A Musandam Arabic text from Lima (Oman)

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This paper presents a short unpublished text recorded in the town of Lima, a small settlement located on the eastern shore of the Musandam peninsula (formally an Omani exclave). The text is fully transcribed and glossed, and a discussion follows in which the main phonological and grammatical peculiarities of the informant's speech are investigated. The analysis confirms the findings of the few existing studies on Musandam Arabic, and adds some previously undocumented features, discussing their possible relations with other dialects of the Gulf Area. In particular, the hypothesis is put forward that some of the traits typically encountered in Musandam Arabic may find their ultimate origin in the southernmost regions of the Arabian Peninsula.

1. Introduction[1]

In the Spring of 2016, Simone Bettega was lucky enough to spend a couple of days in the town of Lima (ليمة),[2] on the eastern coast of the Musandam Peninsula. At the administrative level, the Musandam Governorate constitutes an exclave of the Sultanate of Oman, from which it is separated by the United Arab Emirates. Geographically, this mountainous and jagged strip of land extends towards Iran into the waters of the Arabian/Persian Gulf (henceforth: the Gulf), thus creating the narrow sea passage known as the Strait of Hormuz. Lima is, to this day, a relatively isolated town, only accessible by boat, since the network of partially asphalted roads that exists inside and around the settlement is not connected to the main road system of the UAE and Oman. During his stay in Lima, Simone Bettega was hosted and shown around by a local acquaintance, M. O. Al-Shehhi, who graciously agreed to having his voice recorded while illustrating certain aspects of the local culture and customs, and narrating certain episodes of his childhood. This recording session resulted in two short texts, the first of which

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[1] The contribution of each author is as follows. Simone Bettega: data collection and sections 1., 2. and 5. Fabio Gasparini: phonetic analysis of data. Sections 3. and 4. have been co-authored.

[2] GPS coordinates: 25.942585801365187, 56.41924746003272.

is presented in the following pages. The article is structured as follows: in Section 2. we introduce the general linguistic situation of south-eastern Arabia, with a focus on the Musandam Peninsula, reviewing the existing literature on the topic. In Section 3. we present the whole text, fully transcribed, glossed and translated, along with some background information about the speaker and some considerations on the type of Arabic he employs. Finally, in Section 4., we discuss the relevant linguistic features that appear in the text, while their possible implications for the dialect geography of the area will be considered in Section 5.

2. The dialect geography of south-eastern Arabia and Musandam

It is a well-known fact that the majority of the Arabic dialects currently spoken along the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, from southern Iraq to the UAE, are structurally very similar, to the point that they are all commonly rubricated under the general label "Gulf Arabic" (GA; Holes 2007). This homogeneity is obviously the result of interdialectal contact and levelling, but it also has historical roots: over the course of the centuries, several migratory waves have brought nomadic groups from the inner deserts of central Arabia (the Najd) to relocate on the shores of the Gulf, where they eventually settled, bringing their dialect with them. In time, not only did this dialect type undergo major structural changes (a process of morphological simplification that has been carefully documented in Ingham 1982), but it also became the dominant one in eastern Arabia, mostly supplanting the local, original varieties. These, however, were not entirely lost: it is believed that the similarities that exist between the dialects spoken today in places as distant from each other as Bahrain (Holes 2016), certain oases of eastern Saudi Arabia (Prochazka 1981, 1988) and the mountains of northern Oman (Holes 1989) are not coincidental. These varieties represent all that is left of a once more widespread dialect type, now reduced to a discontinuous chain of *Sprachinseln* surrounded by a sea of originally central Arabian linguistic features (Holes 1991, 2006, 2016: 18 and ff.).

The position of Musandam Arabic (MusAr) with respect to the scenario described above is not entirely clear, in part because very little is known about the varieties of Arabic spoken in the region. It seems plausible that the dialects of Musandam have enjoyed a relative degree of linguistic isolation due to the rugged orography that characterizes the peninsula. Of course, contacts with the outside world via sea routes must have been fairly constant through history, but it seems that the above-mentioned migratory processes, which brought people of Bedouin origin to resettle from central to coastal Arabia, have left Musandam mostly untouched. The question could therefore be posed of whether or not is MusAr to be considered another link in this broken chain of "old" eastern Arabian

dialects. Bibliographical sources on MusAr are, unfortunately, extremely limited, but we will now briefly review the few works that exist on the subject.

The Arabic dialects spoken in the Musandam Peninsula have often been referred to as "Šiḥḥi Arabic" (Holes 2007: 211, Watson 2011: 927). Anonby, Bettega and Procházka (forthcoming), however, remark how "alongside the Shihuh, the Dhohuri and Hadheri (urban) people are other important Arabic-speaking groups," and that the geographical label MusAr is therefore to be preferred. It is also worth noting that, alongside Arabic, the endangered Kumzari language is spoken in Musandam (Anonby 2011 and 2012, Van Der Valt Anonby 2015). MusAr dialects are virtually undocumented: the only published article on the subject dates back to the very beginning of the 20th century (Jayakar 1904), and an MA thesis on the dialect of al-Jadi (الجادي) was defended at Leiden University some ten years ago (Bernabela 2011). Apart from these works, the aforementioned study by Anonby, Bettega and Procházka deals with demonstratives in several varieties of MusAr.

In spite of the lack of sources, the little that is known about MusAr dialects is sufficient to show that these varieties are characterized by a very high number of features that are extremely uncommon, or even unique, as dialects of Arabic go. We will not insist on this point here, since most of such features will be discussed in Section 4. Finding an answer to the more general question of how should MusAr be classified with respect to the dialect geography of south-eastern Arabia is a more complex problem, and it will be shortly addressed in the final part of this article.

3. The text

As already stated, the following text was recorded with the help of a male informant originally from the town of Lima. At the moment of the recording, the informant was in his early forties, and lived on the Omani side of the border town of Daba/Dibba (دبا), after having spent his university years studying in the UAE. Predictably enough, several koineized features appear in his speech, most likely as a result of the long exposition to the locally more prestigious and widespread varieties of GA, of which he had active command. Whenever a potential "Gulf" influence is detectable in the text, this has been highlighted in the comment section (Section 4).

Broadly speaking, we have opted for a mostly phonemic approach to the transcription. The realization of certain underlying sounds, however, appears to be particularly variable, so that, in these cases, we have decided to stick more faithfully to the informant's actual rendition of said sounds. These will be discussed more thoroughly in the next section, but in short they are: etymological /ʕ/, /t̠/, /d̠/, /ḍ/, /ḏ̣/ and /ā/. The text has been segmented according to the prosodic units of the original recording, so that, broadly speaking, a new line starts each time a pause longer than 0.5 second occurs.

1. *nə-ṭlaʕ*   *əṣ=ṣubəḥ*   *ni-mši*   *l=madras-a*
    1PL-leave\PFV   DEF=morning   1PL-go\IPFV   DEF=school-S.F

    "We used to get out in the morning and go to school."

2. *u=min*   *ni-ryaʔ*   *min*   *əl=madras-a*   *nə-tġaddi*
    CONJ=from   1PL-return\IPFV   from   DEF=school-S.F   1PL-have_lunch\IPFV

    "And when we came back from school we had lunch."

3. *ġaddey-na*
    have_lunch\PFV-1PL

    "We finished eating."

4. *u=yi-mkin*   *nə-ṭlā*   *l=baḥar*   *mā*   *ahal=na*
    CONJ=3M-be_possible\IPFV   1PL-leave\IPFV   DEF=sea   with   family=1PL

    "And [then] maybe we went to the sea with our family."

5. *nə-ṭlā*   *l=baḥar*   *ᵊhnōk*   *mā=na*   *lyōx*[3]
    1PL-leave\IPFV   DEF=sea   there   with=1PL   net\PL

    "We went to the sea, down there, [taking] with us [the] fishing nets."

6. *b=a-ḥaṣṣal=l=na*   *kammeyn*   *samak-a*   *keḏa*
    IRR=1S-find=for=1PL   some   fish-S.F   like_this

    "I would catch for us some fishes [or something] like this."

7. *riyā-na*   *lə=blēd*
    Return\PFV-1PL   DEF=village

    "We came back to the village."

8. *u=min*   *riyā-na*   *lə=blēd*   *falley-na*   *s=samak*
    CONJ=from   return\PFV-1PL   DEF=village   freeze\PFV-1PL   DEF=fish

    "And after coming back to the village we put the fish on ice."

9. *šī=la*   *mā=na*   *maṣeynā*   *faley*
    EXIST=NEG   with=1PL   machine\PL   ice

    "We didn't have any ice machines."

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[3] The term is listed by Brockett (1985: 193) for Khabura as *layx*, pl. *alyāx/lyāx*, with the meaning of "fishing nets."

10. *əl=faley*   *mawyūd*   *bi=ṭ=ṭarrōd*   *ḥaytī=h⁴*   *min*   *deba*
     REL=ice   present   with=DEF=boat   bring\PTCP=3S.M   from   Dibba

     "The ice was in the boat, we brought it from Dibba."

11. *wa=…*   *falley-na*   *s=samak*
     CONJ   freeze\PFV-1PL   DEF=fish

     "And… we put the fish on ice."

12. *w=iḏa*   *huwa*   *fīh*   *waqat*   *ḥadar-na*   *deba*
     CONJ=if   3S.M   EXIST   time   go_down\PFV-1PL   Dibba

     "And if there was time we went down to Dibba."

13. *w=iḏa*   *šī=la*   *waqat*   *trō=na⁵*   *ḥādī-n*   *tammey-na*
     CONJ=if   EXIST=NEG   time   DP=1PL   remain\PTCP-PL   stay\PFV-1PL

     bi=lə=blēd
     with=DEF=village

     "And if there was no time we stayed in the village."

14. *w=āla*   *bōkər*   *əṣ=ṣubaḥ*
     CONJ=on   tomorrow   DEF=morning

     "And on the next day, [in] the morning."

15. *ya-ḥdər*   *abū=y*   *li=deba*   *yi-bīʕ*   *əs=samak*
     3M-go_down\IPFV   father=1S   to=Dibba   3M-buy\IPFV   DEF=fish

     "My father would go down to Dibba to sell the fish."

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⁴ This verb appears here in its participial form (see Section 4.2 for the presence of a diphthong) and in (16) in the p-stem. It is most likely derived from a ʕ - ṭ - y root, via desonorization of the initial /ʕ/ and develarization of the emphatic stop. Behnstedt and Woidich (2014: 406) report reflexes of the verb ʕaṭā "to give" for most Arab countries, with a number of possible modifications that mostly involve develarization of medial /ṭ/ and the shift from /ʕ/ to /ʔ/, or the elision of the entire first syllable. The only attestation of a dialect where this element appears with initial /ħ/ is found in south-western Turkey. As far as we are aware there is no previous documentation of this verb featuring at the same time desonorization of the first radical and develarization of the second one.

⁵ Reflexes of this same discourse particle *trō=* are common in Northern Oman (where it appears as *tarā=*, see examples 9 and 55 in Bettega, 2019, pp. 108 and 129 respectively), and in general on both shores of the Gulf (see Holes, 2016: 281 for Bahrain and Leitner, 2022: 229, for Khuzestan). Among the uses of this particle, both Holes and Leitner report the possibility of adversative reading. This seems precisely to be the case in (13), as in: "*otherwise*, if there was no time, we would remain in the village." It is worth noting that in MusAr, as well as in Northern Oman, the particle is inflected by the suffixation of a personal pronoun, while it appears to be invariable in Khuzestan and Bahrain.

16.   *u=ya-ḥti*   *xawr-a*   *mā=w*   *minnōk*
     CONJ=3M-give\IPFV   vegetable-S.F   with=3S.M   from_there
     "And he brought fruits and vegetables with him from there."

17.   *mawz*   *u=tiffāh*   *u=ʕanab*   *u=...*
     banana   CONJ=apple   CONJ=grape   CONJ
     "Bananas, apples, grape, and…"

18.   *illi*   *ya-qdar*   *yāni*   *āe=h*
     REL   3M-can\IPFV   I_mean   on=3S.M
     "What he could, I mean."

19.   *lakən*   *aktar*   *šī*   *yāni*   *l=xuḍraw-ōt*   *yāni*
     but   more   thing   I_mean   DEF=vegetable-PL.F   I_mean
     "But most of all, I mean, fruits and vegetables, I mean."

20.   *zamōn*   *awwal*
     time   first
     "In the past."

21.   *əl=umūr*   *kōn-at*   *aḥsan*   *an*   *aḥayn*
     DEF=matter\PL   be\PFV-3S.F   better   than   now
     "Things were better than now."

22.   *u=kōn*   *əl=insōn*   *ya-ʕmal*   *yaʕni*
     CONJ=be\PFV.3S.M   DEF=human_being   3M-work\IPFV   I_mean
     "And the human being used to work, I mean."

23.   *u=yi-štaġal*   *u=yi-kidd*
     CONJ=3M-work\IPFV   CONJ=3M-earn\IPFV
     "And work, and earn [his wages]."

24.   *u=yi-tāb*
     CONJ=3M-toil\IPFV
     "And toil."

25. | *ʔašān* | *yi-yīb* | *loqm-at* | *ʕayš* | *li=ʔayēl=uh* |
| in_order_to | 3M-bring\IPFV | mouthful-S.F | rice | to=child\PL=3S.M |

"In order to bring a mouthful of rice to his children."

26. | *ʔayēl=uh* | *maḥtēy-īn* | *hōda* | *šī* |
| child\PL=3S.M | need\PTCP-PL | DEM.NEAR.S.M | thing |

"His children needed that."

27. | *al=…* | *kōn* | *rabb* | *əl=usra* | *l=abu* |
| DEF | be\PFV.3S.M | head | DEF=family | DEF=father |

"The… The father was the head of the family."

28. | *u=yi-tʕab* | *yaʕni* |
| CONJ=3M- toil\IPFV | I_mean |

"And he used to toil, I mean."

29. | *wa…* | *w=alladi* | *huwa* | *yi-štaġal* | *bi=l=baḥar* | *yi-štaġal* |
| CONJ | CONJ=REL | 3S.M | 3M-work\IPFV | in=DEF=sea | 3M-work\IPFV |

| *bi=l=baḥar* |
| in=DEF=sea |

"And him who worked at sea, he worked at sea."

30. | *u=alladī* | *huwa* | *yə-ṭlā* | *n=naxal* | *yə-ṭlā* | *n=naxal* |
| CONJ=REL | 3S.M | 3M-go_up\IPFV | DEF=palm | 3M- go_up\IPFV | DEF=palm |

"And him who worked with the palm trees, he worked with the palm trees."

31. | *ən=naxal* | *bi=l=qēw* |
| DEF=palm_tree | in=DEF=summer |

"The palms, in the summer."

32. | *ən=naxal* | *lī=ha* | *dawr* | *ᵊkbīr* | *mā=na* |
| DEF=palm_tree | to=3S.F | role | big | with=1PL |

"The palms they have an important role for us."

33. | *bi=l=qēw* | *fī=ha* | *nxīl* | *ᵊktīr-a* | *fī=ha* | *lə=xneyzi* | *fī=ha* |
| in=DEF=summer | in=3S.F | palm\PL | many-S.F | in=3S.F | DEF=xneyzi | in=3S.M |

| *lə=xṣāb* |
| DEF=xsāb |

"In the summer there are many types of palm, among them the *xneyzi*, the *xṣāb*."

34.   *fī=ha*   *š=šahəl*

      in=3S.F   DEF=šahal

      "The *šahəl*."

35.   *fī=ha*   *nxīl*   *ᵊkt̲īr-a*   *lēn*   *hōdi...*

      in=3S.F   palm\PL   many-S.F   until   DEM.NEAR.S.F

      "There are many types of palms, even those..."

36.   *ši*   *min=ha*   *nə-xraf*[6]   *min=ha*   *r=rt̲ab*

      thing   from=3S.F   1PL-pick\IPFV   from=3S.F   DEF=fresh_date

      "Some of them, we pick fresh dates from them."

37   *n-ōkl=uh*

      1PL-eat\IPFV=3S.M

      "We eat those."

38.   *u=ši*   *min=ha*   *n-yid=ha...*[7]   *hadōk*

      CONJ=thing   from=3S.F   1PL-cut=3S.F   DEM.FAR.S.M

      "And some of them, we cut them... that."

39.   *wa=yə-t̲lā*   *min=ha*   *s=siḥḥ*

      CONJ=3M-leave\IPFV   from=3S.F   DEF=dried_date

      "And from them come dried dates."

40.   *siḥḥ*   *hōda*   *s=siḥḥ*   *ni-mlī*   *minn=uh*

      dried_date   DEM.NEAR.S.F   DEF= dried_date   1PL-fill\IPFV   from=3S.M

      kammeyn   *yirōb*[8]

      some   bag

      "Dried dates, these are dried dates, we fill some bags with them."

41   *u=n-ḥatt̲=uh*   *fī=l=beyt*

      CONJ=1PL-put\IPFV=3S.M   in=DEF=house

      "And we put them in the house."

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[6] Holes (2001: 147) lists the same verb for Bahraini with the meaning "pick dates one by one," while Brockett (1985: 91) gives "to climb the palm and pick fresh dates" for Khabura.

[7] This verb appears as *gedd/yigidd* in Brockett (1985: 71), «to harvest the whole raceme of dates [...] by cutting its stalk».

[8] Sack of dates made of palm-fronds. See Brockett (1985: 72) for Khabura (*yrāb* or *grāb*); Holes (2001: 85) for Bahrein (*ǧrāb*).

42. *u=n-ōkil*   *minn=uh*   *ṭūl*   *(əṣ-ṣeyf?)*[9]
    CONJ=1PL-eat\IPFV   from=3S.M   all   (DEF=summer?)

    "And we eat from those all (summer?)."

4. Commentary

In this section, we highlight some of the most relevant and typologically unusual features that appear in the text. The reader should bear in mind that this article is in no way intended as a description of the dialect of Lima (a much larger amount of data would be needed to pursue such a goal), and that the selection of traits and structures that we have operated is at least in part arbitrary (especially in the realm of morphosyntax). This short survey is intended as the first step of a documentation process that we hope can be expanded in the future.

4.1. Consonants

4.1.1. Reflexes of ق and ج [10]

The realization of etymological ق appears to be extremely variable in the text. Bernabela (2011: 23-4) claims that this sound normally surfaces as a voiceless uvular stop [q], though it can be sometimes spirantized to a voiceless or voiced velar fricative in intervocalic position. In our text we see several instances of this, not only in intervocalic position (['waxat] (12) and ['waɣat] (13) in place of ['waqat]) but also in onset position when followed by a vowel (*bi=l*=['ɣeːw] instead of *bi=l=qēw*, 31 and 33). ق appears to be normally retained in pre-consonantal position (e.g. ['loqmat], 25). Voiceless refexes of ق are relatively common in Oman, both in the dialects of the northern interior (Holes 1989) and in those of the coastal south (Davey 2016: 34). They are, however, almost completely absent in GA, where this sound normally surfaces as a voiced velar stop[11]. This is all the more surprising in light of the fact that

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[9] Here the recording is interrupted by a series of loud noises. Only the first syllable of the last word of the text is clearly audible, so we have tried to reconstruct it on the basis of the sentence's meaning.

[10] When referring to the consonants that form the root of a word, we have decided to use Arabic graphemes instead of Latin transcription in order not to commit to a specific pronunciation (since in some cases the "original" rendition of these sounds, if one existed, is unclear).

[11] A single occurrence of [g] appears in our text, in the word *ya-qdar* "can, be able to" (18), actually realized as ['jagdaɹ]. We believe this to be a clear example of influence from GA. In particular, it is possible that the whole word is to be considered as a lexical loan from GA, since other verbs with the same meaning are in use in the area (Jayakar 1904: 259 gives ʕabbar or *abbar* for Musandam, and *rām* is commonly heard in northern Oman).

etymological ج systematically surfaces as [j][12] in the text, e.g. *ni-ryaʔ* [niɹ'jaʕ] (2), *mawyūd* [maw'juːd] (10), *yi-yīb* [ji'jiːb] (25). Bernabela (2011: 22) maintains that [j] and [ʤ] appear to be in free variation in the dialect of al-Jadi, but in the speech of our informant not a single instance of [ʤ] was recorded[13]. It has to be noted that [j] is the typical GA realization, while the aforementioned Omani dialects have a velar stop [g] in its place. In this respect, then, this variety of MusAr appears to be characterized by an admixture of GA and Omani traits (so that, for instance, it would not fall in any of the four categories that Holes 1989 proposed for the classification of Omani dialects).

4.1.2. Reflexes of ر

One of the most distinctive features of MusAr phonetics is the realization of etymological ر, as already noted in Jayakar (1904:249-50) and Bernabela (2011:24-5). This phoneme is realized most of the time as a retroflex approximant [ɻ], such as in *riyā-na* [ɻi'jæːna] (7) and *ḥadar-na* [ħa'dæɻna] (12).

In intervocalic position, ر is realized as a retroflex flap [ɽ], as in *yirōb* [ji'ɽoːʔp] (40). After another consonant ر is realized as an alveolar flap [ɾ]: *trō=na* ['tɾoːna] (13), *l=madras-a* [lmæ'dɾæsa] (1); this realization is attested also in other contexts where the default [ɻ] realization would be expected, such as in *dawr ᵊkbīɽ* ['dæwɾ ək'biː ɾ] (32).

When ر is geminate as a phonotactic effect of assimilation of an adjacent sonorant, it is usually realized as an alveolar trill [r]: *min riyā-na* [mər:i'jæːna] (8), *kōn rabb* ['koːr:abː] (27). If an emphatic consonant is found in the preceding syllable, pharyngealization spreads to the rhotic /r/, which is then realized as a pharyngealized voiced alveolar trill [rˤ]: *bi=ṭ=ṭarrōd* [bitˤ:a'rˤ:oːd] (10); *xuḍraw-ōt* [xudˤrˤa'woːt] (19); *r=rṭab* [rˤːtˤaβ] (36). The same happens with ل: *nə-ṭlā* ['nətˤlˤaː] (4).

4.1.3. Reflexes of ع

According to Bernabela (2011:26, see also Jayakar 1904: 249-50), ع has developed in a glottal stop /ʔ/ in most environments, although word-medially and in coda position it can sometimes be completely elided, in which case compensatory lengthening of the neighboring vowels takes place. In the speech of our informant, ع has mostly disappeared, causing the lengthening of the neighboring vowel in every position but utterance-initial: **w=ʕala > w=āla* (14), **maʕ=na > mā=na* (5, 9 and 32), **nə-ṭlaʕ > nə-ṭlā* (4).

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[12] This has been transcribed as <y> in the text.

[13] Jayakar (1904: 249) appears to be of no use in this respect. He only passingly (and oddly) reports that "the letters ج, ح and خ are interchangeable as in some other modern dialects of Arabic." We have observed nothing of the sort in our text.

Utterance-initial ع is realized as a glottal stop, at least in the word *ʔašān*, probably due to phonotactic constraints (i.e. #V syllables are not tolerated). More occurrences of word-initial ع would however be needed to better assess this phenomenon.

The rules just discussed know several exceptions in the text. ع is maintained in tokens such as *ʕanab* (17), *ya-ʕmal* (22), *ʕayš* (25), and sometimes one observes variation in the realization of the same lexical item, e.g. *yi-tāb* (24) ～ *yi-tʕāb* (28); *yāni* (18 and 19) ～ *yaʕni* (22 and 28). We believe the explanation of such "irregularities" to be sociolinguistic in nature, i.e. due to contact with GA as well as other varieties of Arabic, to which our informant has been intensively exposed; besides, this phenomenon is probably reinforced by the artificial and semi-formal context of the recording (including the interviewer's being a non-native speaker).

4.1.4. Reflexes of ذ and ث

According to Jayakar (1904: 249), etymological fricative ث has turned into the corresponding stop [t] in all contexts, while its voiced counterpart has more varied reflexes (apparently [ḏ], [d] or [z]). Bernabela (2011: 26) simply reports that all interdentals have become stops, although he notes that "one may occasionally hear an interdental fricative being articulated, but this is probably due to the influence of MSA." To this, we may add that influence from GA is likely to play a role as well, since in this variety interdentals have been retained.

As was the case for ع, reflexes of ث and ذ appear to be very variable in our text, and this is probably due to our speaker's idiolect being affected by other varieties of Arabic. Demonstratives appear to systematically feature a stop (*hōda,* 26 and 40; *hōdi,* 35; *hadōk,* 38), as does the relative pronoun *alladi* (29 and 30). The conditional particle *iḏa*, on the other hand, appears twice with a fricative (12 and 13), and the same is true of *keḏa* (6). Etymological ث is retained in *kṯīr* (33 and 35), but oddly enough lost in *aktar* (19), in spite of the fact that these two words come from the same root.[14]

A most peculiar reflex of ث is encountered in lines 8 to 11, where the words *faley* "ice" and *falley-na* "we froze" (both from an original root *ṯ - l - ǧ*) are used repeatedly. No other root appears in the text in which this sound change is attested. To the best of our knowledge, the /ṯ/ > [f] sound change has not been reported for any Musandam or Omani dialect, and neither is it attested in GA. The only eastern Arabian dialects in which this shift occurs are the Baḥārna dialects of Bahrain (Holes 2016: 59). We are

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[14] Note that *iḏa* and *kṯīr* are specifically listed by Bernabela as two typical elements in which the fricative realization can be encountered.

inclined to believe that these specific lexical items, both connected to a technology of relatively recent introduction in the area, are to be regarded as lexical loans. It is not impossible that, for some reason, the first refrigerators that arrived in Musandam where brought there from Bahrain, which can explain the intrusion of an otherwise entirely undocumented phenomenon. Obviously, this is just a hypothesis (and a hard-to-prove one at that), and much is yet unknown about Musandam dialects, so that future research in the area might lead to different explanations.

4.1.5. Reflexes of ض and ظ

Few occurrences of these two sounds appear in the text, so that it is not possible to have a complete picture of the situation. It seems reasonable to suppose that the dental fricative ظ has been conflated with the corresponding stop (as is mostly the case with the other dental fricatives), leaving only ض in the dialect. Bernabela (2011: 26) claims that this is precisely what happened in the dialect of al-Jadi.

In general, however, the status of ض in the dialect is not entirely clear. While this sound is retained in *xuḍraw-ōt* [xudˠrˠaʼwoːt] (19), it is clearly articulated as a labio-velar approximant in *xawra* [ˈxawɻa] (16; note that the latter is just the singular form of the former). A short footnote in Bernabela (2011: 15) informs us that the [dˠ] > [w] shift is allegedly reported in the dialect of Ghumda (غمضاء), some four kilometers south of al-Jadi, but not in al-Jadi itself. The word *qēw* [ˈɣeːw] "summer" appears twice in the text. This word is normally realized as *gēḏ* [geːðˠ] in GA (see for instances Holes 2011: 444). In light of this, we must either postulate that an earlier /ðˠ/ > /dˠ/ shift was later followed by a /dˠ/ > /w/ one, or that both /ðˠ/ and /dˠ/ underwent this process independently. The former explanation is obviously more convincing, but the details of this phenomenon remain in general unclear (we do not know, for instance, if this shift is environmentally-conditioned, and if so, by what type of environments). This represents an important open question on which future studies on MusAr should focus.

4.1.6. Reflexes of ل

Bernabela (2011: 25) notes that etymological ل is sometimes realized as [r] in his texts, and that in some cases [l] and [r] appear to be allophones in free variation. We have observed nothing of the sort in the speech of our informant (i.e. all historical ل are realized as such, see for instance *nə-ṭlaʕ,* 1; *fallay-na*, 8; *awwal*, 20). In two cases, however, etymological ل is entirely elided. This happens with the preposition *ʕala* (18), which appears as *āe=h* (followed by a 3S.M suffix pronoun), and with the adverb "now" (21), realized as *aḥayn* (historically derived from the lexicalization of the definite article *al* plus the word *ḥīn* "time," and normally encountered in the form *alḥīn* in the rest of the Gulf; see Section 4.2 on the

presence of a diphthong here). With only two occurrences of this phenomenon, it is hard to say whether or not it represents a recurring and regular feature of this dialect, and further observations are needed on this point, also in order to determine which contexts trigger this type of elision. It is worth noting, however, that the disappearance of ل can bring forth the emergence of vocalic clusters which are unusual as varieties of Arabic go.

4.1.7. Devoicing in utterance-final position

Devoicing in utterance-final, pre-pausal position is a phenomenon well attested across many Arabic vernaculars. As for the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula, this process (often accompanied by various secondary articulations such as glottalization, aspiration and neutralization) has been documented for San'ani, Hadrami and other north Yemeni varieties (Jastrow 1984; Behnstedt 1985; al-Saqqaf 2000-2002) as well as for Modern South Arabian (Watson and Asir 2007; Watson and Bellem 2011), and therefore it is considered an areal linguistic feature of the South-Western Peninsula (Watson and Bellem 2011:252).

MusAr shows clear signs of lenition and devoicing in pre-pausal position of voiced and voiceless stops. Voiced stops are either devoiced, as in *yi-kidd* [ji'kit:] (23) or lenited, as it is the case of spirantization of /b/: *lə-xṣāb* [lə'xsˤaβ] (33), *r=rṭab* [rˠ:tˠaβ] (36). Voiceless stops are clearly aspirated: *hadōk* [hæ'do:kʰ] (38). Bernabela (2011: 27-8) reports the same for al-Jadi.

4.2. Vowels

4.2.1. *ʔimāla* and reflexes of *ā*

ʔimāla ("inclination") is a term often used in studies of Arabic linguistics to refer to the fronting and raising of short and long *a*. In our text, *ʔimāla* is rare: it never occurs with short *a* in final position (see e.g. *madrasa*, 1; *samak-a*, 6; *huwa*, 12; *fī=ha*, 33), and this stands in open contrast with what Bernabela (2011: 30) reports for the dialect of al-Jadi, where the feminine ending "is consistently raised to *i*" and the 3S.F suffix pronoun *-ha* can be raised to *-hi* as well.

ʔimāla does occasionally occur in the case of medial long *ā*, in the words *blēd* [blēd] (7, 8 and 13), *ʕayēl* [ʕayēl] (25 and 26) and *maḥtēy-īn* [maḥtēyīn] (26). In all other cases (except for the word *ʔašān*, 25), long *ā* is backed to [ō]. Examples are numerous and include *hnōk* (5), *bōkir* (14), *xuḍraw-ōt* (19) and *hadōk* (38). Bernabela (2011: 32-3) similarly reports that, in al-Jadi, historical *ā* has largely disappeared. According to him, it is not always easy to predict whether an [ō] or [ē] reflex will be found in its place, but as a general rule, it would seem that [ē] is only attested when the vowel is both preceded and

followed by a non-velarized, non-nasal front consonant[15] (otherwise the [ō] reflex obtains). Bernabela also notes that the feminine plural nominal marker *-āt* systematically surfaces as *-ōt*, no matter the consonantal environment. All this seems to be in accordance with our data, the only exception being represent by *yirōb* (40), where [ē] would be expected instead.

The backing of long *ā* is a well-known and widely attested phenomenon in the Gulf Area. Holes (2016: 28), for instance, notes that, in the Bahraini dialects spoken by Sunni Arabs, *ā* "has a backed and rounded quality in *any* phonetic environment," and Johnstone (1976: 23) also noted how in GA in general central [ā] is often difficult to distinguish from backed [ɑ̄], and that in some cases the two would seem to be in free variation.

4.2.2. Diphthongs and diphthongization of long vowels

Several interesting phenomena connected to diphthongs are present in the text. Firstly, the dialect of our informant seems to retain etymological diphthongs, which are normally not monophthongized. In the case of original /ay/ diphthongs, the quality of the vowel is raised to an open /e/ [ɛ] unless preceded by a back consonant, and examples include s-stem forms of final weak or geminated verbs (*ġaddeyna,* 3; *tammeyna,* 13), the dual ending (*kammeyn,* 6 and 40) and other lexical elements (*ʕayš,* 25; *beyt,* 41). In the case of original /aw/ diphthongs, the quality of the vowel is backed to [ɑ] (*mawyūd,* 10; *mawz,* 17; *dawr,* 32). The only recorded exception to this trend is represented by the word *šī* "thing," where the original diphtong (**šay)* has been reduced to a long vowel. Every occurrence of *šī* in the text appears to be monophthongized, no matter the role that the word fulfils in the sentence: grammaticalized existential marker (*šī=la,* 9 and 13), quantifier (*šī min=ha,* 36 and 38) or part of a comparative construction (*aktar šī,* 19). Bernabela (2011: 38) reports that in al-Jadi "The monophthongisation of the OA diphthongs *ay and *aw to *ē* and *ō* respectively is not complete, especially for the former, as it is still slightly diphthongal." This process would seem to be even more incomplete in the speech of our informant (also because certain lexical items that Bernabela lists as systematically showing monophthongization retain their diphthong in our text, e.g. *dawr).* Interestingly enough, retention of diphthongs is characteristic of the "older" Baharna dialects of Bahrain, "where elderly and uneducated speakers typically have the diphthongs /ay/ and /aw/ rather than the mid-vowels /ē/ and /ō/" (Holes 2016: 66).

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[15] Specifically, Bernabela notes that "Bilabials, labio-dentals, alveolars and palatals […] are here considered as front consonants. Next to all the postpalatal consonants, retroflex *r* counts as a back consonant as well."

A second very interesting phenomenon observed in the speech of our informant is the tendency to diphthongize etymological long vowels. This trait is attested, although often poorly described, in several Arabic dialects. However, as far as we are aware, diphthongization of etymological long vowels has only been documented in coda position (some examples in Yemeni dialects can be found in the commentaries to maps 014 and 015 in Behnstedt 2016[16]; see Mion 2008 for a more general survey). Furthermore, in many cases it only occurs in pause, and seems not to be connected to the presence of guttural sounds (the Arabic of Nazareth documented by Zuʿbi 2017 is a good example of these last two points)[17]. In our text, on the contrary, diphthongization is also found in non-final syllables, in non-pausal contexts, and it appears to be triggered by adjacent guttural consonants. With only three recorded occurrences, it is hard to determine what kind of rationale underlies this phonological process (also because it appears to affect both *ā* and *ī* vowels, yelding identical results), but, as anticipated, the long vowel undergoing diphthongization is always preceded by a guttural or emphatic consonant. The relevant examples are *maṣaynaʕ < *maṣānaʕ* (9), *ḥaytī=h < *ḫātī=h* (10) and *aḥayn < *alḥīn* (21, see Section 4.1 above for the loss of *l* in this word). Note that at least one counterexample appears in the text, namel *ḥādī-n* (13), in which *ā* is preceded by a guttural but not diphthongized.

Although more research is clearly needed on this point, it might be worth pointing out that back consonants cause following high long vowels to diphthongize also in Mehri, one of the five Modern South Arabian languages spoken in Southern Oman (Watson *et al.* 2020: 17). Allomorphy can be observed, for instance, in the singular feminine future participial suffix *-īta* in *kətbīta* 'will write f.s.' vs. *ṣəṭṭayta* 'will feel pain f.s.' and *yəṣṣayta* 'will be afraid f.s.'

4.3. Phonotactics

4.3.1. Elision

Bernabela (2011: 49) claims that all etymological short high vowels in CvCv̄C sequences are systematically elided. This appears to be confirmed in our data, where we find *blēd < *bilād* (7, 8 and 13), *hnōk < *hunāk* (5), but *zamōn < *zamān* (20), *ʔašān < *ʕašān* (25), *ʕayēl < *ʕayāl* (25 and 26) and *hadōk < *hadāk* (30). Two interesting cases of elision are those that appear in 32 (*kbīr*), 33 and 35 (*kṯīr*).

According to Bernabela, short *a* in CaCīC patterns is never elided, so that we shouldn't see any elision here. However, we know that, in the Gulf area, the quality of this vowel is often high, also because it can trigger the affrication of velar stops in front vowel enviroments typical of GA (see Johnstone 1976: 30 for examples of *čibīr* and *čiṯīr* in Kuwaiti Arabic). In the case of these two elements, then, if we believe *a* to be the original short vowel, we should postulate three separate diachronic stages, namely *CaCīC > *CiCīC > CCīC.

Bernabela also notes that "In verbs that end with *–vC*, this last vowel is prone to elision when a vowel-initial suffix is added to the base." We have one very clear example of this in (42), where the verb *n-ōkil* features a short vowel which is, conversely, lost in (37), where a 3S.M pronoun is suffixed to it, giving *n-ōkl=uh.*

4.3.2. Anaptyxis and *gahawa syndrome*

An epenthetic vowel is inserted after the first consonant whenever a CCC cluster is created by the juxtaposition of different words or morphemes. We see examples of this in 5 (*l=baḥar ᵊhnōk*), 32 (*dawr ᵊkbīr*), 33 and 35 (*nxīl ᵊkṯīra*). This is consistent with Bernabela (2011: 40-1), who also claims that a pause counts as a consonant for the purpose of word-final consonantal clusters (in other words, word-final consonant clusters are not allowed in the dialect). As a consequence of this, CC# segments are normally resolved as CvC#[18]. In our text, we see several examples of CvCC lexical elements resyllabicated in CvCvC: since none of those occur in pause, it is probable that an original epenthetic vowel has been reinterpreted as part of the root in all these words (e.g. *ṣubəḥ* < *ṣubḥ*, 1; *baḥar* < *baḥr*, 4 and 5; *ahal* < *ahl*, 4; *naxal* < *naxl* 30 to 32[19]). Some of these could look like examples of the so-called *gahawa syndrome*, but by looking at certain verbal forms that appear in the text, it is easy to establish that the gahawa syndrome is not active in the dialect of our informant (see for instance 16, *ya-ḥti* in place of *ya-ḥati* – or possibly *y-ḥati* after resyllabication – and 22, *ya-ʕmal* in place of *ya-ʕamal* or *y-ʕamal*).

4.3.3. Assimilation

In the text, sonorants undergo assimilation in various cases. We see two examples of complete assimilation of *l* when followed by an *n* sound. This happens in 4 (*mā ahal=na*, actually pronounced

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[18] Bernabela further comments that the same process applies to word-initial #CC clusters. In our text, we have no word with an initial CC cluster appearing at the beginning of an utterance, so that it is impossible to confirm this claim.

[19] The quality of the epenthetic vowel is normally [ə], but it seems to be realized as [a] when preceded by a guttural.

māhan=na) and 6 (*b=aḥaṣṣal=l=na*, actually *b=aḥaṣṣan=na*). Furthermore, assimilation takes place when *n* precedes *r*, even across word boundaries: *min riyāna* [mər:i'j æ:na] (8) and *kōn rabb* ['ko:r:ab:] (27).

4.4 Morphosyntax

4.4.1. Collectives and agreement

Several collective nouns appear in the text, most notably *samak* "fish" (8, 11 and 15), *naxal* "palm trees" (30, 31 and 32), *rṭāb* "fresh dates" (36) and *siḥḥ* "dried dates" (39, 40). A singulative can be derived from most collectives by the addition of the suffix *-a(t)*, as exemplified by *samak-a*, in (6). Being morphologically akin to masculine singular nouns, collectives often trigger masculine singular agreement (*rṭāb n-ōkl=uh* "fresh dates, we eat them," 36 and 37; *s=siḥḥ ni-mli minn-uh...* "the dried dates, we fill with them...," 40). However, collectives can sometimes trigger feminine singular agreement, as is the case with "proper" plural nouns lacking individuation (Brustad 2000: 52 ff.). An example of the former phenomenon is found in (32), *ən=naxal lī=ha* "palm trees, they have...," while we have an example of the latter in (21), *əl=umūr kōn-at* "things were..."

Several collective nouns in Arabic posses an apophonic plural that is normally employed with the meaning of "types of X" (X being the entity the collective describes, see Sallam 1979: 24). In our text, the plural of *naxal*, *nxīl*, is used with this very meaning in (33), *nxīl ᵓkṯīr-a fī=ha lə=xneyzi fī=ha lə=xṣāb* "many types of palm trees, among them the *xneyzi*, among them the *xṣāb*," where the speaker uses the apophonic plural before listing all the different subspecies of palm trees that used to be grown around Lima. Note that this plural also triggers feminine singular agreement in both the adjective and the pronoun.

4.4.2. Existentials and negation

In the text, the particle *fīh* is used once as an existential element with the meaning "there is/are" (*fīh waqat*, 12). This is a very common feature, shared by a very high number of Arabic dialects, from Egypt to the Levant to eastern Arabia. Interestingly enough, it would seem that the negative counterpart of *fīh* (*šī=la*) has a different origin, namely the word for "thing," *šay*, which further developed into *šī* via monophthongization, as discussed in Section 4.2.

Negation is probably one of the most intriguing aspects of MusAr. Bernabela (2011: 53, 86-87) observes how both verbs and nominal sentences can be negated with the enclitic *-lu* (alternatively, preponed *mā* can be used). This behavior is unique among all known varieties of Arabic (even in the

few dialects where negation can be realized by the use of a suffix only, this suffix systematically contains a *š* element, while this is not the case in MusAr, where the negation is clearly derived by **lā*).

In our text, this suffixal negator appears twice (in the form *=la*), in both cases in the context of an existential sentence. Note in particular 12 and 13, where the opposition between affirmative *fīh* and negative *šī=la* is clearly visibile (*w=iḏa huwa fīh waqat ḥadarna ḏeba w=iḏa šī=la waqat trō=na ḥādīn tammeyna bi=lə=blēd* "If there was time we would go to Dibba, and if there wasn't we would stay in the village"), but see also 9 (*šī=la mā=na maṣaynaʕ falay*, "We didn't have ice machines").

On the topic of the opposition between *fīh* and negative *šī*, Bernabela (2011: 61) thus comments: "In the recorded texts, 'there is / are' is expressed consistently with *fīh*. Elicitation, however, also yielded *šī*, and since the negative equivalent 'there is / are not' is always expressed with *šīlu* or *mā šī / šay* (never *mā fīh*), it is likely that *fīh* has been imported." It is certainly possible that *šī* represents the "original," autochthonous element in MusAr, while *fīh* constitutes a borrowing from GA or some other dialect.[20] Be that as it may, it is also possible that the two are now becoming semantically specialized, the former to be used in negative sentences only and the latter in affirmative ones.

As a last note, the negative existential closely resembles that of existential negation in the Modern South Arabian languages, where a structure EXIST + NEG (*śī + lā*) is attested (Simeone-Senelle 2011: 1078). According to Lucas (2020: 650-6), both the use of *šī* as an existential predicate in Arabic dialects and postverbal negation through *lā* in MusAr (an unicum among Arabic varieties) are the result of transfer from MSAL due to earlier strict contact.

4.4.3. Some remarks on clause combining and the verbal system: *s*- and *p*-stem verbs, active participles and the *b*- prefix

The text offers a limited but interesting set of examples of the functions and uses of the various verbal forms that exist in the dialect. The verbs in lines (2) to (4) well illustrate the opposition between suffix-stem verbs (normally encoding perfective aspect) and prefix-stem verbs (normally expressing the imperfective). The passage (2) *u=min ni-ryaʕ min əl=madras-a nə-tġaddi* (3) *ġaddey-na* (4) *u=yi-mkin nə-ṭlā l=baḥar* can be translated as "And when we came back from school, we had lunch. After lunch,

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[20] The idea that *šī* represents the original existential element of MusAr is further reinforced by this passage from Holes (2016: 24): "the functions of *šī/ šay* in the Baḥārna dialects, the Omani dialects and those of the Gulf coast which neighbour Oman (Rās al-Khayma, Dubai), are virtually identical with those of *ši* in Yemen." The use of *šī*, in other words, would represent yet another shared trait among the varieties that belong to the "older" dialectal stratum in south-eastern Arabia, i.e. the dialects that existed in the area before the arrival of Bedouin peoples from Najd (as discussed in Section 2).

sometimes we went down to the sea." Here it can be noted how the mere juxtaposition of a *p*- and an *s*-stem verb is sufficient to convey the idea of temporal sequentiality, without the use of any temporal adverb, conjunction or discourse marker other than two long pauses right before and after the *s*-stem verb (*ġaddey-na*). This phenomenon is what Persson (2015: 254-5) refers to as *gram switching*, on which she writes:

> The fairly well-defined aspectual values associated with Gulf Arabic verb forms, especially the prefix form and the suffix form, are employed in various ways in clause combining to signal clause hierarchy and discourse structure. This is done without recourse to conjunctions or discourse markers. Simple switches between grams (verb forms) are used to signal temporal/conditional clauses, relative clauses, final clauses and other non-main clause linking as well as narrative background/foreground.

Asyndetic clause combining returns in (15), though this time without a gram switch. This line offers a perfect example of the type of semantic ambiguity that is typical of such constructions, which Persson (2009) dubs circumstantial qualifiers (CQ). In the case of *ya-ḥdər abū=y li=deba yi-bīʕ əs=samak*, it is difficult to say whether the second clause is to be interpreted as coordinated to the first one (in which case the sentence would translate as "My father would go down to Dibba and sell the fish") or as a final subordinate (thus giving the English translation "My father would go down to Dibba in order to sell the fish"). This inherent ambiguity is highlighted by Persson (2009: 257) herself, when she writes that "a CQ at clause level consisting of an asyndetically appended clause sometimes has an alternative reading as an ordinary coordinated clause."

Yet another example of semantic ambiguity resulting from asyndetism can be seen in (13), here involving an active participle: *w=iḏa šī=la waqat trō=na ḥādī-n tammey-na bi=lə=blēd.* It is hard to tell whether the following s-stem verb should here be regarded as subordinated or coordinated to it – and this in addition to the fact that the two verbs are close synonyms, which further complicates translation into English. The sentence could be tentatively rendered as "and if there was no time, we stayed, remaining in the village" or "and if there was no time, we ended up remaining in the village" (literally: "we remained remaining").

As far as active participles are concerned, in (10) we find *ḥaytī=h* "we had brought/used to bring it." Like the one in (13), this participle is plural, but the final *n* of the plural suffix is here lost due to the suffixation of the pronoun. This same phenomenon is reported for al-Jadi by Bernabela (2011: 69), who further comments that this stands in opposition with the suffixation of personal pronouns to *singular* active participles, in which case an infix *-in(n)-* is obligatorily inserted between the participle and the pronoun. Though we have no example of this in our text, fieldwork observations made by Simone

Bettega confirm that this feature is widespread in MusAr (on the importance of the post-participial -*in(n)*- infix in Arabian dialects, see Holes 2011).

Finally, a passing comment is due on the only occurrence of the *b*- prefix that appears in the text. The *b*- prefix is the main verbal prefix found in the Arabic dialects of the eastern Peninsula[21]. It has been variously described as a marker of futurity and intention, but Persson (2008) correctly points out that it is better envisioned as a modal marker of *irrealis*. Among the various uses of this element, Persson notes that it sometimes appears introducing verbs that express the habitual past. This observation is remarkable in that this specific use of *b*- had not been reported before in other works on GA (see for instance Johnstone 1967 or Holes 1990), nor has it been observed in subsequent studies on the topic (Eades 2012 and Bettega 2019, both focused on Omani dialects, and Holes 2016: 301-2, on Bahraini Arabic). It is therefore an interesting finding that the only occurrence of *b*- that appears in our text is precisely of this kind, i.e. the prefixed verb is actually used to express the habitual past (see 6, *b=a-ḥaṣṣal=l=na kammeyn samak-a*, which can be variously translated as "I used to catch us some fishes" or "I would catch us some fishes"). This confirms Persson's claims on the subject, and expands on Bernabela's (2011: 87) observation that *b*- is used in MusAr to express futurity.

5. Discussion

The text presents all the traits that have already been described as typical for (at least some varieties of) MusAr. These include: disappearance of etymological /ʕ/, conditioned fricativization of /q/, retroflex reflexes of /r/, merger of dental fricatives with the corresponding stops, fronting or (more commonly) backing of etymological /a:/, and the suffix negative clitic =*la*. Some phenomena appear in the text that were either scarcely or entirely undocumented, namely: shift from /dˤ/ to /w/, occasional disappearance of etymological /l/, retention of etymological diphthongs, diphthongization of etymological long vowels when preceded by back consonants. All these phenomena (except the retention of diphthongs) only appear irregularly within the text. It is presently impossible to tell whether these traits would occur systematically, or at any rate more often, in the speech of informants who have been less exposed to other varieties of Arabic. All of this further demonstrates that MusAr varieties abound with traits that, from the perspective of Arabic dialectology, are typologically unusual, and henceforth worth of further investigation.

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[21] Pan-Gulf *rāḥ* and Omani *ha*- can be sporadically encountered, but are markedly rarer. On the topic see Bettega (2019), in particular Sections 5.1 and 5.3.2.

MusAr varieties, in particular, share several important isoglosses with those dialects that, as discussed in Section 2 and according to Holes (2016: 18ff.), form a broken chain of closely related varieties all around the periphery of the Arabian Peninsula. Holes lists five fundamental features that characterize these dialects, namely: voiceless reflex of /q/; 2S.F suffix pronoun -*iš*; post-participial -*in(n)*- infix; 2S.F independent pronoun *intīn* and 2PL.M independent pronoun *intūn*; existential *šī* or *šay*. Several of these traits have been discussed in the preceding pages. Those that haven't (most notably the pronominal forms) are also attested in MusAr (Simone Bettega's own notes, and Bernabela 2011: 47-8). It would seem, then, that Musandam varieties of Arabic are to be included in this dialectal group of probable south-western Arabian descent. This hypothesis is further reinforced by the observation, made by Anonby, Bettega and Procházka (forthcoming), that the unusual forms of the singular demonstratives found in many MusAr dialects are only paralleled by certain south-western Arabian varieties (mostly in western Yemen and southern Saudi Arabia). In addition to this, the oral traditions of the tribes which inhabit Musandam appear to corroborate such theory, since they claim Yemeni ancestry (see Jayakar 1904: 247; van der Walt Anonby 2018: 625 for more details on this point). The idea that several of the features we have discussed might have originated in south-western Arabia, and were later exported to Musandam, would also explain some of the striking similarities that MusAr varieties show with some of the Modern South Arabian languages. This potential connection, as we have seen in Section 4.4, has been highlighted by other authors before, in particular with respect to the most obvious of these traits, namely the postposed negation. Other highly unusual traits observed in MusAr, however – traits which are not shared with other known varieties of Arabic – are encountered today in at least some of the MSAL, including conditioned diphthongization of etymological long vowels (see Section 4.2), retroflex reflexes of /r/ and inconsistent realization of /ʕ/[22]. Obviously, this point as well is just a tentative hypothesis, and would need more in-depth investigation to be substantiated.

As a final note, we would like to point out how, in spite of the fact that the dialect of our text presents a remarkably high number of phonological features that are unusual for the area in which it is spoken, it is also characterized by a typical GA feature, namely the realization of etymological ح as [j]. Given that this realization is consistent and invariable in the speech of our informant, we are inclined to believe that this is not an idiolectal feature caused by long exposition to GA; rather, it is likely that this represents the standard realization of this sound in the dialect of Lima, and possibly

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[22] Retroflexes are rarely attested in the MSAL, but not unheard of; see Watson (2012: 13): "Before coronals, /r/ may form a retroflex cluster with the following coronal in both dialects, as in ba[ɽɳ] 'we already.'" Inconsistent realization of /ʕ/ is a typical feature of Mehreyyet, where this sound can be realized as /ʔ/ or entirely elided (Watson 2012: 14).

other locations in Musandam. This fact comes as no surprise, if one considers that phonologically "mixed" dialects of this type (where typical "Bedouin" and "sedentary" features intermingle) are also commonly encountered on the northern Omani coast. It seems probable that prolonged contact with groups that ailed from other parts of the Gulf via maritime trade routes has, through the course of time, brought some typically GA traits in the coastal towns of Musandam. It is also worth pointing out that, if we move past the level of morpho-phonology, we find the syntax of this dialect to be relatively similar to that of other varieties of Arabic spoken along the Gulf Coast and in Oman (with the obvious exception of negative structures). Other studies have highlighted the fact that, while phonological differences between the various dialects of the area are known and well-documented, it is still unclear to what level do they differ in terms of syntactic behavior (see e.g. Eades and Persson 2013: 343). The study by Bettega (2019) on the verbal system of Omani Arabic would seem to suggest that this variety has more in common with GA than a superficial observation of its phonetic inventory would lead one to believe. It is therefore not impossible that MusAr varieties, too, will prove less "idiosyncratic" in terms of grammatical structure, once additional studies on the topic are carried out. This, however, is at present impossible to demonstrate, and must remain the subject for future investigations.

Appendix: list of abbreviations

1	1st person	IPFV	imperfective aspect
2	2nd person	M	masculine
3	3rd person	NEAR	near deixis
CONJ	conjunction	PFV	perfective aspect
DEF	definite	PLURAL	plural
DEM	demonstrative	PTCP	participle
DP	discourse particle	REL	relative pronouns
F	feminine	S	singular
FAR	far deixis		

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