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Excavating a Linguistic Category: On the Properties of *Ism al-  
Fi'l* and the Limits of *Kalām al-'Arab*

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Excavating a Linguistic Category: On the Properties of *Ism al-Fi'l*  
and the Limits of *Kalām al-'Arab*

by

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Excavating a Linguistic Category: On the Properties of *Ism al-Fi'l*  
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Examining the occurrence of *ism fi'l murtajal* (an obscure lexical class whose words syntactically are verbs, while morphologically resemble irregular nouns) in three early, founding works of Arabic grammar and lexicology, affords analysis of the words' structures and origins, and informs our understanding of the Classical Arabic linguistic register at whose edges they existed.

These works' terminology for the items differs from modern terms. Said terminology seems furthermore not yet standardized. Many items do not fit into conventional root-pattern morphological analysis, though creative or unprecedented derivational methods render them pliable to Arabic's

triradical morphosyntactic system. Some items do correspond to known roots, and a few are recognizable as basically conventional, if irregular, imperatives. A few times items exhibit archaic or irregular phonetics or morphophonology. This lexeme class' presence in the performative Classical Arabic (*'arabiyyah*) suggests its founding corpus (*kalām al-'arab*) was not merely linguistic (i.e., "Arabic language") but also cultural (i.e., perceptions of *'urūbah*—Arabness—itself).

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EXCAVATING A LINGUISTIC CATEGORY: ON THE PROPERTIES OF *ISM AL-FI'L* AND  
THE LIMITS OF *KALĀM AL-'ARAB*

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The early linguistic scholars of Arabic faced the monumental task of describing, cataloguing, and systematizing the pluricentric language's largely oral corpus. The analytical categories and frames they established--*ism* (noun), *fi'l* (verb), *ḥarf* (particle); *i'rāb* (declension); *'amal* (syntactic governance)--became the orienting compass of the subsequent twelve centuries of Arabic study. Such scholars found themselves against the vast expanse of the ocean that is *kalām al-'arab*--the primarily oral corpus Brustad holds to consist of "pre-Islamic poetry, formal speeches, and tribal war (*ayyām*) material" (2016: 148)--and took to devising the tools of its systematic study. This entailed the first step of a reduction and ordering to a thitherto largely formless mass. Some methodological differences arose; later grammarians developed and debated these while continuing to refine the tools of inquiry; yet the analytical fundamentals first extant in al-Ḥalīl b. 'Ahmad al-Farāhīdī (d.170/786)'s<sup>1</sup> *Mu'jam al-'Ayn* and Sībawayh (d.180/796)'s *Kitāb* have proven extremely useful, and remained remarkably intact and of unparalleled influence.

For all the outstanding and admirable successes of the work of these men and their predecessors in establishing all-encompassing, systematic frameworks for analyzing العربية *al-'arabiyyah*--the name they gave the language of this corpus-- there do appear to be a few categories of word particularly resistant to classification. This project examines the attestations

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<sup>1</sup> Questions of the *Mu'jam*'s authorship, though the deserving subject of discussion elsewhere (see, for instance, Schoeler 2005), is of little relevance to the present discussion; traditional attribution is thus followed to al-Ḥalīl.

in some of the earliest extant Arabic metalinguistic literature of one such category, called by one modern grammarian<sup>2</sup> *ism fi'l murtajal* (“improvised verb-nouns”<sup>3</sup> that usually behave syntactically as verbs, while morphologically resembling highly irregular nouns). In particular, we investigate the occurrence in al-Ḥalīl’s *Mu‘jam al-‘Ayn*, Sībawayh’s *Kitāb*, and al-Farrā’s<sup>4</sup> linguistic exegesis *Ma‘ānī al-Qur‘ān*, of the *murtajal* subcategories of animal commands and onomatopoeia for non-human sounds<sup>5</sup>. So doing may give us deeper knowledge of the structures and origins that constitute this fringe category, while simultaneously informing our understanding of the ‘*arabiyyah* register at whose edges they existed.

al-Ḥalīl and Sībawayh rank among the undisputed godfathers of codified Arabic grammar; al-Farrā’, a contemporary of theirs, may not be conventionally accorded such an influential role in the tradition’s development, yet the living *kalām al-‘arab* corpus we hope to examine with the first two scholars did fundamentally inform his opus as well. After gathering every onomatopoeia and animal command we can find across the three works’ combined sixteen volumes, we first analyze them linguistically: What can we learn about these crypto-categories, both from the authors’ discussions and from our own deductions? Do the earliest sources treat them as a single category? What sort of terminology is used to discuss them? How might we understand the categories’ apparent idiosyncrasies in morphology, syntax, and anywhere else we discover them? Are there, in fact, latent structures governing these words’ behaviors beneath the apparent chaos? Structures and paradigms perhaps not recognized in the conventional schemata of normative ‘*arabiyyah*? After that we turn to the existential question: What would the inclusion of onomatopoeia and animal commands tell us about the nature of the ‘*arabiyyah* these early

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<sup>2</sup> el-Dahdah

<sup>3</sup> See el-Dahdah’s explanation: ارتجلته عفوية الإنسان (“They are improvised by human spontaneity..” 1997: 103). *Ism fi’l* I render as “verb-noun” to avoid confusion with the *maṣdar*, commonly translated as “verbal noun.”

<sup>4</sup> d.206/822 or 823.

<sup>5</sup> I.e., those not produced by the human vocal tract.

authors inscribed in their master works? How neatly do they fit into the picture of *kalām al-‘arab* as poetry, speeches, and *‘ayyām*?

In combing the *Mu‘jam*, *Kitāb*, and *Ma‘ānī* for every occurrence of onomatopoeia and animal commands, I held to two parameters. Firstly, the word’s formal morphology must be unmistakably that of *ism al-fi‘l*, rather than more general noun categories like verbal nouns (*maṣḍars*). A few times in research we find entries like

وَحَنْفَقِيْقٌ وَحَيْفَقِيْقٌ: حكاية جري الخيل... يقال: جاءوا بالركض والخنفقيق

ḥanfaqīqun/ḥayfaqīqun: *The ḥikāyah<sup>6</sup> of horses’ running* (al-Ḥalīl, vol. IV:154)...*It’s said: They came galloping with ḥanfaqīq* (ibid., 323);

العَسُّ: زجر القط

Al-ġassu: *the zajr<sup>7</sup> for a cat* (ibid., 342);

والضاضاة، لا تهمز: من زجر الراعي بالعنوز.

al-dāḍā (*non-hamzated*): *one of the shepherd’s zajr words to goats* (ibid., VII:75).

From their very definitions, these words are clearly indicative of onomatopoeia or animal commands. It may even be difficult to argue that each of these words is not basically identical to the *ism fi‘l* they refer to, i.e., that an onomatopoeia for running horses would not be *ḥanfaqīq*, or that *ġass* and *dāḍā* would not be commands respectively for cats and goats. Yet their *al-* definite prefix and *‘i‘rāb* declensional endings<sup>8</sup> betray them as more conventional nouns (particularly verbal nouns, or *maṣḍars*] rather than *‘asmā’ ‘af‘āl murtajalah*. Especially given this study’s emphasis on the non-standard morphology and syntax underlying these word categories, we

<sup>6</sup> Approx.: “imitative sound” (see section III)

<sup>7</sup> Approx.: “prohibitive command” (see section III); owing to the Arabic term’s rather wide semantic range, and the relative unwieldiness of its translations, I often leave it untranslated as *zajr*.

<sup>8</sup> el-Dahdah establishes imperviousness to grammatical governance (*‘amal*) as a defining criterion of *ism al-fi‘l* (103). I’ve nowhere seen categorical rejection of *al-* for *ism al-fi‘l*, but neither do I know of a single example of a *murtajal* accepting the article.

cannot use forms that, though clearly indicative of an onomatopoeia or animal command, are not so themselves.

Second, we took care to avoid reduplication of items that appear to exist in various cognate (dialectal?) forms. We often find in the sources more than one form listed for a particular animal or situation. In cases like *خ* 'ih and *عاج* 'āj, the commands used in making camels kneel, each form is counted separately as there is clearly no case for them sharing a lexical origin. Other times we see variations like *غاق* ḡāq / *غيق* ḡīq (for the raven's croak), *حاء* ḥā' / *حا* ḥā / *أحو* 'uhū (in encouraging a ram to mate), *هيا* hayā / *أيايا* 'ayāyā / *ياه* yāh (in driving camels), *حل* ḥal / *حلا* ḥalā ; *دھاع* dahā' / *دھداع* dahdā' (in driving a she-camel), *تشأ* ša' / *تشو* t(V?)šu<sup>9</sup> (in driving donkeys), and *عا* 'ā / *عو* 'w / *عاي* 'āy (for driving sheep). Here it is clear that each of the items represents a slight variation on its sister terms. When such couplets or triplets appear in the same work, the linguists themselves almost always cite them together. Such groupings we, too, count as one token.

We thus end up with 32 examples of onomatopoeia and animal commands across the pages of al-Ḥalīl's *Mu'jam*, Sībawayh's *Kitāb*, and al-Farrā's *Ma'ānī*. Thirty of these feature in the *Mu'jam*, seven in the *Kitāb*, and four in the *Ma'ānī*; eight are shared between two or more of them. Seventeen of them feature across fourteen verses, two etymological fables, and one proverb; three items appear in more than one such citation (*šāhid*). Nine are onomatopoeic (seven in al-Ḥalīl, two in Sībawayh, one in al-Farrā'), while a further 23 are commands (all 23 in al-Ḥalīl, five in Sībawayh, and three in al-Farrā').

The fruits of analyzing these data are many: We first see that the terminology these early authors employ in examining the items differs from the modern terms seen in el-Dahdah and elsewhere, and that said terminology seems not yet standardized. Additionally, different terms

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<sup>9</sup> More on this in section VII.

are often used for both onomatopoeia and animal commands, though, particularly due to their shared morphosyntactic distinctions, they are often analyzed jointly under general, encompassing terms.

Regarding roots and patterns, we see that these words and their derived forms cannot fit completely into conventional morphological analysis: the items themselves seem often to have arisen from outside of the manipulation of triliteral roots and subsequently incorporated into the conventional folds of Arabic morphology by reduplication, gemination, and a few other processes unknown to me elsewhere in the language.

Despite the morphological irregularity of many of our tokens, a few of the animal commands exist in forms readily identifiable as Arabic imperatives. In fact, the formal diversity of Arabic imperatives from weak, hamzated, or geminate roots (including what we observe today across the different colloquial varieties of Arabic) makes it difficult to rule out most of the other animal commands as traditional imperatives in form as well as function. We must note only that most of them appear subject to restricted declension for gender and number.

The tokens are of use as well in shedding light on points or remnants of variation in old Arabic phonetics and morphophonology, particularly apparent in the contrasting *luġāt* (variants) recorded in the *Muʿjam*. A future study will explore the kinds and extent of variation in this delineable group of words, which may provide some evidence for variation in the corpus.

Sociolinguistically, our findings move us to envision wider parameters for *kalām al-ʿarab* than those held by Brustad. Not only do popular stories, folk etymologies, and proverbs feature alongside Qurʾān, poetry, speeches, and *ʿayyām* in the *šawāhid* used to hold up the *ʿarabiyyah*; so, too, does it appear that *kalām al-ʿarab*, beyond being a merely a linguistic corpus, is also one of cultural artifacts that inform the *ʿarabiyyah* and are informed by it. Just as the fourth century’s

al-Mutanabbī celebrated the Arabs' marriage of الخيل والليل والبيداء..والسيف والرمح والقرطاس (the horse, the night, the desert...the sword and spear, the pen and paper), so too do the second and early third century's leading scholars of language seem to have imbibed from *kalām al-'arab* not only its words but also its prevailing ethos of, among other things which must be explored elsewhere, pastoralism and desert wilderness.

## II. ISM FI'L MURTAJAL

Before analyzing our data, let us return to discussion of *ism fi'l murtajal* in greater detail.

The term functions as one of three categories of *ism al-fi'l*, which el-Dahdah defines as

لفظ ينوب مناب الفعل معنى و عملا ولا يتأثر بالعوامل ولا يقدم المفعول به عليه

*A word that acts semantically and syntactically as a verb, unaffected by syntactic governance*<sup>10</sup>

*and distinctive in not allowing its direct object to precede it (1997:103);*

and by Medhat Foda, as

كلمة مبنية تدل على معنى الفعل، وتعمل عمله، ولا تقبل علاماته.

*An indeclinable word that functions semantically and syntactically as a verb, while not*

*permitting verbal inflection (khayma.com/medhatfoda/m1th/term2/naho-b1th/1thn2.htm).*

El-Dahdah sorts *ism al-fi'l* into three morphological categories of *qiyāsī* (analogous), *manqūl* (transferred), and *murtajal* (improvised; 1997:103). By *qiyāsī*, he means indeclinable imperatives of the pattern *fa'āli* like

حَذَارِ (احذر إلخ) *ḥadāri: (iḥḍar)* be careful

سَمَاعِ (اسمع، إلخ) *samā'i: (isma')* listen

قَتَالِ (اقتل، إلخ) *qatāli: (uqtul)* kill

The *manqūl* category refers to prepositions, adverbs, verbal nouns, and demonstrative particles when used as imperatives<sup>11</sup>:

إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابِ (خذ الكتاب) *ilayka-l-kitāba: take the book'*

أَمَامَكَ (تقدّم) *amāmaka: move forward*

رُؤْيَدَكَ (تمهّل) *ruwaydaka: slowly/take it easy*

<sup>10</sup> Ar. عوامل ('awāmil).

<sup>11</sup> el-Dahdah does not explicitly limit the *manqūl* to imperative usage, though all of his examples, and all those I am familiar with, are used so.

*hā-l-kitāba*: take the book (خذ الكتاب) ها الكتاب

The *murtajal* category, a morphological catch-all for *asmā' 'af'āl* apparently comprised of neither *qiyāsī*, nor *manqūl*, nor any other known method of derivation, includes interjections, onomatopoeia, and commands to both humans and animals:

أف uff: ugh'

غاق ḡāq: onomatopoeic for the raven's caw

مه mah: (to a person) stop<sup>12</sup>

هس hiss: guiding call to sheep (definition from *Lisān al-'Arab*, 4667)

It is with this third category of the *murtajal* that this present work concerns itself, particularly with animal commands and onomatopoeia for non-human sounds.<sup>13</sup> These words share morphological and syntactic features that set them apart as anomalous from most, if not all, other word categories in *al-'arabiyyah*. First, they do not correspond neatly (i.e., in form and function) to any of the three constituents of noun, verb, and particle into which Arabic words are conventionally divided. For while animal commands are semantically imperative (and other categories of *ism al-fi'l* can be described as functioning as *māḍī* or *muḍāri'* verbs), their forms usually bear little resemblance, if any, to that of verbs (el-Dahdah 1997:103). Most don't even inflect for gender or number. Onomatopoeic words may sometimes double as nouns, as in al-Ḥalīl's

<sup>12</sup> No human commands are actually listed by el-Dahdah under the *murtajal* category, nor in any of the other two categories (despite being mentioned elsewhere in *ism fi'l*'s syntactic imperative category). That said their place would undoubtedly be here, given the criteria previously described.

<sup>13</sup> "Non-human onomatopoeia" referring more precisely to onomatopoeia representing sounds not produced by the human vocal tract. This restriction, along with that of using solely animal-directed imperatives, is based on criteria and assumptions held for an earlier version of this project, and that I no longer deem relevant or sound. The thought was originally that analysis of such terms could challenge a sense of binarism between the performative *'arabiyyah* and the colloquial varieties of old Arabic, inasmuch as they were word categories unlikely to have separate literary and colloquial forms. Initial research showed my assumptions to be misguided and irrelevant, and instead pointed me to the form of my current investigation. That said, though I believe in principle that this research stands nothing to gain by excluding human *'asmā' 'af'āl murtajalah*, the limited scope of this paper, and the currently available resources to be spent toward it, may provisionally justify focusing on the data already gathered.

الهَابُ: زجر الإبل عند السوق، يقال: هَابِ هَابِ

Al-hābu: Zajr in driving camels. One says: “hābi hābi!” (IV:98),

though the distinction between them is usually clear semantically, as well as morphosyntactically.

This brings us to a second shared distinction: unique morphosyntax, most saliently in *’i’rāb*. Among the great achievements of the early linguists was their systematic ordering of *al-’arabiyyah* according to *’i’rāb*, in a case-marking system that bridged even the divide between verbs and nouns. Yet the onomatopoeia and animal commands here again resist such easy classification. Indeed, al-Ḥalīl, Sībawayh, and al-Farrā’ can all be seen treating the two categories together on this basis. From *Kitāb Sībawayh*:

فهذه الأسماء (المبهمة)...خالفوا بها ما سواها من الأسماء في تحقيرها وغير تحقيرها وصارت عندهم بمنزلة  
"لا" (و)"في" ونحوها وبمثلة الأصوات نحو: غاقٍ وحاءٍ

*These (demonstrative pro)nouns behave differently from other nouns in diminution and other respects. Their status has become like that of words such as lā and fī, and like ’aṣwāt<sup>14</sup> such as ḡāqi and ḥā’i (III:281);*

وزعم الخليل أن الذين يقولون غاقٍ غاقٍ وعاءٍ وحاءٍ فلا ينونون فيها ولا في أشباهها أنها معرفة..

*al-Ḥalīl proposed that ḡāqi ḡāqi and ‘ā’i and ḥā’i and the like without nunation are definite..(ibid., 302;); and from al-Farrā’:*

وقرأ العوام (أفّ) فالذين خفضوا ونونوا ذهبوا إلى أنها صوت لا يعرف معناه إلا بالنطق به فخفضوه كما  
تُخفض الأصوات. من ذلك قول العرب: سمعت طاقٍ طاقٍ لصوت الضرب، ويقولون: سمعت تَغٍ تَغٍ لصوت

<sup>14</sup> Roughly: “interjections”; for the same reasons as those listed for “prohibitive command” *zajr* (see note 7), this term is often left untranslated.

الضحك. والذين لم ينونوا وخفضوا قالوا: أفّ على ثلاثة أحرف، وأكثر الأصوات إنما يكون على حرفين مثل صة ومثل يَغ ومه.

*The masses recite “’uffin”; Those who apply the genitive and nunation reason that the word is a sawt whose meaning is not known except in its recitation; thus they apply the genitive, as they do for ’aṣwāt. So do the Arabs say: “I heard ṭāqin ṭāqin,” for the sound of a blow; and “I heard taḡin taḡin” for the sound of laughter. Those who apply the genitive without nunation say: “Uff” consists of three letters, while most ’aṣwāt, like ṣah, yaḡ, and mah, consist of but two (II:121)<sup>15</sup>.*

We see here both the morphosyntactic challenges these words posed to the early grammarians, and, more importantly, that their uniquely opaque inflectional paradigms formed another basis on which they were jointly analyzed, to the exclusion of most of the rest of the language.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, many onomatopoeia and animal commands seem to figure outside of Arabic's triradical derivational system. Items like صه *ṣah*, مه *mah*, سَأ *sa*, بس *bis*, عاق *’uff*, آق *’āq*, هس *hiss*, هيج *hīj*, and جوت *jūt*, could be regarded at most as unsound (معتل *mu’tall*) or doubled. Sound roots appear fairly uncommon in these categories. Even in those words with three sound consonants--such as بله *balh* and عدس *’adas*--the pervasive irregularity prompts us to ask whether we may truly understand onomatopoeia and animal commands to belong to conventional root-pattern paradigms.

The relationship of these word categories to the inherited systems and methods of Arabic morphosyntactic analysis is thus uncertain. In many ways, the modern designation of *ism fi’l murtajal* seems a catch-all motivated more by surface-level similarities shared in distinction to

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<sup>15</sup> يَغ is elsewhere unattested; could he have meant عيق?

all pre-existing molds in the language, than to genuine cognate relationships of function or even form.

### III. TERMINOLOGY AND CLASSIFICATION

We noted above in passing that the terminology used in the *Mu'jam*, *Kitāb*, and *Ma'ānī* is non-standardized: while today we know these categories of onomatopoeia and animal commands under the umbrella of *ism fi'l murtajal*, we find in our early sources derivatives of *ṣ-w-t*, *ḥ-k-y*, *z-j-r*, *'-m-r*, and *d-'-w* applied to our tokens, neither uniformly nor interchangeably<sup>16</sup>. *ṣawt* may seem at first to apply itself fairly straightforwardly to today's general notions of “sound” and “voice”:

"من ذلك قول العرب: سمعت طاق طاق لصوت الضرب"

...For instance, the Arabs' statement: 'I heard 'ṭāq ṭāq,' referring to the sound of blows (al-Farrā' II:121).

"والتأييه: التصويت، أيه بالناس والإبل: صوت وهو أن يقال لها: ياء ياء."

ta'yīh: *Calling out. He did ta'yīh to the people, or the camels: He called out to them: "Yāh yāh!"* (al-Ḥalīl IV:104).

That said, we should also note that some of Sībawayh and al-Farrā's explanations seem to use “*ṣawt*” to refer to onomatopoeia themselves, or even commands<sup>17</sup>:

وقرأ العوام (أف) فالذين خفضوا ونوّنوا ذهبوا إلى أنها صوت لا يعرف معناه إلا بالنطق به فخفضوه كما تخفض الأصوات.

*masses recite “`uffin”;* Those who apply the genitive and nunation reason that the word is a *ṣawt* whose meaning is not known except in its recitation; thus they apply the genitive, as they do for 'aṣwāt (al-Farrā' II:121).

وصارت عندهم بمنزلة (لا) (و) في ونحوها بمنزلة الأصوات نحو: غاق وحاء.

<sup>16</sup> al-Farrā' also uses the term *ism fi'l al-'amr* for 'alā (Q 5:105), *darāki*, and *naḍāri* (the former *manqūl*, the latter two *qiyāsī* by el-Dahdah's terminology).

<sup>17</sup> Represented here by Sībawayh's *ḥā'*.

*Their status has become like that of words such as lā and fī, and like 'aṣwāt such as ḡāqī and ḥā'i (Sībawayh III:281).*

Both al-Ḥalīl and Sībawayh also use *ḥikāyah* in discussing onomatopoeia and commands. al-Ḥalīl, for instance, explains *ḥabaṭaṭaṭa* as expressing

حكاية قوائم الخيل إذا جرت. قال: جرت الخيل فقالت حَبَطَقَطَق حَبَطَقَطَق

*ḥikāyah of the sound of running horses' hooves, as the poet said: The horses galloped by, saying ḥabaṭaṭaṭa, ḥabaṭaṭaṭa (III:339).*

The term's meanings become clearer in the context of the phrase *ḥikāyat ṣawt*, which both men use:

فيرد أحدهما فيقول: جَلَن ويورد الآخر فيقول: بَلَق، قال: وتسمعُ في <sup>18</sup>جَلَن: حكاية صوت باب ذي مضراعين  
الحالين منه جَلَن بلق

Jalan: *ḥikāyah of the sound of a two-leaf door: One closes and says jalan; the other closes and says balaq. The poet said: You hear in both cases from him jalan balaq (al-Ḥalīl VI:124).*

حكيت بغاقٍ صوت الغراب وبقب وقع السيف..

*You do ḥikāyah of the sound of a raven with ḡāq, and the blow of a sword with qVb.. (Sībawayh III:323)*

From this can be gleaned a sense of *imitating* or *reproducing what was heard as best one can*.

We see this meaning of *ḥikāyah* elsewhere across all three works, for instance in al-Farrā's:

ومثله: قرأت «الحمْدَ» وقرأت «الحمْدُ» إذا قلت قرأت «الحمْدَ» أوقعت عليه الفعل، وإذا رفعت جعلته  
حكاية على قرأت «الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ».

<sup>18</sup> An obvious typo for مصراعين.

*For instance: I read “al-ḥamda” and I read “al-ḥamdu”: If you say I read “al-ḥamda” you cause the verb to act upon it [making al-ḥamd the verb’s accusative direct object], while if you used nominative “al-ḥamdu” you’re making it ḥikāyah of I read “al-ḥamdu lillāh” (I:40).*

*ḥikāyat sawt could thus stand roughly as “imitating a sound (as closely as possible) as one heard it.”<sup>19</sup>*

The most common term al-Ḥalīl uses for our non-onomatopoeia is *zajr*<sup>20</sup>, by which he designates over two-thirds of the animal commands he describes, including the following:

بس: زجر للحمار، تقول منه: بسّ بسّ

Bis: *zajr for donkeys, from it you say: bis-a bis-a* (VII:204).

وحلّلت بالإبل إذا قلت: حلّ بالتخفيف، وهو زجر

*You did ḥalḥala to the camels, in saying: ḥal (without shadda); it is zajr* (ibid., III:27).

وهجهجت بالناقة وبالجمال إذا زجرته

*You did hajhaja to the she-camels, and to camels, in giving them zajr* (ibid., III:343).

It may be worthwhile to consider here that, while al-Ḥalīl uses the term sometimes in ways that seem a bit past its general semantic prerogative of زجرته...أي نهيته (*I did zajr to him...meaning I told or kept him away from something*; ibid., VI:61), as in:

الهَاب: زجر الإبل عند السوق، يقال: هَاب هَاب،

Al-hābu: *Zajr in driving camels. One says: “hābi hābi!”* (ibid., IV:98),

شأشأت بالحمار، إذا دعوته إلى الماء والعلف...أو زجرته ليُمضي

*You’ve made ša’ša’ah to the donkeys, in calling them to water and fodder...or in making zajr for them to move forward* (ibid., VI:299),

<sup>19</sup> “A kind of performance,” Brustad comments (personal communication).

<sup>20</sup> Approx. “prohibitive command”

there are nonetheless conditioning factors behind its use that belie an impression of *zajr* being a set word for animal commands in general. Some circumstances not qualified as *zajr* may invoke more a sense of “calling to” (*da'wah*) than “calling away from (places, distractions)”:

شأست بالحمار، إذا دعوته إلى الماء والعلف، أو ليقوم حتى يلحق به...

*You've made ša'sa'ah to the donkeys donkeys, in calling them to water and fodder... (ibid.)*

عوهت بالجحش تعويها إذا دعوته ليلحق بك

*You've made ta'wīh to the wild donkey in calling it to catch up with you (ibid. II:169)*

وإذا عجمت بالناقة قلت: عاج خفض بغير تنوين. وإن شئت جزمت على توهم الوقف. وعجمتها:

أنختها

*When you've made 'aj'ajah to she-camels, you've said: “'āji 'āji” (genitive without nunation).*

*You may also apocopate, supposing pausal form. Also: You've made 'aj'ajah to it: You've made it kneel (ibid. II:185).*

Clearest in this regard is the fact that none of the three command words used in breeding is described as *zajr*:

الينخ من قولك أينخت الناقة، إذا دعوتها للضراب، تقول اينخ اينخ

*Yanaḥ--the verb is 'aynaḥa, as in “I did yanaḥ to the she-camel--is calling her toward mating.*

*You say: “Tynaḥ iynaḥ (ibid. IV:310).”*

حا وهو أمر للكباش عند السفاد

*Ḥā is the command given to a ram during mating (ibid. III:316).*

ويقال للفحل عند الضراب: قَلَخ قَلَخ، مجزوم.

*One says to the male animal during breeding: qalḥ qalḥ (apocopated; ibid. IV:152).*

Taken as a whole this may actually reinforce our idea of *zajr* as an at least implicitly negative command, as its general usage would have. If the pairing of *zajr* with عند السوق (*in driving*) or ليمضي (*to move forward*) seem counterintuitive, I might suggest that the activity of keeping animals on track here may involve as much *zajr* away from distractions or rest, as it does 'amr or da'wah to action. We can admit as well a second possibility: of partial semantic expansion from negative command toward general one. It may otherwise be difficult to explain al-Ḥalīl's usage of the term *zajr* in

ونخنختها... من الزجر أي: أبركتها...<sup>21</sup>

*You did naḥnaḥah: a term of zajr meaning: You made it kneel...*(ibid., IV:143).

We may thus observe some trends and general principles organizing our myriad terms--*ṣawt*, *ḥikāyah*, *ḥikāyat ṣawt*, *zajr*, 'amr, da'wah--though their usage is far from standardization or uniformity.

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<sup>21</sup> The etymological and semantic association here with the breeder's call "البنخ" further complicates the picture, and supports an interpretation of these terms' usages as relative and non-decisive.



Yet more interesting and, to my knowledge, unprecedented derivational processes also occur, beyond the bounds of those recognized in the conventional Arabic root-pattern derivation system. The driver's call to his camels *yāh yāh*, elsewhere assigned the reduplicated *yahyaha*, is at one point hamzated and incorporated into a verb *'ayyaha ta'yīhan* (ibid. IV:106; ibid. 104). Hamza insertion into a biliteral, resulting in a trilateral that can then be adapted to an augmented verb pattern, is a process unknown to me outside this data<sup>27</sup>. In addition, though *gāq* / *gīq* *gīq* is associated with the conventional *gāqqa yaḡīqqu ḡāqīqan*<sup>28</sup> (ibid. IV:340), we also encounter:

نغق الغراب ينغق نغيقا، صاح: غيق غيق.

*The raven did naḡīq (naḡaqa yaḡīqu naḡīqan), meaning it shouted: "ḡīq ḡīq!"* (ibid. IV:355).

Again we find a letter, superfluous to the call it actually denotes, added initially to a biliteral to produce a sound trilateral verb, this time in unaugmented form I. Worth observing here is that both ' and *n*, though nowhere else used to derive verbs in this way, are in fact prominent in deriving augmented verb forms *'af'ala*),

انفعل (*[i]nfa'ala*),

افعلل (*[i]f'anlala*; XIV triliteral--افعنسس *[i]q'ansasa*),

افعللى (*[i]f'anlā*; XV)

افعللل (*[i]f'anlala*; quadriliteral III--اسلنطح *[i]slanṭaḥa*).

An even more interesting case is that of the warning call to a camel: *'ih' ih'*. Two roots are directly associated with it: *n-h(-h)* and *'-n-h*<sup>29</sup>, thus continuing our pattern of *n-* (and likely also *'a-*) insertion to trilateralize deficient roots (ibid. IV:143). We also find:

<sup>27</sup> We may also interpret this as an example of Arabic's well-documented fortition of *h*→' (*hayyaha*→' *ayyaha*).

<sup>28</sup> Also associated with falcons, and mice. A reduplicated *ḡḡīq* *yaḡḡīqu* is assigned solely to falcons.

<sup>29</sup> The latter is apparently form II, given its infinitive *ta'yīhan*.

النخخة من الإناخة، تقول: أنختها فاستناخت، أي: بركت، ونخختها ففتنخت، من الزجر أي: أبركتها فبركت.

*Naḥṇaḥah is from 'ināḥah (causing to kneel). You say: I made it kneel ('anaḥtuhā / naḥṇaḥtuhā / 'abraktuhā), so it kneeled (istanāḥat / tanāḥṇaḥat / barakat); a term of zajr (ibid.).*

Given the similarity of the “root,” the animal addressed, and the compatibility of usage for each form, we end up with the following roots al-Ḥalīl associates with *'ih* *'ih*: *n-h(-h) / n-h-n-h*, *'-n-h*, *n-w-h*.

The previously cited command *iyṇaḥ*, used in calling she-camels to mate, poses a fascinating complication to this discussion of roots relative to the command they seem to designate. Semantically, it seems absurd to deny a connection between *iyṇaḥ* and *'ināḥah / naḥṇaḥah*, especially inasmuch as camels can only be called to mate (*iyṇaḥ*) if *'ināḥah* takes place. Morphologically and lexically, however, the relationships get blurry: We’ve tentatively accepted the connection of *'ināḥah* to *'ih*, and in any case noted that the listed “roots” of “*'ih* *'ih*” employ *n*-insertion to produce trilaterals *n-h(-h)* and *'-n-h*. What, then, are we to make of *iyṇaḥ*, whose form shows what appears to be a root-original *n*? If the terms be of the same origin, can we postulate one to predate the other? Does *n*-insertion as proposed here lead us from *'ih* to *n-h(-h)*, *'-n-h* and *iyṇaḥ*? Or has *iyṇaḥ* in fact collapsed over time to *'ih*<sup>30</sup>? Or does the perceived *n*-insertion from *'ih* to *n-h(-h)* owe instead to analogy to a formally similar, though always distinct, *iyṇaḥ*? The vagueness of al-Ḥalīl’s explanation of *'ih* as “zajr...for the camel” makes this question particularly challenging. In any case, it’s clear that the integration of onomatopoeia and animal commands into the conventional system of Arabic roots, while adequate for practical purposes of verb formation, is often an imperfect approximation, because of which speakers

<sup>30</sup> I consider the loss of *n* here farfetched, given its lack of parallels elsewhere in the language.

would resort at times to unprecedented morphological measures to reconcile the unconventional morphology of many of the items.

Such a statement is equally true, and the anomalous nature of these word classes is equally evident, with regards to some of the verb patterns. As we saw above, most of the data can be made to fit adequately--if uncomfortably--into a conventionally acceptable root and pattern. Yet a couple of items are tied to verb forms so irregular as to reveal either the ad hoc, non-systematic nature of their incorporation into the structures of the language, or the inability of the conscious linguistic tradition to grant them a place in the ranks of the derivational morphology they describe.

We've mentioned previously the form *ḥa'* (variants *ḥā*, *ḥā'*, and *'uḥū*), used in calling rams to mate. In addition to *ḥa'ḥa'ta bihi* al-Ḥalīl provides non-hamzated *ḥāḥayta bihi* (III:316). The term used to drive sheep, *'ā* (variants *'Vw*<sup>31</sup>, *'āy*, and likely *'ā'*), produces the following verbs:

عاعى يعاعي معاعة و عاعة ( *'ā'ā yu'ā'ī mu'ā'āh / 'ā'āh*),

عوعى يعوعى عواعة ( *'aw'ā yu'aw'ī 'aw'āh*),

عيعى يعيعى عيعاعة و عيعاء ( *'ay'ā yu'ay'ī 'ay'āh / 'iy'ā'*; ibid. II:271).

The diversity of verbs here is undoubtedly linked to the diversity of command words, each verb mimicking closely the form of the item from which it derives. We thus postulate these correlations:

حأأ = (حأأة؟) حأأأ يُحأأ ( *ḥa'ḥa'a yuḥa'ḥi' [ḥa'ḥa'ah?]* =to say *ḥa'ḥa'*)

حا = (محاأة؟/حأأة؟) حأحأ يُحأحأ ( *ḥāḥā yuḥāḥī [muḥāḥāh / ḥāḥāh?]* =to say *ḥā*)

عا = عاعة و معاعة يعاعي عاعى ( *'ā'ā yu'ā'ī mu'ā'āh / 'ā'āh* =to say *'ā*)

عو = عواعة عوعى يعوعى عو ( *'aw'ā yu'aw'ī 'aw'āh* =to say *'Vw*)

<sup>31</sup> Almost certainly *'aw*.

عاي = عيعة و عيعاء و عيعاء يعيعي عيعة و عيعاء = عاي ('ay 'ā yu 'ay 'ī 'ay 'āh / 'iy 'āh=to say 'āy).

Where things become morphologically tricky is with forms *ḥāḥā* and 'ā'ā<sup>32</sup>: On the surface, their verbal paradigm could be that of فاعل يفاعل *fā'ala yufā'il* or quadriradical فاعل يفاعل *fa'lala yufa'lil*. Though their companions *ḥa'ha*, 'ay'ā, 'aw'ā are clearly quadriliteral reduplications, and 'ā'ā is assigned a quadriliteral infinitive عاعة 'ā'āh that fits the pattern فعلة *fa'lalah*, the alternate infinitive معاعاة *mu'ā'āh* allows for interpretation of the verb as trilateral form III. Each of these possibilities entails fundamental breaks with the prescribed rules of root and pattern morphology. A quadriradical عاعة يعوي 'ā'ā yu 'ā'ī 'ā'āh would require radical (here second radical) alif, a well-known prohibition at the base of Arabic radical morphology: contrast عاعي 'ā'ā to هيمان *haymana*, حوقل *ḥawqala*, عولم *'awlama*. Similarly, however, trilateral معاعاة يعاعي 'ā'ā yu 'ā'ī mu'ā'āh demands identical first and second radicals, which I understand to operate against the inherited principles of morphology and have been attested only in two other places: (1) a word in al-Ḥalīl's *al-'Ayn* of the Hiraite Christians<sup>33</sup>:

الشَّشْقَلَةُ<sup>34</sup>: كلمة [حيرية<sup>35</sup>] عبادية، لهج بها صيارفة العراق في تعبير الدينار. يقولون: قد ششقلناها أي:

الدنانير، أي: عيرناها، إذا وزنوها ديناراً ديناراً. ليست بعربية محضة

*šašqalah*: A word of the Hiraite Christians used by the money-changers of Iraq in weighing dinars. They say: We've done *šašqalah* to them (the dinars), meaning: We've weighed them, for when they have weighed them dinar by dinar. Not pure 'arabiyyah (V:245)

<sup>32</sup> This would also apply to ضاضة, مصدر for driving goats (as previously stated, we have not included ضاضة in our primary data, nor anything associated with it, as the texts did not offer a true animal command form as stipulated by our project's parameters.

<sup>33</sup> See, for instance, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 2778; and Toral-Niehoff's "The 'Ibād of al-Hira: An Ancient Arab Christian Community in Late Antiquity Iraq."

<sup>34</sup> The author humbly suggests ششقل *šašqal* may be a loan originating with root š-q-l (i.e., Hebrew *šeḡel*, from Akkadian *šiqḫu*), with prefixed C-stem (pattern IV) š- (attested in Akkadian and borrowed into Aramaic).

<sup>35</sup> Misprinted here as حميرية. I follow all other sources, including al-Ḥalīl V:41, in producing حيرية.

and (2) the verb *يَبِيْتُ بِأَ حَسَنَةً* (*yayyaytu yā'an ḥasanah*: I wrote a beautiful *yā'*) cited at the end of Lane's Lexicon from *Tāj al-'Arūs* (1863: 3064). The only such triplicated uniliteral root possessing a verb in *Mu'jam al-'Ayn*, *د د د* (*d-d-d*), requires an epenthetic hamzah to verbalize: *دَأَدَدُ يَدَأُدُّ دَأَدَّةً* (*da'dada yuda'didu da'dadah*; al-Ḥalīl, II:51). We are thus left with no easy judgments regarding pattern for verbs like *ḥāhā* and *'ā'ā'*<sup>36</sup>. They appear without comment in al-Ḥalīl's founding dictionary of Arabic, and even in the poetry whose *šawāhid* constitute, with the Qur'ān, the main pillar and highest form of the *'arabiyyah*:

قَوْمٌ يُحَاوُونَ بِالْبَهَامِ وَنَسْدٍ/وَأَنَّ قِصَارَ كَهَيْئَةِ الْحَبْلِ

*Men who call their rams--“ḥa'ḥa'”--and women short like partridges* (ibid. III:316).

Even so, they elude neat correspondence to any of the inherited possible intersections of root and pattern that underlie verbal morphology, thus furnishing further evidence for the linguistic exceptionality of non-human onomatopoeia and commands.

<sup>36</sup> Attested *ضَا ضَا*, used to drive goats, seems to follow this same pattern (and its command form in any case is most certainly *ضَا*), and is explicitly noted: “لا تهمز”. Due to the absence of an explicit animal command form, however, we could not include it in our data.

## V. MORPHOSYNTAX: ANIMAL COMMANDS AS CONVENTIONAL IMPERATIVES

Sometimes, however, a particular item's assigned root and meaning do align in a way that not only suggests a certain correspondence to the root-and-pattern system, but also sheds helpful light on the morphological nature of the otherwise formally bizarre animal command words. It is beyond the scope of this work<sup>37</sup> to investigate all items against possible roots, patterns, and meanings; but four throughout the course of the author's preliminary research and analysis have made themselves particularly lucid and useful for drawing insight.

In two places we find al-Ḥalīl listing variant forms هجدم *hijdam* and إقدم *'ijdam*, for driving a horse forward. He recognizes both the words' status as variants of أقدم *'aqdim* (which he claims is the preferred version), and their use in “إقدامك الفرس وزجره” (*calling a horse forward* [*'iqdām*], *and away from distraction*; IV:116; *ibid.* VI:88). Ergo, this is a case of animal command forms that fits clearly into the conventional system of root-derived meanings, if with interesting dialectal variants (more on this below). The item's appearance in al-Farrā's *Ma'ānī* helps fill out the morphosyntactic picture. In support of the claim that al-Jūdi, the resting place of Noah's Ark in 11:44, could originally have derived from the verbal imperative form *jūdi* (*be generous*), onto which was tacked the nominal prefix *al-*, al-Farrā' produces al-Mufaḍḍal's verse:

وكفرت قوما هم هدوك لأقدمي إذ كان زجر أبيك سأساً واربق

*You've rejected the people that guided you to “'aqdimī” (li-“'aqdimī”) when your father's call was “sa'sa<sup>38</sup>!” and “urbuq<sup>39</sup>!” (II:16).*

<sup>37</sup> A few may be theorized to be comprised of call words, perhaps appended to a منادى (for instance هيا, ياه, and يعاط). Some--for instance سا, حاسا, and أس--may be exceedingly difficult to analyze in this way.

<sup>38</sup> Used for donkeys.

<sup>39</sup> Roughly: “lasso up the sheep / goat(s)”; see Lane, 1027.

The *dāl*'s *kasrah* ('*aqdimī*) leaves little doubt that '*aqdimī* is not only semantically but also morphosyntactically a simple command form, here of the form IV verb '*aqdama yuqdim 'iqdām*. We see even that it may conjugate for gender (nowhere else in the data do we observe anything resembling feminine forms for *ism fi'l murtajal* imperatives).

Second is the term إْحْسَا' *iḥsa'*, listed here as a *zajr* for dogs from root هـ س خ *h-s-*, among whose basic meanings listed in the *Mu'jam* we find “distance” and “being driving away” (IV:288). Here, as with '*aqdim*, we find an animal command whose form and meaning correspond precisely to those of the standard imperative form of *kalām al-'arab*. The form's inflectional morphology--for gender and number--remains unclear from the data, though it is unique in being used often with prepositions, listed here as '*an* (عن) or '*ilā* (إلى).

Here again the command اِيْنَحْ *inyah* comes into play: Given especially the listed verbal of يَنْحُ *yanah*, we see that plugging the root into the common vowel class فَعَلَا يَفْعَلُ *fa'ila yaf'al fi'l* results in imperative اِيْنَحْ *inyah* (compare to اِيْنَسُ *iy'as* from يَأْسُ يَأْسُ *ya'isa yay'as*, and اِيْقَظُ *iyqaz* for يَقْظُ يَقْظُ *yaqiza yayqaz yaqaz*). Imperative form and function thus align perfectly, though, significantly, this term meant exclusively for female camels is kept to male conjugation<sup>40</sup>.

We finally see a correspondence to conventional Arabic morphosyntax, if less completely, in the camel command عَاجَ عَاجَ '*āj 'āj*. Though the item's meaning is not explicitly given, its associated verb عَجَجَ '*aj 'aja* is made synonymous to اِنَاخَ '*anāḥa*, and is listed, significantly, under the root ع و ج *-w-j*, whose meanings revolve chiefly around bending, inclination, and crookedness (ibid. II:185). That اِنَاخَةُ '*ināḥah* entails the camel folding (bending)

<sup>40</sup> Brustad notes an apparent parallel in the formal masculinity of words that semantically are unambiguously feminine, like حَانِضٌ، عَانِسٌ، حَامِلٌ (personal communication).

in its front, then rear, legs, then, establishes a clear relationship between the command ‘*āj* and the meanings of what seems to be its hollow trilateral root<sup>41</sup>.

Based on the evidence for at least four animal commands being formal imperatives from recognized trilateral roots, let us consider some other items, such as بِسْ بِسْ (*bis-a-bis*), حَلْ (*ḥal*), أُسْ (‘*us*), حَا (*ḥa*), عَهْ (*‘ah ‘ah*), هَابْ (*hāb*), هِيدْ (*hīd*), حَوْ (*ḥVuw*), and عَا (*‘ā*): Given that standardized Arabic imperative morphology leaves us with forms as variegated as اَكْتُبْ (*uktub*<sup>42</sup> “write”), احْسَبْ (*iḥsab* “reckon”), اِقْبِضْ (*iqbiḍ* “grasp”), كُلْ (*kul* “eat”), قُلْ (*qul* “say”), قَوْلِي (*qūlī* f. “say”), قِفْ (*qif* “stop”), سِرْ (*sir* “march”), سِيرِي (*sīrī* f. “march”), ضَعْ (*ḍa* “put”), خَفْ (*ḥaf* “fear”), خَافِي (*ḥāfī* f. “fear”), اقْضْ (*iqḍi* “spend”), اِبْقْ (*ibqa* “stay”), اصْحْ (*uṣḥu* “awaken”), قِ (*qi* “protect”); and that colloquial varieties contribute forms like كُتِبْ (*ktub* “write”), نَامْ (*nām* “go to sleep”), رُوحْ (*rūḥ* “go”), زَيْحْ (*zīḥ* “move sthg. away”), اِيْجَا (*iyja* “come here”<sup>43</sup>), اِمْشْ (*imsh*, “go”<sup>44</sup>), تَعْ (*ta* “come here”<sup>45</sup>), it is not farfetched to suppose that many of the animal commands are Arabic imperatives not just in meaning, but also in form. Even if these forms be unconventional, to us at it was to the earliest grammarians, we do have here a suggestive intersection of imperative semantics and morphology, and should additionally remember that such marginal domains of language use as directing animals may well lend themselves to preserving older linguistic forms (as certainly in the case of *hijdam*), even if they tend to cast aside impractical distinctions like conjugation for gender and number.

<sup>41</sup> One may even note the formal similarity of عَاجِ to el-Dahdah’s imperative فَعَالِ قِيَاسِي.

<sup>42</sup> For the sake of morphological simplicity all forms listed are singular, and, unless otherwise noted, masculine.

<sup>43</sup> Common in the environs of Tunis.

<sup>44</sup> Present in Saudi Arabia.

<sup>45</sup> Present in Lebanon.

Regarding the tendency of animal commands to eschew such declensions<sup>46</sup>, we may propose several explanations. We’ve mentioned in a prior footnote that some items may be derived from other than old reflexes of root derivation, but it’s certainly worth stating the obvious: that, regardless of etymology, it may be difficult to suppose the speaker of, for instance, عا (‘ā) to conceptualize the word as an imperative verb (فعل أمر) in the same way they tell a man to احك (ihki, “speak”), a woman to احكي (ihkī), a duo to احكيا (ihkiyā), a group of men to احكوا (ihkū), and, of women, to احكين (ihkīna). That is to say, most of the animal commands that don’t appear to conjugate could well have stopped being understood as imperative verbs.

A few other possibilities may serve either as alternative explanations, or sociolinguistic pressures occasioning such a paradigm shift. First would be the phenomenon of large, relatively non-individuated groups being addressed with singular command forms. The Prophetic *Sirah*, for instance, records the Muslims’ battle cry at Uhud as أمت (‘amit: msg. command “kill!”), and, at Badr, as يا منصور أمت (yā manṣūr ‘amit, “o God-aided, kill!”), rather than clunkier calls with plural أميتوا (‘amītu: “kill!” [pl.]), لِنْمِتْ (li-numit: “let us kill!”) or the like (Lings: 2004 148, 182). So, too, have I heard a Palestinian Jordanian attempt to control a group of 30+ children with singular اقعد مكانك (ug‘ud makānak--“stay [msg.] in your seats [lit. your seat; msg.]”! Mahmoud al-Batal informs me that such formulae are standard in military contexts: استرح (“at ease!”), استعد (“attention!”), قدم سلاحك (“present arms!”)<sup>47</sup>. Thus in contexts like these, with large groups in which context eliminates the possibility of one particular (male) member being addressed to the exclusion of the collective, it seems that masculine singular verb conjugations, if only in the imperative, may be acceptable. Such usage may, in fact, return to pragmatics: that a singular

<sup>46</sup> We may exclude from consideration three items whose cited form approximates what we’d expect from conventional verb conjugation, based on the gender and number of animals the form is used for: a group of goats can be called with حو, and a ram and a horse are spurred into mating, respectively, with حا and with قلح.

<sup>47</sup> Personal communication.

imperative implies each and every person being addressed as an individual, thereby strengthening the command's communicative force<sup>48</sup>.

We come here to another factor which must enter into the morphosyntactic simplicity of animal commands: Given that the mind that receives and processes them is not human and thus does not manage human language and grammar, distinguishing number and gender will most certainly be superfluous to communicating one's command to the animal. If even linguistically trained chimpanzees cannot grasp human grammar to the degree of a two-year-old human child (University of Pennsylvania: [sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/04/130410131327.htm](http://sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/04/130410131327.htm)), how much more implausible that a she-donkey object to بس بس *bis-bis* rather than a (pseudo-)feminine بسي *bisī* *bisī-bisī* (or بسبسي *bisbisī*); or that a group of sheep require plural declension to comprehend and to respond properly to the shepherd's call داع داع *dā' dā'*. Assuming the human overseer is even in a position to distinguish the animal's sex, it would remain absurd to propose that number/gender distinction be either linguistically or sociolinguistically necessary for successful speech acts with animals.

If we are to interpret the form أقدمي *'aqdimī*, cited in al-Mufaḍḍal, as a legitimately feminine declension of *'aqdim* rather than a flourish of poetic meter, then the fact that this only time gender distinction appears to have been used in animal commands is in driving on a horse opens the fascinating yet for now purely speculative notion that the human relationship with the animal, and the degree to which the animal is considered an intelligent agent with whom the human shares a bond, may hold some weight in determining these patterns. Brustad shows that agreement patterns of plural nouns depends in part on the speaker's perception of the noun's

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<sup>48</sup> In such non-individuated circumstances it would be interesting to see if gender distinction holds (i.e., restraining a group of girls with اقعدى مكانيك). Thanks to Brustad for pragmatic analysis of this structure.

individuation, animation, textual prominence, and quantifiedness; thus can the same speaker of Arabic produce the equally grammatical statements:

الناس ما بقتش النوع د الاحترام ... الناس ما كتفهمش بعضها

*People no longer [have] respect...people don't understand each other* (Brustad: 2000, 55).

كتشوف بزاف د الناس ولاد البلاد ما بقاوش كيمشيوا البحر

*You see many people, town natives, no longer go to the beach* (ibid.)<sup>49</sup>.

While I'm not aware of anything in Brustad's data that may directly support my idea--indeed, her investigation is of distinguishing *number*, not gender in the singular--her same criteria of individuation, animation, prominence, and quantifiedness may also account for the difference between a poet-warrior's honored steed, whose sex is considered, and a villager's donkey or shepherd's mass of sheep whose lack of the above individuating, distinguishing criteria in our data render their sex unknown or irrelevant. Our shepherd may watch dozens of livestock, and, if skilled, may be able to tell them apart and recognize distinct traits in individual creatures, yet to what extent could the shepherd's relationship with an individual animal in its flock approach the same degree of individuation, respect, and profundity as that of a rider toward his steed<sup>50</sup>? Could unstated notions of an almost quasi-human regard for certain animals underlie a tendency for more discursively prominent, individuated creatures to be granted more human paradigms of verb conjugation? Further research into the stations of different species of animal in *كلام العرب kalām al-'arab*, particularly inasmuch as the speaker directly addresses them, would be of much benefit.

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<sup>49</sup> Brustad 55 (her translation). This speaker is Moroccan, though Brustad cites data from Egyptian and Syrian speakers that corroborate this same broad trend.

<sup>50</sup> Given the pre-Islamic Arabs' close relationship with hunting dogs, and also the formal conventionality of the verb for dog commands, I believe *أخسأ ihṣa'* may be a particularly strong candidate for an animal command demonstrating inflection for gender.

## VI. MORPHOSYNTAX: INFLECTION AND CASE

This category of speech to animals may be best understood as a largely fossilized subset of the Arabic imperative, both in meaning and often--with clear but non-fatal adjustments--in form. Its grouping and analysis with onomatopoeia, observed today under the umbrella *ism fi 'l murtajal* and in Sībawayh's time under the category of *'aṣwāt*, is presented by the grammarians as a matter of convenience: Just as the "Khoisan language family" refers to languages in southern Africa not necessarily related, but whose non-Bantu origins and distinctive system of clicks distinguish them from all else around them, so too are onomatopoeia and animal commands<sup>51</sup> jointly categorized on the basis of certain aspects of their surface morphosyntax, shared between them to the exclusion of most other word categories of the language. We have already mentioned the difficulty of classifying such words as unambiguously verbs or nouns, and have considered in some detail the extent to which they do or do not operate independently of Arabic root-pattern derivational morphology. The final aspect we shall consider here is that of declension (إعراب, *'i'rāb*).

In Sībawayh's *Kitāb*, in particular, these words' unconventional declensions form a large part of the basis for their grouping as *'aṣwāt* or *'asmā' 'af'āl murtajalah*, and are his most frequent reason for referencing animal commands and onomatopoeia in his grammatical analyses. His discussion of demonstrative pronouns (أسماء مبهمّة, *'asmā' mubhamah*), includes speculation on the origin of their lack of *'i'rāb* declension. The frequency of such words' use, he says, caused the Arabs to decline and inflect them differently from others

في تحقيرها وغير تحقيرها، وصارت عندهم بمنزلة "لا" و"في" ونحوها، وبمنزلة الأصوات نحو: غاق

وحاء

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<sup>51</sup> This category also includes interjections like *مه* and *إبه* not discussed here.

...in diminution and other respects. Their status has become like that of words such as *lā* and *fī*, and like *ʿaṣwāt* such as *ġāqi* and *hāʿi* (Sībawayh III:281).

Sībawayh’s reference point for the irregularity or absence of *ʿiʿrāb*, then, is often both animal commands (*hāʿ*, for driving camels) and onomatopoeia (*ġāq*, in imitation of the raven’s caw): Despite referring to word classes semantically quite distinct from each other, morphosyntactically these *zajr* words and onomatopoeia share this rare distinction as *ʿaṣwāt* of independence from *ʿiʿrāb* declension. Of the eight other passages I’ve encountered that include discussion of our two word categories, one refers to their status as imitative *ʿaṣwāt*, one more, to some of their irregular forms (أوزان), namely *faʿ* (i.e., *ḥal* and *sā*<sup>52</sup>; ibid. IV:229); but the rest of our relevant passages look explicitly to our items’ anomalous *ʿiʿrāb*. Seven of these, additionally, are only brought into the picture to clarify the morphological properties of other words or word categories. Thus we are shown that the vocative noun often follows the single *ḍammah* of *ḥawbu* (ibid. II:185); and that *labb*, from formulaic *labbayka*, أمس (*ʿams*), and *ḥāzibāz* (*ḥāzibāz*)<sup>53</sup> take the final *kasrah* of onomatopoeic *ġāq* (*ġāq[i]*; ibid. 1:351, III:271, 273, 299, 302).

Only once are onomatopoeia and animal commands the primary object of analysis, again regarding their declension. Here Sībawayh quotes al-Ḥalīl’s claim that

الذين يقولون "غاقٍ غاقٍ" و"عاءٍ" و"عاءٍ" فلا يَنُونون فيها ولا في أشباهها (فإنها) معرفة وكأنك قلت في "عاءٍ" و"عاءٍ": "الإتباع"، وكأنه قال: قال الغراب هذا النحو. وأن الذين قالوا: "عاءٍ" و"عاءٍ" و"عاقٍ" جعلوها نكرة.

*Ġāqi ġāqi* and *ʿāʿi* and *hāʿi* and the like without nunation are definite, as though you mean by *ʿāʿi* and *hāʿi*: الإِتباع (a definite verbal noun meaning “to make sthg. follow”), and by *ġāqi*: “The

<sup>52</sup> Though hamzah is not marked, passage’s context seems to suggest hamzated “سأ.”

<sup>53</sup> وهو عند بعض العرب: ذباب يكون في الروض وهو عند بعضهم: الداء

*raven said something like this*” (“*something like this*” again being definite). Those who say ‘ā’in, ḥā’in, and ḡāqin treat the words as indefinite (III:302).

Whether we accept al-Ḥalīl’s criterion of definiteness with غاق *ḡāqi* and غاقٍ *ḡāqin* is not our primary concern<sup>54</sup>. What matters is the joint analysis in *al-Kitāb* of onomatopoeia and animal commands, sometimes called *’aṣwāt* and almost always examined for their distinctly irregular morphology and in particular declension.

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<sup>54</sup> I would personally require more data, and that in meaningful contexts.

## VII. PHONETICS AND MORPHOPHONOLOGY

It behooves us now to briefly consider some phonological peculiarities preserved in the surveyed items. The scope of such an examination is intrinsically limited, of course, by the words' brevity and etymological obscurity, as well as the vagueness of their definitions and the general constraints of written language to indicate phonetics, especially the nonstandard. All told, we can glimpse through these sources--particularly the *Mu'jam*--just the surface of the vast linguistic and sociolinguistic oceans Old Arabic would have contained in its onomatopoeia and animal talk.

The majority of noteworthy observations here refer to apparent or explicit cases of phonological and morphophonological variation, through which we may gain a window into the diversity of Old Arabic which left traces along the edges of *kalām al-'arab* as the great linguists set about framing it. These traces seem to include

- 1) some degree of variation of ع ' and ح *ḥ*,
- 2) either variation of ق *q* and ج *j* or use of said letters to give a nonstandard /g/,
- 3) retention of archaic form IV *hf<sup>h</sup>l*, and
- 4) use of what appears to be either /tʃ/ or a click-consonant.

The first of these obtains in the two *luḡāt* cited for driving mules: عَدَس *'adas* and حَدَس *ḥadas* (al-Ḥalīl I:321, III:131). To my knowledge, such variation features phonetically in the panorama of spoken Arabic, (as in some modern dialects' devoicing of /' / before voiceless consonant suffixes like مَحَا ← مَعَهَا *ma'ahā-->maḥḥā*), and is attested at least two other times in al-Ḥalīl's فَلَح *falaha* / فَلَع *fala'a* ("to split or cleave"; III:233, II:146), and in the lexical oddity قَلَّحِم *qillaḥm* / قَلَّعِم *qilla'm*, (a "worn-down old man"). Of note with *'adas* / *ḥadas* is that al-Ḥalīl

indicates preference for the form with *h* (II:301)<sup>55</sup>. Yet on what basis is this distinction made? Could it be that the folk-etymological namesake of the term--a man who became a byword for harsh treatment of mules and whose name was used in Pavlovian fashion to inspire fear and obedience in the creatures--is given with *h*<sup>56</sup>? Or that the apparently majoritarian pronunciation was with /ʕ/ ("المعروف عدس" *the better-known is* ‘adas; *ibid.* I:321) while a prestigious minority used /h/? In any case, it may be meaningful that al-Farrā’ records Yazīd b. Mufarrig al-Ḥimyarī using /ʕ/ in his verse

عدس ما لعباد عليك إمارة أمنت وهذا تحملين طليق<sup>57</sup>

‘Adas! ‘*Abbād has no lordship over you: You are safe, and he you carry, free* (al-Farrā’, I:138) as it suggests that one linguist’s aesthetic preference for *ḥadas* did not disqualify ‘*adas* from the ranks of exemplary poetry.

Already mentioned in passing are the synonymous أقدم *’aqdim* and إجدم *’ijdam*. Such variation of *q* and *j* is well attested in today’s Arabic (in parts of Syria and the Arabian Peninsula, for instance, where \*/q/ is conditionally realized as [dʒ]; and in parts of Upper Egypt, where both phonemes merge partially into [g]<sup>58</sup>), and features in at least five other lexemes in the *Mu’jam*:

يارقان / يارجان (من أسورة النساء، وهما دخيلان... كأنهـ[ما] فارسيـ[ان])

<sup>55</sup> "الحاء أصوب."

<sup>56</sup> As with قلم / قلمح. Brustad suggests the word could be a portmanteau, perhaps along the lines of "قليل اللحم" (rendered with a little imagination as "shriveled, decrepit"), or perhaps, in my opinion, as an old-style Semitic name-phrase like قل لحم (see برق نحره or تأبط شرا), with basically the same meaning. We should also note the lexeme قَحْم defined by al-Ḥalīl as الشيخ الخرف (III:54). In both cases, preference of ح could be understood on etymological grounds.

<sup>57</sup> The poem’s entirety, as reproduced by Dr. Abdul Quddus Abu Saleh, is dedicated to the poet’s she-mule. Harkening back to past discussions of gender and agency, all verbs and pronouns match the lauded she-mule’s biological gender, though the poet still uses عدس. For that matter the commentator holds عدس here to be meant not actually as a command, but as a personal name for the mule taken from the command (1975 180-85).

<sup>58</sup> Jason Schroepfer, personal communication.

yāriqān / yārijān: *a kind of women's bracelet (of non-Arabic etymology; [V:210])...likely Persian*  
(ibid. VI:174)

أَشَجَّ / أَشَقَّ (اسم دواء)

'ašajj / 'ašaqq: *a type of medicine* (ibid. VI:158)

لَزَقَ (لَصِقَ..وَلَسِقَ..وَلَزَقَ وَهِيَ أَقْبَحُهَا) / لَزَجَ (يَقَالُ: أَكَلْتُ شَيْئًا فَلَزَجَ بِإِصْبَعِي لَزَجًا أَي عَلِقَ بِهِ)

laziqa (*the least-preferred variant of lašiqā and lasiqā [to stick]*) / lazija (*one says: "I ate something and it stuck to my finger"*) [ibid. V:64, VI:69])

أَقْلَعَدَ / أَجْلَعَدَ (هُوَ الْجَعْدُ الَّذِي لَا يَطُولُ وَلَا يَكُونُ إِلَّا مَعَ صَلَابَةٍ..)

iqla'adda / ijla'adda (*to become curled [said of short, rough hair]..*) [ibid. II:293]

قُعْمُوسٌ / جَعْمُوسٌ / قَعْمُوسٌ / جَعْمُوسٌ (قَعْمَصٌ فَلَانٌ إِذَا أَبَدَى بِمِرَّةٍ وَوَضَعَ بِمِرَّةٍ. وَيُقَالُ: قَدَ تَحْرَكَ قَعْمُوسُهُ فِي بَطْنِهِ. وَالْقَعْمُوسُ: ضَرْبٌ مِنَ الْكَمَاءِ.)

qu'mūs / ju'mūs / qu'mūš / ju'mūš (*someone does qa'maša when they defecate, depositing their excrement all at once. One says: "His qu'mūš moved inside him."*) A qu'mūš is also a type of truffle (ibid. II:291).

Approaching the phonetic realities of the ق q / ج j pairing is a complicated issue. For starters, Sībawayh describes non-Arabic (أعجمي) 'a'jamī /g/ in loanwords being Arabized variously to /j/, /g/, and /k/ (IV:305-06). Differing processes of phonological adaptation for originally foreign lexemes are explicitly recognized as underlying أَشَجَّ 'ašajj / أَشَقَّ 'ašaqq<sup>59</sup>, and implicitly for يَارِجَانٌ yārijān / يَارِقَانٌ yāriqān; this is improbable for قَعْمُوسٌ qu'mūs<sup>60</sup> and is certainly not the case for لَزَجَ lazija / لَزِقَ laziqa, أَجْلَعَدَ ijla'adda / أَقْلَعَدَ iqla'adda, or إِجْدَمَ 'ijdam / أَقْدَمَ 'aqdim, each of which

<sup>59</sup> (al-Ḥalīl VI:158). "وهما واحد واشتقاقه من المعجمة".

<sup>60</sup> Appears to be derived (interestingly, though infixation of -م-) from جُعَسَ, whose meaning of بَدَأَ or عَذْرَةَ (feces) it shares.

possesses a semantically transparent Arabic root<sup>61</sup>. Especially for these items, we must look to questions of how ج *j* and ق *q* may have been realized in and before the grammarians' time.

Semiticists reconstruct ج *j*'s Proto-Semitic ancestor to \*[g], a velar realization Vanhove postulates for proto-Arabic (2006: 753), and which still obtains in lower Egypt, parts of Yemen, and conditionally in Morocco. Sībawayh may be referring to such an articulation (“الجيم التي “كالكاف” *the k-like j*”) among his

..حروف غير مستحسنة ولا كثيرة في لغة من ترتضى عربيته ولا تستحسن في قراءة القرآن ولا في الشعر.  
..*letters found unattractive, infrequent in the dialectal varieties of those whose 'arabiyyah is pleasing/satisfying, disliked in recitation of Qur'ān and poetry (IV:432).*

In theory, then, we could be looking at أقدم *'aqdim* [ʔaqdim] and إجدم *'ijdam* [ʔigdam].

Typologically and historically this seems reasonable<sup>62</sup>, and would pose fascinating questions regarding the presence (and to what extent?) in al-Ḥalīl's *'arabiyyah* of non-standard pronunciations deemed improper by his student Sībawayh to some of the language's highest registers<sup>63</sup>. A look at the panorama of modern dialectal variation vis-à-vis Classical ق *q*, briefly referred to above, presents the possibility of ق *q* having palatalized partially to [dʒ], thus producing أقدم *'aqdim* [ʔaqdim] and إجدم *'ijdam* [ʔidʒdam]. At the face of it this interpretation may seem more probable than [ʔigdam]: Palatalization of /q/→[dʒ] would result in a conventional reading of إجدم *'ijdam*'s ج *j* as the inherited standard /j/, and would manifest the phenomenon of palatalization which was well-documented for neighboring ك *k*<sup>64</sup>. Though I have found no

<sup>61</sup> The ultimate root for اقلعد / اجلعد can only be جعد, especially in light of its definition.

<sup>62</sup> With the observation that the voicing of /q/ into /g/ or /ɟ/ is not formally documented before the 10th century (Holes 29).

<sup>63</sup> Sezgin (*Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums*) says, regarding this, that al-Ḥalīl may have died while compiling the *Muʿjam*, leaving it to be completed by another scholar who may not have shared his preferences and reservations.

<sup>64</sup> See discussion of ككشنة (al-Ḥalīl, V:269), and of Sībawayh's ككاف والبيم والبيم (كاف) التي بين البيم والكاف on p.816.

decisive references in our sources to /q/→[dʒ], Brustad supports the antiquity of such a process, pointing for instance to the well-rooted pronunciation and spelling of etymological قاسم *qāsim* as جاسم *jāsim*; *Lisān al-‘Arab*, indeed, records both بنو جاسم *Banū Jāsim* and بنو جوسم *Banū Jawsam* as old Arab clans (أحياء [Ibn Manẓur, 625]). Of course, palatalization of uvular ق *q* to palatal ج *j* does typologically require an intermediate velar realization of the consonant. Thus, if some palatalized original ق to [dʒ], we can only assume that, either synchronously or prior to this, some also would velarize to [g].

Finally we have the triplet form هجدم *hijdam*: Though one citation, in uncharacteristically fanciful fashion, supposes the term to derive from Qabil/Cain’s telling a horse “هج الدم” (*hij-id-dam*, lit. “rouse your blood” [al-Ḥalīl, IV:116] after killing his brother, it is clear that the ج *j* is etymological ق *q* (as we’ve noted before), and that the ه *h* is a remnant of the older Western Semitic C-stem *h*- causative which predates glottalization to /ʔ/. At least four other such retentions obtain in the *Muʿjam*:

الإراحة: رد الإبل بالعشي يُرْمُحُهَا<sup>65</sup>، وفي لغة: يُهْرِجُهَا، هَرَاخَهَا هَرَاخَةً

’irāḥah: *bringin the camels back at night; yurīḥuhā or by another luḡah: yuhrīḥuhā, harāḥahā hirāhatan* (ibid. III:291)

هراقت السحابة ماءها تُهْرِيقُ<sup>66</sup> فهي مهْرِيقَةٌ، والماء مهْرَاقٌ. الهاء...بدل من همزة أراق، وهرقنتُ مثل أرقنتُ

*The cloud poured its rain* (harāqat tuharīqu; *the cloud is muharīqah pouring, and the water is muharāq poured.*) *The hā’...is in place of the hamzah of ’arāqa; haraqtu is like ’araqtu* (ibid.

III:365)

يقال: هاتٍ في معنى أتٍ...

<sup>65</sup> An apparent misprint for يُرْمُحُهَا

<sup>66</sup> There appears to be diversity and difference of opinion regarding the presence or absence of a vowel immediately following the *h* in *h*-retaining C-stem form IV verbs; see *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 4654.

*It's said: hāti, meaning 'āti (give it here)...(ibid. VIII:146)*

يقال: أراق وهراق، وأيهات وهيهات

*It's said: 'arāqa and (it's also said) harāqa, 'ayhāt and (also) hayhāt (ibid. III:349).*

Interestingly, though *h-* retention is rare, three of the four forms above listed are quite prominent in the language or linguistic culture: the Qur'ān opts for هيهات *hayhāt* over أيهات *'ayhāt*<sup>67</sup>, Imru' al-Qays refers near the beginning of his *Mu'allaqa* to the cure for his heart-pangs being عبرة *'abrātun muharāqatun* (174), and millions of contemporary Arabs use هات *hāt* (for more paradigmatically conventional آت *'āt*) on an everyday basis. We should note, following al-Ḥalīl (III:349), the ease of this process due to the proximity of each letter's place of articulation, and observe from our data seven more forms that<sup>68</sup>, listed as beginning either with /h/ or with /'/, could theoretically be subject to the same variety: هيَّيم *(hayqam)*, imitative of the ocean; ibid. III:372), إِيح *('ih)*, in making camels kneel; ibid. IV:143), أَوْس *('aws)*, for driving goats and cattle; ibid. VII:330), هَيْج, هَيْب, هَيْبِ *(hīj, hayā, and hābi)*, for driving camels; ibid. III:343, IV:98,107) and هَيْد *(hīdi)*, unspecified *zajr*; ibid IV:79). No alternate *luḡāt* are given that corroborate this suggestion, and the items' brevity and morphological obscurity preclude easy answers; nonetheless it is tempting to consider, especially in light of the previously discussed multiplicity of even conventional standard Arabic command forms, that some of them may be C-stem (pattern IV) command forms showing either archaic *h-* or more typical descendant '-. The command هاب *hābi*, given its structural similarity to هات *hāti*, may make a particularly strong candidate.

A fourth and final case containing interesting phonology is that of the donkey command

شَأْسَأْ *ša'sa'* (ibid. VI:299). It may be related to the other donkey command سَأْسَأْ *sa'sa'* (ibid.

<sup>67</sup> al-Farrā' recognizes أيهات as a general لغة of هيهات, though he does not refer to the former's use, either legitimately or otherwise, in Qur'ānic recitation (II:235).

<sup>68</sup> The first an onomatopoeic, the rest, animal commands.

VII:336)--variety between which is attested in al-Ḥalīl's time as today<sup>69</sup>--though the terms' definitions are too vague to confirm this relationship. What is of interest here is شَأْشَأْ *ša'sa*'s synonymous form تَشْوَتَشْوُ *t(V?)šū'-t(V?)šū'* (ibid. VI:299): It is unvoiced, and العربية *al-'arabiyyah* disallows initial consonant clusters<sup>70</sup>, yet it seems difficult to fathom that a person call their donkey with clunky [tV-fu'] as opposed to monosyllabic /tʃu'/; we may even be looking at a click consonant, as in English *tsk tsk*<sup>71</sup>. Especially if we accept this latter conclusion, we may then rightly wonder about the degree to which our other items--both animal command and onomatopoeia--are done phonological justice by their orthography. Could there be other consonants and vowels obscured beneath the surface of standard alphabet and diacritics?

Not much can be said regarding our onomatopoeia. Unlike the animal commands, words of this category are almost never listed with variants which would provide an entry point into the diversity of Old Arabic phonetics; the sole غاق غيق *gāq-gīq* pairing we're given is meager sustenance to fuel any such exploration. The only observation I may offer regarding our nine items is the preponderance of ق *q*, which occurs in seven of them: هيقم (*hayqam*, for the ocean), بلق (*balaq*, for the movement of a door's second leaf), طاق (*tāq*, for a blow), حبططاق (*ḥabaṭaṭaq*, for running horses' hooves striking the ground), قب (*qVb*, for the blow of a sword), قَرَر (*qirar*, for the call of the شِقْرَاق *šiqrāq*<sup>72</sup> [ibid. III:245]), and غاق/غيق (*gīq / gāq*, the call of the raven). A

<sup>69</sup> Such variety is apparent in al-Ḥalīl's time (see: تَشْمُت / تَشْمُت [al-Ḥalīl VII:240] ; عَلُوس / عَلُوش [ibid. II:314] ; مَسَنَ / مَسَنَ [ibid. VII:276]) as it is today: Ingham (2006, 127) cites Prochazka's documentation of ش for س in parts of Southwest Saudi Arabia.

<sup>70</sup> A fascinating question here would be whether our three early grammarians predate the formulation or prescription of such restrictions. That said I'm aware of no evidence to suggest their العربية permitted initial /CC-/

<sup>71</sup> Note the nearly identical orthographical convention of expressing the click with *t*+sibilant.

<sup>72</sup> applied in Lane's time to the Eurasian green woodpecker (*picus viridis*) and European roller (*coracias garrulus*). The former can be heard at <http://www.hbw.com/ibc/species/56313/sounds>; the latter, at <http://www.hbw.com/ibc/species/55859/sounds>.

deep occlusive ق *q*--as in its preserved standard pronunciation /q/--serves well the harsh quality or sudden, crashing motion that produces most, if not all<sup>73</sup>, of these onomatopoeia.

More work is needed in the phonetics and morphophonology of items like these, and indeed of the *'arabiyyah* we encounter in the early sources, before we can derive any solid conclusions from these findings. If nothing else, however, I hope the phonetic and morphophonological diversity we've observed here may help begin to clear a path, aided by whatever else is found from further research, toward greater understanding of the rich sound landscapes of Classical and Old Arabic.

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<sup>73</sup> We may understand part of the desired imitative effect of هيقم to be the crashing of waves. Additionally, if we accept Lane's identifications, I incline toward positing the شقراق as *coracias garrulus* based on the correspondence of the شقراق's call فِرَر to *coracias garrulus*' call at the above sound database.

## VIII. SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND DISCUSSION

We come at last to the existential “why”? Why do we find this much attention to shepherd calls and onomatopoeic interjections in founding linguistic texts devoted to performance registers of Arabic poetry, proverb, speeches, Qur’ān, and hadith<sup>74</sup>? What can we learn from their inclusion about both their nature, and that of the ‘*arabiyyah*’ they help comprise? It should be sufficient to begin with two interrelated phenomena at play in the Arabic of these works. First is that the source material of the ‘*arabiyyah*’ corpus of poetry, Qur’ān, proverbs, and the like betrays no reservation about the validity of these word categories in the performance register. As previously cited, our research has found seventeen of our 32 items across fourteen verses, one proverb, and two etymological fables--seventeen in the poetry<sup>75</sup>, one in the proverb, and two in the folk etymologies. While modern appreciations of a fossilized *فصحى* *fuṣḥā* may keep it on a pedestal far “above” the colorful grime and inventive subtleties of actual breathing, experiential human language, the reality of the Abbasid and pre-Abbasid wordsmiths whose work formed the backbone of *al-‘arabiyyah*--both performers and linguists--was that expressions like the following posed no existential danger to the integrity of the Arabic language, and indeed were incorporated into the language’s emerging canon:

كأن صوت جرّعهن المنحدرُ      صوتُ شِقْرَاقٍ إذا قال "قِرْرُ،"

*As though the sound of their fading gulps were that of a roller bird calling “qirar” (al-Ḥālīl V:23)*

معاتبَةً لهن حلا وحوْبًا      وجلّ غنائهن "هيا" و"هيدِ،"

*Training the camels with “ḥal” and with “ḥawbu,” and most of their singing is “hayā” and “hīdi” (ibid. IV:79)*

<sup>74</sup> Hadith seems to play a much larger role in the *Mu‘jam* in comprising the corpus of العربية than it does in the *Kitāb*.

<sup>75</sup> This includes both شعر and رجز.

*The horses galloped by, saying ḥabaṭaṭaṭa, ḥabaṭaṭaṭa (ibid. III:339),*

and

ابن العشر لعاب بالقلين، وابن العشرين باغي نسين، وابن الثلاثين أسعى الساعين، وابن الأربعين أبطش  
الباطشين، وابن الخمسين ليث عفرين، وابن الستين مؤنس الجالسين، وابن السبعين أحكم الحاكمين، وابن  
الثمانين أسرع الحاسبين، وابن التسعين واحد الأرذلين، وابن المئة لا... جاء وساء

*A male of ten plays with toys<sup>76</sup>; at twenty, he craves women; at thirty, he's of greatest stride; at  
forty, of most violent seizing hand; at fifty, a judicious lion; at sixty, of affable company; at  
seventy, he's the wisest of rulers; at eighty, of most decisive reckoning; sunk at ninety to  
decrepitude; at one hundred...useless past all hope [lit.: has no ḥā (for commanding rams) nor sā  
(for donkeys)] (ibid. II:123-24, III:316).*

Closely related to the flexibility of the *'arabiyyah* and its architects (chiefly al-Ḥalīl and Sībawayh) is the former's theoretical expansiveness. For while the bulk of each man's شواهد (*šawāhid*, poetic citations) do come from specific forms of performance language, this cannot encompass everything one finds in their works. Very often we find them adopting more theoretic frames in their examples: الرجل (a man may say), وقد يقول الرجل (don't you say[...?]), كقولك (as you say:). Upon this foundation Sībawayh builds his entire باب ما تلحقه الزيادة في الاستفهام Chapter on What Takes Prefixes in Interrogative Statements, for instance. He provides over two dozen examples, counterexamples, and analogies across a little under 600 words, yet the closest he gets to a conventional *šāhid* is:

وسمنا رجلا من أهل البادية قيل له: أخرج إن أخصبت البادية فقال: أنا إنيه

<sup>76</sup> Literally referring to special sorts of sticks with which boys play a game called فلة.

We have heard of a man from the desert dwellers who was asked: “Will you go out if the desert grows lush?” And replied, “anā `iniyh?” (“Who? Me?” [II:420]).

Sībawayh relates this morphosemantic suffix and its variants to other gems but does not produce a single literary *šāhid*, relying instead on otherwise observed data, and on analogy<sup>77</sup>:

(1) وقالوا في الباء في الوقف: سعدج يريدون سعدي.

They say j for y in pausal position: “sa‘dij” for “sa‘dī” (ibid. II:422),

(2) وإن قال: ضربت زيدا الطويل قلت: أزيذا الطويله

If he says: “I hit Zayd, the tall one,” you say: “a-zaydan-iṭṭawīlāh?!” (“Zayd the tall one?!”

[ibid. II:420]),

and the declining pausal forms of *man* (interrogative “who”):

3)	masc.			fem.	
	nom.	acc.	gen.	nom.	acc. / gen.
sg.	<i>manuw</i> منو	<i>manā</i> منا	<i>maniḡ</i> مني	<i>manah</i> منه	
du.	<i>manān</i> منان	<i>manayn</i> منين		<i>manatān</i> منتان	<i>manatayn</i> منتين
pl.	<i>manūn</i> منون	<i>manīn</i> منين		<i>manāt</i> منات	

(ibid. II:408-09, 420-21). Importantly, we observe with Sībawayh that what he deems to be

acceptable phrases, structures, even individual words can serve as proofs in *al-‘arabiyyah*

without being anchored in poetry, scripture, or the like. So, too, do we find al-Ḥalīl reaching

beyond the categories of *šawāhid* we’ve described above. Although most of the onomatopoeia

and animal commands (seventeen of 30) found in his *Mu‘jam* are provided a textual *šāhid*, such

support is clearly not an essential criterion for each individual item. Thus does he suffice in

<sup>77</sup> Most of this assumes the formula of قَوْلُ / يَقُولُ / قَوْلُ (الرجل) usually in response to قَوْلُ / يَقُولُ / قَوْلُ (الرجل) type-prompts (i.e., “أزيدنيه”, “أزيدنيه”, “أزيدنيه”). We also find some من العرب من and 3mpl. inflexions.

explaining أوس *'aws*, the *zajr* for goats and cows: تقول: أوس أوس [VII:330]); and for قلخ *qalḥ*: قلخ قلخ: عند الضراب: يقال للفحل (One says to the male animal during breeding: qalḥ qalḥ [ibid. IV:152]). Here, again, it becomes clear that the *'arabiyyah* is not exclusively a literary vehicle, and that *kalām al-'arab* may be a far more expansive corpus than previously thought.

I suggest that further categories of *kalām al-'arab* exist for these men that are not contingent on a word's use or non-use in a body of literature; rather, semantic categories seem to obtain that represent Arab cultural heritage in and of themselves, thereby earning a place in the pages of *al-'arabiyyah*. This current paper is not the place to begin excavating a full picture of these categories, though I do suggest that, leaving the onomatopoeia aside for a while, the animal commands do constitute such a category<sup>78</sup>.

Again, the *kalām al-'arab* here is not merely a literary corpus: It's also an intangible, pulsating spirit conveyed by the inherited tradition. In other words, much of *kalām al-'arab* is the lifestyles and ethos transmitted through the literature. Consider al-Ḥalīl's aside toward the end of his *ḥ-l(-l)* section: Never actually providing the common definition of خليل *ḥalīl* (close friend and confidant), he does note that لسان الرجل وسيفه خليلاه في كلام العرب (*a man's tongue and his sword are his two ḥalīls in kalām al-'arab* [IV:142]). Even if he isn't offering ethical wisdom here<sup>79</sup> so much as saying that the word *ḥalīl* is often used in *kalām al-'arab* in place of “سيف” (*sword*) and “لسان” (*tongue*), it is clear that this Arabic is very much tied to a set of values, manifested in particular associations with tangibles or intangibles like language, martial prowess, Islamicate culture, and life in the desert. Save for the previously mentioned folk etymologies for

<sup>78</sup> One place to begin such an investigation might be the hundreds of terms associated with different species of (desert?) tree.

<sup>79</sup> Or pre-channeling al-Mutanabbī!

حَدَس *hadās* and هَجْدَم *hijdam*, the Islamicate *Weltanschauung* on display through much of our three linguistic texts is not particularly salient in our examples<sup>80</sup>, so we shall focus here on the place and memory of desert life as underpinning the cultural heritage and ideology of *kalām al-‘arab* the early scholars endeavored to record and preserve.

Clive Holes (2005, 32) notes the cultural biases of Arabic lexicons, such that very little related to ships, fishing, and agriculture is recorded, the lion’s share of attention and devotion going toward the desert and its flora and fauna. Subdividing the commands by animal, we get one apiece for cows<sup>81</sup>, mules, snakes (i.e., in charm-healing), dogs, and wolves; two apiece for donkeys, goats, and horses; three for sheep; and nine for camels. All are native to Arabia and, with the possible exception of cows and snakes<sup>82</sup>, are all species readily associated with our basic inherited image of Arabian desert life, particularly though not exclusively that of the Bedouin. The items preserved in poetic *šawāhid* refer to mules, donkeys, wolves<sup>83</sup>, horses, and camels. If *kalām al-‘arab* is understood not merely as the form of Arabic expression, but also the spirit, then the place of the above-mentioned animals, and of the words that defined the Arabs’ interaction with them, is well deserved in the corpus of *al-‘arabiyyah*. More research on the socio-historic context that saw the inspiration and production of these works would be required before speaking definitively, but it could be that second- and third-century fears of disruption (اضطراب, *iḍṭirāb*) of *kalām al-‘arab*<sup>84</sup>--or, less dramatically, nostalgia for a lifestyle far removed

<sup>80</sup> See, for instance, al-Ḥalīl’s aside after defining نرد (VIII:22):

ومن لعب بالنرد فكأنما غمس يديه في لحم الخنزير.

<sup>81</sup> The term أوس is also used for goats, by al-Ḥalīl’s admission.

<sup>82</sup> Both are mentioned in hadith as being present around Mecca and Medina; at least one hadith refers to bedouin east of Medina shepherding cattle (Muslim: “Killing Snakes, Etc.,” “The Book of Greetings”; al-Buḥārī 3307).

<sup>83</sup> صُبَّ عَلَى شَاءِ أَبِي رِبَاطٍ  
ذُو الْوَالِدِ كَالْأَفْذَحِ الْأَمْرَاطِ  
يَدْنُو إِذَا قَبِلَ لَهُ يِعَاطِ

(al-Ḥalīl II:212). The other شواهد have been previously referenced.

<sup>84</sup> The term is b. Sallām al-Jumāhī’s (cited in Brustad 2016, 154).

in space and perhaps time from the flourishing Iraqi metropoli--weighed heavily on our wordsmiths<sup>85</sup> and underlay some of the impetus to define and describe *al-‘arabiyyah*.

Despite their marked irregularity in morphology, syntax, sometimes even phonology, these rustic words for driving cows, donkeys, mules, sheep, goats, dogs, horses, camels; for serenading snakes and sounding back to stalking desert wolves, appear in and of themselves no less important than poetry and the like in preserving the inherited linguistic culture that was *kalām al-‘arab*.

If we conceive of *al-‘arabiyyah* as essentially a performance register, I believe the data gathered and analyzed here suggest we expand--past recitation of Qur’an, poetry, proverbs; delivery of speeches--what we understand to be a performance. If, as we are beginning to see, inherited notions of Arabian desert culture behaved as an intrinsic form of extratextual *šāhid*, then the essence of “performance” itself need not be restricted to any particular speech genre like poetry or oration, but may rather involve a more amorphous idea of performing *‘urūbah* (“Arabness”), regardless of the form that takes. The often unsituated, decontextualized nature we have discussed of many of al-Ḥalīl’s lexemes, and many of al-Ḥalīl and Sībawayh’s examples, indicate that such speech examples were, independent of literary *šawāhid*, sociolinguistically indexed as somehow especially “Arab<sup>86</sup>.” What behooves us going forward is to continue examining early foundational sources like these, to excavate what understandings of *‘urūbah* they have bequeathed us<sup>87</sup>.

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<sup>85</sup> Worthy of more attention and exploration is the fact that none of the poets so far encountered in the data pre-date Islam (Yazīd b. Mufarrig al-Ḥimyarī died in 69AH; his birthdate is not given, though al-Ḍahabī reports him to have satirized Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād during the time of Mu‘āwiyah [al-Ḍahabī III:522]).

<sup>86</sup> I.e., worthy of *al-‘arabiyyah*.

<sup>87</sup> Thanks to Brustad for reining me back to reason regarding “performance language.”

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