the local dialects on the one hand and certain Arabic dialects of the Arabian Peninsula on the other. Two main groups of Bahraini dialects are analysed. They are: (1) the indigenous Bahārnah dialect and to a somewhat lesser extent (2) the <sup>Ā</sup>Anazi dialect of Bahrain. The book consists of an Introduction and six parts. Part I gives a detailed analysis of the origins of the Bahārnah Arabs. It also includes an historical survey of the region. Parts II-IV treat the phonology, morphology and syntax of the Bahārnah dialect respectively. Part V is a lexical analysis of Bahraini Arabic which also includes an analysis of loan words from Persian, English and Hindustani. Part VI presents a comparative study of the Bahraini dialects and the dialects of the Arabian Peninsula.

Three points should be noted about the present study. First it aims to determine the linguistic origins of the population of Bahrain. The author shows the influences of southern, northern and central Arabian dialects on Bahraini dialects. The author lays particular stress on evidence demonstrating that Bahrain is linguistically an integral part of the Arabian Peninsula and that it is not a dialect produced by outside influences. Secondly the author points to the existence of many of the present dialectal features of Bahrain, in early Arabic dialects as shown by early Arab linguists. These include the phenomena of *imālah*, *kaškašah*, <sup>Ā</sup>an <sup>Ā</sup>anah and various other phonological alternations. Similarly he points to morphological, syntactic and lexical links with Ancient Arabian dialects. Finally he provides maps and tables illustrating the distribution of different dialectal features in Bahrain as well as other parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

The present book is the first systematic and comprehensive analysis of the dialects of Bahrain. It is based on extensive field work and is therefore a significant contribution to our linguistic knowledge of a region which is becoming increasingly more important in the world today.

The author was born in 1940. He received his secondary schooling in Bahrain. In 1961 he joined al-Sa<sup>Ā</sup>idiyya Secondary School, Cairo, where he obtained his Secondary Certificate. In 1965 he received his B.A. in English

*Editor's note*

literature from Cairo University. He then joined the Department of Education in Bahrain. In 1967 he obtained a Post-Graduate Diploma in English Studies at the University of Leeds, England.

During September 1973, he represented the Department of Education at the Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in the Arab World, held under the auspices of the Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Science. In the summer of 1979 he obtained his Ph.D. in Semitic Studies from the University of Leeds. His doctoral dissertation was entitled 'A Critical and Comparative Study of the Baḥārnah Dialect of Arabic as Spoken in Present-Day Bahrain'.

Dr Al-Tajir contributed a paper entitled 'Notes on the Places and Tribes of the Ancient Region of al-Bahrain and the Island of 'Awāl', to the Seminar for Arabian Studies held at the University of Cambridge in July 1979.

He obtained an M.A. in Area Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London in 1980 and is at present reading history at the same School.

M. H. Bakalla  
Series Editor  
King Saud University  
(formerly *University of Riyadh*)

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## Preface

The present study notes the existence, in contemporary Bahrain, of two distinct dialect-groups, viz. (a) the Bahārnah speech-community (b) the <sup>ᶜ</sup>Anazi speech community.

Nowadays, common cultural ties as well as shared linguistic features are factors, among others, that unite the members in each group. Historically, speakers in group (a) are largely descendants of the early <sup>ᶜ</sup>Abd al-Qais tribes of eastern Arabia, whereas those that constitute group (b) are descended from diverse peninsular Arab tribes many of whom came to Bahrain in the wake of the <sup>ᶜ</sup>Anazi take-over of 1783.

The study attempts to describe, in analytical as well as historical terms the Bahārnah speech-forms; also it attempts, to some degree, inter-and cross-dialectal comparisons and relates its findings to the dialects prevailing in the adjoining areas. It is a synchronic as well as diachronic account of the phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexis of the Bahārnah dialect of Arabic. The approach followed throughout is in line with the one employed by linguists interested in the Arabic dialects of the region. In addition, the study devotes attention to the examination of the origins of the speakers in both communities, especially the Bahārnah Arabs of Bahrain whose tribal descent has been somewhat misrepresented.

Some of the findings of the study are:

- (a) In many respects, the Bahārnah speech-forms, which constitute an older stratum in east Arabian speech, tie in closely with early east and south Arabian Arabic, and less so with north Arabian.
- (b) On the other hand, the <sup>ᶜ</sup>Anazi speech-forms of Bahrain show clear resemblance to central and north Arabian peninsular Arabic, and hence represent the eastern dimension of north Arabian speech.
- (c) Circulation in current Bahārnah Arabic of a large number of classical and archaic forms.
- (d) The presence in Bahārnah speech of quite a number of localisms which deviate from the established usage elsewhere in the area, therefore deserve to be noticed.

Since I committed myself to the present study, I have incurred obligations of gratitude to many people. I am greatly indebted to all those who helped, one way or another, particularly my informants, males and females who have furnished me with the basic material without which such a dialect survey would have been impossible. Their positive attitude, coupled with the courtesy and patience which they exhibited during the recording sessions, has greatly facilitated my field work. Except for my female informants, whose names, at their own request, are not disclosed, names of my male informants are provided on separate lists.

My sincere thanks go to Mr. Anwar al-Dirāzi, who not only assisted me on several field work sessions, but also arranged for interviews, especially with female Dirāzi speakers. My thanks are also due to Mr. H. A. al-Madani and my cousins Mrs. Bāqir and Sa<sup>ᶜ</sup>id al-Tājir, who were all of great help while conducting field work in Bahrain, particularly Mr. Sa<sup>ᶜ</sup>id who later helped in verifying some of the information recorded on previous occasions. I would like also to thank Mr. <sup>ᶜ</sup>Abdul Raḥmān <sup>ᶜ</sup>Abdalla of Bahrain Radio, who kindly carried out, on my behalf, the tape-recordings of certain old plays produced for Bahrain Radio in Muḥarraḡi dialect; and to Mr. Aḥmad al-<sup>ᶜ</sup>Urayfi of the Drama and Arts Section of the Ministry of Information who helped in arranging some of my earlier interviews.

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M.A. al-Tājir

# Transcription and transliteration

## Phonetic Transcription

Below are the symbols employed throughout the study to represent the consonantal sound-units of the Baharnah dialect of Arabic. Free variants or alternative realizations are shown in parenthesis.

ʔ		z	k (č)
b (p)		s (s)	g
t		š	l
ṭ (t)		ṣ	m
j (y), (g)		d	n
č		ṭ	h
ḥ		ẓ (d)	w
x		c	y
d		ġ	
ḍ		f	
r		q (g), (k), (i)	

## Notes:

The vowels are broadly described  $a, \alpha, e < ee, i, o < oo$  and  $u$ . Their longer equivalents are  $aa, \alpha\alpha, ee, ii, oo, uu$ . The above distinctions were found adequate to the aims laid down for this study as it also helps avoid typographical complications. Vocalic lengthening or shortening, brought about as a result of elision or affixation, are discussed under the appropriate sections. Emphatic consonants are distinguished by the placing of a dot under the consonant as in the <sup>C</sup>Anazi form *buṣal*, “onion”.

Partial realization of a consonant is indicated by a small circle placed under the consonant as in: <sup>C</sup>*alašaag*, “for, so that”.

A vowel in parenthesis such as *ma(a)* “not” is, broadly speaking, indicative of the occurrence of both long and short forms. Often parentheses are also used to indicate prosthetic vowels. Final  $e < a$ , known as *imāla* is in effect, an allophonic variant of  $a$  in B.

For typographical convenience, allophonic variants such as front  $a$  and back  $\alpha$ , short and long forms are, throughout this study, transcribed  $a$  and  $aa$ , except where the distinction between the two is discussed.

Note also, that in connected speech, word-final vowel is in liaison with the initial consonant of the item following it and word-final consonant is in liaison with the initial vowel of following item, as in: *ʔil ġurfa š-šargiyye* “the eastern room” and *daak il-yoom* “that day”.

## Transliteration

Except for slight modifications, the following symbols, such as normally used by Orientalists, have also been employed for transliteration purposes: e.g.

th	dh	d	c	ʔ
ḥ	sh	ṭ	gh	
kh	ṣ	ẓ	q	

In transliterated forms, vowel length is indicated by a dash over the letter as in: *ḥalāyil*, “native islanders from the rural areas.”

Names of places quoted in this study generally conform to the official spelling, without regard to what would be their correct phonetic transcription.

## Abbreviations

### (a) Works Referred to by Abbreviated Titles:

Abbreviated form	Author	Full title
<i>CDB</i>	H. Blanc	<i>Communal Dialects in Baghdad</i>
<i>EADS</i>	T.M. Johnstone	<i>Eastern Arabian Dialect Studies</i>
<i>Ein arabischer Dialect Études</i>	Carl Reinhardt J. Cantineau	<i>Ein arabischer Dialect gesprochen in <sup>C</sup>Oman und Zanzibar</i> <i>Études sur quelques parlers de nomades arabes d'orient</i>
<i>GCASP</i>	G.R. Driver	<i>A Grammar of the Colloquial Arabic of Syria and Palestine</i>
<i>al-Ibdāl</i>	Abū al-Ṭayyib	<i>Kitāb al-Ibdāl</i>
<i>al-l<sup>C</sup>rāb</i>	Ibn Jinnī	<i>Sirr Ṣinā<sup>C</sup> at al-l<sup>C</sup>rāb</i>
<i>al-Kitāb</i>	Sībawaihi	<i>Kitāb Sībawaihi</i>
<i>L'Arabo Parlato</i>	E. Rossi	<i>L'Arabo Parlato a Ṣan<sup>C</sup>ā</i>
<i>Lexicon</i>	E.W. Lane	<i>Arabic-English Lexicon</i>
<i>Lisān</i>	Ibn Manẓūr	<i>Lisān al-<sup>C</sup>Arab</i>
<i>MDA</i>	H. Blanc	<i>Mesopotamian Dialect of Arabic</i>
<i>WGAL</i>	W. Wright	<i>A Grammar of the Arabic Language</i>
<i>al-Muzhir</i>	al-Suyūṭī	<i>al-Muzhir fi<sup>C</sup> Ulūm al-Lughah</i>
<i>ODA</i>	A.S.G. Jayakar	<i>The <sup>C</sup>Omānee Dialect of Arabic</i>

### (b) Journals and Series:

<i>AIEO</i>	<i>Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales d'Alger</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>The Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London</i>
<i>EI</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society, Newhaven</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>JRCAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society</i>
<i>JRGS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Geographical Society</i>
<i>JRSA</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Society of Arts</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>MEJ</i>	<i>Middle East Journal, London</i>
<i>MMA</i>	<i>Majallat Majam<sup>C</sup> al-Lughah al-<sup>C</sup>Arabiyyah, Cairo</i>

### (c) Other abbreviations and symbols:

A	<sup>C</sup> Anazi dialect or speech of Bahrain
act. part.	active participle
adj.	adjective
anap.	anaptyctic vowel
app.	approximately

xxviii Abbreviations

assim.	assimilation
B	Baḥārnah dialect or speech of Baḥrain
c.	common gender
cf.	compare
con.	consonant
f. or fem.	feminine
fig.	figurative
fin.	final
imp.	imperative
imperf.	imperfect
inf.	informant
init.	initial
IOR	India Office Records
lib.	liberal (ly)
lit.	literal (ly)
lit. Ar.	Literary Arabic
m. or masc.	masculine
MDA	Mesopotamian dialect area
med.	medial
n.	noun
N.A.	North Arabian (dialects)
p.	person
parag.	paragraph
pass.	passive participle
part.	
perf.	perfect
pl.	plural
prep.	preposition
pron.	pronoun
pron. suff.	pronominal suffix
pros.	prosthetic vowel
ref.	reference
s. or sing.	singular
v.	vowel
v.n.	verbal noun
vd.	voiced
vl.	voiceless

The sign < means arising or derived from

The sign > means becoming or realized as

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