

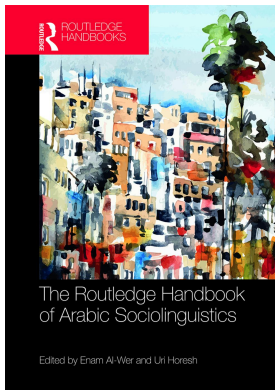
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Publisher: *Routledge*

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## The Routledge Handbook of Arabic Sociolinguistics

Enam Al-Wer, Uri Horesh

### Traditional dialects

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315722450-7>

Bruno Herin

**Published online on: 25 Jun 2019**

**How to cite :-** Bruno Herin. 25 Jun 2019, *Traditional dialects from: The Routledge Handbook of Arabic Sociolinguistics* Routledge

Accessed on: 04 Jun 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315722450-7>

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# 7

## TRADITIONAL DIALECTS

*Bruno Herin*

### Introduction

One of the most widely used taxonomies of Arabic dialects is probably that which distinguishes between sedentary and Bedouin dialects. This same division further makes a distinction between rural and urban dialects within the sedentary group. Most dialectologists and sociolinguists of Arabic have taken this for granted. But is it not worthy of a critical examination? For, often, we find that rural and Bedouin dialects share features that are distinct from urban dialects.

Therefore, rather than devoting chapters to sedentary (rural & urban) vs. Bedouin dialects, I have chosen to take a more critical approach and deal with the two types of dialects from a sociolinguistic angle. In this chapter, I will discuss dialects that are more isolated and represent the conservative – or traditional – varieties spoken in their respective speech communities. Often, but not always, these will be rural or Bedouin dialects. However, some elderly speakers or speakers with certain religious affiliations in urban settings may also speak such dialects.

There doesn't seem to be any cross-linguistic definition of what a traditional dialect is. Traditional dialects are most often referred to in relation to a specific environment. Trudgill (1990: 5), in the context of the British Isles, characterises it in the following way:

Traditional dialects are what most people think of when they hear the term dialect. They are spoken by a probably shrinking minority of the English speaking population of the world, almost all of them in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. They are most easily found, as far as England is concerned, in the more remote and peripheral rural areas of the country, although some urban areas of northern and western England still have many Traditional Dialect speakers.

A more recent characterisation appears in Hughes (2013: 34):

Traditional dialects are those conservative dialects of English which are, for the most part, spoken in relatively isolated rural areas by certain older speakers and which differ considerably from Standard English, and indeed from one another

A further element related to age can be found in Clarke (2015: 75) who considers traditional dialects as “the speech types identified primarily with rural, working-class, and usually older speakers”.

These definitions encompass three dimensions according to which traditional dialects have been identified: geographical, social and linguistic. Geographically, traditional dialects are forms of speech that correlates with remoteness, rurality and non-urbaness. Socially, they are used by individuals whose socioeconomic profile is anchored in the practice of agriculture and farming or wage labour. Linguistically, traditional dialects are said to be more conservative and different from the standard language.

Since these definitions were tailored for the description of state of affairs prevailing in European societies, our challenge obviously lies in their transposition into the Arab World. The history, sociology and linguistic landscape of the Arab World differ in many respects from those found in Europe. Most saliently, differences arise in urbanisation processes and their historical depth, the practice of nomadism, and the roles and functions of standard languages. Urbanisation in Europe is linked to industrialisation, which occurred earlier in Europe than in the rest of the world. Nomadism, although not unknown in Europe (at least in its commercial form), has long become a marginal phenomenon. European standard languages, although they are by and large learnt constructs, are for the most part rooted in particular regional varieties: French and the dialect of Ile-De-France, Spanish and Castellan, Italian and Tuscan, and the like.

In the Arab World, although large cities have existed since early antiquity, industrialisation and large-scale rural exodus only took place in the 20th century. Nomadism, both commercial and pastoral, was common until very recently. Standard Arabic is not rooted in any particular regional variety and most importantly, it was never nativised.<sup>1</sup> Here lies the most fundamental difference when contrasting the linguistic situation of the Arab World and Europe (and beyond): Standard Arabic has no native speakers. In this respect, any discussion about dedialectalisation and convergence in the Arab World has to take into consideration the fact that the direction of change is not towards Standard Arabic, but rather towards supra-local varieties that enjoy greater diffusion in specific regions (Al-Wer 1997). This also implies that any discussion of traditional dialects in the Arab World has a wider scope than in Europe and must also include varieties spoken in old urban centres such as Fez, Tunis, Qayrawān, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Damascus. It should also include all the varieties spoken by the various pastoral nomads, commonly referred to as the Bedouins. One should also add to this all the communal dialects spoken by religious minorities throughout the Arab World. We can now try to provide a tentative answer to the question of what a traditional dialect of Arabic is: (1) rural, (2) Bedouin, (3) old urban (4) communal dialects, keeping in mind that the latter are often offshoots of old urban dialects. The fact that massive rural exodus took place later in this part of the world also implies that traditional dialects of Arabic are not spoken merely by ‘a shrinking minority’, as Trudgill puts it for the English-speaking world, but by larger segments of the population. The general trends of dedialectalisation and convergence observed in all the dialects of Europe are similarly active in the Arab World, but since they are more recent, they appear to be at an earlier stage.

What do traditional dialects of Arabic have in common linguistically? As noted by the above definitions, they are more conservative. To my knowledge, linguistic conservatism is a more or less impressionistic qualification. As such, a more fine-grained characterisation is not an excessive luxury. Conservatism is primarily understood as a diachronic attribute. Labeling a dialect as conservative therefore means that it exhibits a certain degree of stability over

time: certain features are less likely to evolve because there are fewer exogenous factors that could lead to change. There are indeed a large number of changes that are known to occur regularly in the languages of the world, such as certain sound changes or grammaticalisation processes, and others that are more likely to take place in contact situations. None of them are mutually exclusive, of course, as any common cross-linguistic change may perfectly well be contact-induced (Heine & Kuteva 2005). Linguistic stability often correlates with social stability and geographic isolation (Kühl & Braunnüller 2014; Trudgill 2011). Another dimension that remains to be explored is synchrony. Synchronically, a traditional dialect could be seen as a variety that largely escapes or has escaped until recently the process of dedialectalisation, defined as the “disappearance of dialectal variants” (Trudgill 1996, 1999a, 1999b). Quantitatively, the ‘traditionalness’ of a dialect could be measured by the number of features that set it apart from the variety of larger diffusion towards which it is supposed to converge.

The diachronic dimension is not always accessible to investigation because most dialects of Arabic lack early written records. The only way to assess linguistic stability is thus to identify features that are attested in older stages of the language and in the dialect considered, but absent from varieties of larger diffusion. Such archaisms are for example the interdentalals, the realisations of etymological /ǧ/ and /q/, feminine plural, causative derivation using the stem (a)CCaC, apophonic passive, strategies of indetermination using a suffixal *-Vn* (nutation), genitive constructions and verbal modifiers. From this short list, it quickly appears that most urban dialects are much more innovative than rural and Bedouin varieties, as evidenced by the dialects spoken in the Levant. The emerging variety of Amman (Jordan), for instance, lacks the interdentalals, /ǧ/ is de-affricated to [ʒ], the feminine plural is being neutralised in favour of the masculine plural, (a)CCaC is no longer productive, apophonic passives are lexically restricted, nutation is absent, genitive constructions involving the exponent *tabaʿ* are common, and verbs are commonly modified by particles and auxiliaries such as *ʿam(māl)* and *rah* (Al-Wer 2007). The dialect of Salt, one of the most prominent traditional dialects of Jordan, on the other hand, is much more conservative as far as these features are concerned: the interdentalals are well preserved, /ǧ/ is still affricated, feminine plural is maintained, (a)CCaC is still partially productive, the genitive exponent has a very restricted use and preverbal modifiers are mostly absent. Productive apophonic passives and nutation are rarely found outside the Arabian Peninsula, so their absence in the dialect of Salt is not strange.

As a provisional conclusion, two rules of thumb can be identified in the discussion of the traditionalness of a dialect: (1) diachronically, it must be shown that the variety in question has enjoyed a relative linguistic stability and (2) synchronically, the dialect must exhibit a fair number of features that diverge from the target variety.

### Case study

The following is a discussion of a test case. The aim is to show how the frame drawn above can be mobilised to assess the traditionalness of a dialect. For the sake of conciseness and because the diachronic dimension has already been quickly tackled above, I will limit myself to a synchronic investigation of a set of uncommon forms found in one particular dialect of Arabic: the dialect of Salt in central Jordan. I will also try to show the many intricacies that can arise when attempting to describe a traditional dialect. This is largely due to the fact that urbanisation and massive rural exodus, even in places where it occurred later than in Europe, have considerably modified the social and therefore linguistic landscape of most of the areas where traditional dialects were once spoken.

### ***Traditional dialects in Jordan***

Before the creation of the Emirate of Transjordan in 1921, all the dialects spoken east of the Jordan River could safely be labelled traditional. Much of the territory was inhabited by rather small, tight-knit communities, both rural and Bedouin. The only exceptions were a few embryonic urban settlements such as Salt, Irbid, Ajloun and Kerak. The sedentary dialects of Jordan all belong to the southern Levantine group, alongside the Palestinian varieties spoken west of the Jordan River. Geographically, the area where these dialects are spoken is divided, from north the south, into Ḥōrāni (north), Balgāwi (centre) and Mu'āb (south). The Bedouin varieties are spoken across the whole territory. The classification of southern Levantine dialects was first investigated by Cleveland (1963) and subsequently by Palva (1984). The differences between these groups are captured by labelling each dialect by the way the verb 'he says' is expressed: *bigūl*, *bi'ūl*, *bikūl* and *yigūl*. Sedentary Jordan only has *bigūl* and the *bi'ūl* and *bikūl* types are Palestinian. The *yigūl* group designates Bedouin dialects. These labels highlight one phonological feature and one morphological feature: the realisation of etymological /q/ and the presence/absence of the prefix *b-* to mark indicative mood. Bedouin dialects lack the prefix *b-* (*yigūl*) whereas sedentary dialects have it (*bigūl*). The problem with this typology is that it does not capture further differences between the Bedouin varieties that exhibit or not final *-n* in the imperfective e.g. *ygūlu* vs *ygūlūn* 'they say'. N-less dialects are found in the south (e.g., the dialects of the Ḥwēṭāt, Bdūl, and Zawāyda, Sakarna 2002) and central Jordan (e.g., 'Aḡārma, 'Adwān, Bani Ḥasan, 'Abābīd) whereas the camel-breeders such as the Bani Ṣaxər, Sardiyye, Sirḥān, 'Āl 'Īsa, Masā'id, Ḥarb or Faḍul exhibit final *n* in the imperfective. A useful way to capture these distinctions would be to consider the third-person masculine plural instead of the singular. The following labels would therefore be identified: *bigūlu*, *ygūlu* and *ygūlūn*. Combined with the sedentary/nomadic parameter, the following rough classification would arise:

- (a) Sedentary *bigūlu*
- (b) Southern Nomadic *ygūlu*
- (c) Central Nomadic *ygūlu*
- (d) Northern Nomadic *ygūlūn*

As mentioned above, the *bikūlu*, *bi'ūlu* and *biqūlu* types are not indigenous to Jordan. The first two came from Palestine, mostly as a consequence of the 1948 ethnic cleansing and the occupation of the West Bank in 1967, and *biqūlu* is found, to the best of my knowledge, solely amongst the Druze of Azraq who came from Syria.

### ***Ammani as a new variety***

Another point that makes Jordan an interesting case study is the emergence of the capital Amman, which had no indigenous population prior to the creation of the state. A summary of the emergence of Ammani as an autonomous variety can be found in Al-Wer (2007a). In a nutshell, the first generation mostly came from the Palestinian town of Nablus and from Salt in Jordan. Each group appears to have been consistent in its use of its respective dialect. The second generation were exposed to the two varieties from a young age. The speech of this generation is characterised by increased intra- and inter- speaker variability, and a diffuse linguistic situation. Stabilisation and focussing occurred with the third generation, involving various processes of levelling, simplification, emergence of interdialectal forms and reallocation. A striking example of levelling and simplification found in the speech of the third

generation of Salti descent is in second singular bound pronoun allomorphs in which gender is neutralised when the negator *-š* suffixes to the verb as illustrated in Table 7.1. The allomorph *-kī-* in Jordan refers to the masculine, whereas it refers to the feminine in Palestine. The outcome of the contact is that *-kī-* becomes unmarked for gender.

The most dramatic example of interdialectal forms in Amman can be found in the paradigm of the imperfective of verbs such as *'axaq* ‘he took’ and *'akal* ‘he ate’, as exemplified in Table 7.2 (based on Al-Wer 2014). Only one set of the forms recorded in Amman is reported here for the sake of illustrating this point, as Al-Wer was able to record up to 44 different variants. This clearly shows that stabilisation across the paradigm has not yet occurred.

What is striking in the Ammani paradigm is that it mixes the Jordanian initial stem /*ō*/ vowel and Palestinian medial /*u*/ as well as the glide /*y*/ in the third persons, absent in Jordan but maintained in Palestinian (see also Al-Wer 2014a for more on yod-dropping in Amman).

The dialect of Amman is also emerging as the target variety towards which the traditional dialects of Jordan tend to converge. The city of Salt, historically the most important urban centre in Transjordan, is located only 20 kilometres north-west of Amman. When Emir Abdallah – the founder of the modern state – arrived in Transjordan, it was expected that Salt would have been chosen as the capital of the new emirate. Instead, Amman was chosen as the capital.<sup>2</sup> The city has now expanded to such a point that conurbation is almost total between Amman and Salt. As a consequence, amongst traditional Jordanian dialects, Salti is the one on which most pressure is exerted from emerging Ammani. This poses a series of challenges when attempting to record and document the traditional variety, even with NORM (Non-mobile, Old, Rural Men) informants, to the point that I could find what I was looking for only after several rounds of fieldwork. In contact situations, the use of highly localised features tends to be restricted to interactions with individuals who enjoy a fair degree of mutual familiarity, be it relatives or close friends. While such a claim may sound like a no-brainer for most field linguists, it has important methodological implications for outsider researchers who aim at documenting any traditional variety in contact situations, a point to which I shall return in the conclusion.

Table 7.1 ‘I don’t forget you’ in Jordan, Palestine and Amman

	<i>Jordan (Salt)</i>	<i>Palestine (Nablus)</i>	<i>Amman (Salti descents)</i>
2SG.M	<b><i>bansā-kī-š</i></b>	<i>bansā-k-š</i>	<b><i>bansā-kī-š</i></b>
2SG.F	<i>bansā-čī-š</i>	<b><i>bansā-kī-š</i></b>	

Table 7.2 Imperfective of *'akal* ‘he ate’

	<i>Jordan (Salt)</i>	<i>Palestine (Nablus)</i>	<i>Amman</i>
1SG	<i>bōkil</i>	<i>bākul</i>	<i>bākul</i>
2SG.M	<i>btōkil</i>	<i>btākul</i>	<i>btōkul</i>
2SG.F	<i>btōkli</i>	<i>btākli</i>	<i>btōkli</i>
3SG.M	<i>bōkil</i>	<i>byākul</i>	<i>byōkul</i>
3SG.F	<i>btōkil</i>	<i>btākul</i>	<i>btōkul</i>
1PL	<i>mnōkil</i>	<i>mnākul</i>	<i>mnōkul</i>
2PL.M	<i>btōklu</i>	<i>btāklu</i>	<i>btōklu</i>
2PL.F	<i>btōklin</i>		
3PL.M	<i>bōklu</i>	<i>byāklu</i>	<i>byōklu</i>
3PL.F	<i>bōklin</i>		

### *Dedialectalisation and vestigial variants*

Globalisation, increased mobility, geographical and social opening-up of many regions and massive rural exodus translate linguistically into two phenomena: new dialect formation and dedialectalisation (Trudgill 1999). New dialect formation or koineisation can arise when speakers of different dialects come into contact, as in the case of Amman. Dedialectalisation involves the loss of salient dialectal variants, which typically affects traditional dialects. If the process of dedialectalisation affects all distinctive features of a dialect, it may lead to dialect death. Dialect death itself is not always the result of dedialectalisation, but can also be caused by dialect shift (e.g. Walloon in Belgium or Occitan in France).<sup>3</sup> Trudgill (1999) distinguishes two types of variants: embryonic and vestigial. Embryonic variants are involved in the case of new dialect formation, whereby variants that appear to be highly marginal in the first stages of the new variety's genesis are found to have spread to large segments of the newly formed speech community when the dialect in consideration is showing signs of stabilisation. Such variants are often hard to identify due to the paucity of documentation of these early stages.<sup>4</sup>

Vestigial variants are, on the other hand, much easier to spot. This can be achieved by examining rare features from large corpora of recorded speech. These features have to be evaluated, when possible, in the light of the speakers' history and data from varieties with which they may have been in contact. Trudgill further distinguishes variants that are "above and below the level of conscious awareness" (Trudgill 1999: 323). The point is that in the final stages of dedialectalisation, speakers may remain aware that some variants are part of the traditional dialect, even if their actual use is very low. In the case of Salt, features that are often said to be typical of the traditional dialect are, for example, besides a set of lexical items, the affricate /č/ or the disjoint negation marker *a- . . . -š*, both stereotypes in Labov's terminology (Labov 1972). Since stereotypes are by nature limited in number and vestigial variants are potentially numerous, it comes as no surprise that most of the vestigial variants are below the level of conscious awareness for their speakers. What follows is a non-exhaustive list of some vestigial variants in the dialect of Salt.

- (a) The affricate /č/
- (b) The phonology of the feminine ending *-a*
- (c) Feminine plural (verbs, pronouns and agreement)
- (d) Interrogative proforms (*man, ššū, (a)mēt ~ wēnta, lawēš*)
- (e) Indefinites (*nās vs ḥada*)
- (f) Existential (*bī vs fī*)
- (g) Genitive exponent (*šīyy* and *giyy*)
- (h) Prepositions (*'a-rās, 'ugub, mšān & 'ašān, gādī, yamm & tala*)
- (i) Adverbs (*ḡāy, ḥādīr, hassa', lassā', taww-, ams, ḡadd, tāy tāy, wakād, 'uxra, xāfa||a*)
- (j) Presentatives (*hari*)
- (k) Conjunctions (*'ugum-mā, la-mā (taminn- and laminn-), yōm(in), 'in, čān*)
- (l) Other utterance modifiers (*yamm(abdan), winn, čin*)
- (m) Form IV *af'al*
- (n) Negation (*a- . . . -š* and negative copula)
- (o) Auxiliaries (*baga* and *ḡall, gā'id, aḡa*)

None of these features, as far as I know, made their way into Ammani, and some of them may well have completely disappeared from present-day usage. This is most probably the case of the genitive exponent *giyy* and *šīyy*, the adverbs *ams* and *ḡadd* and the morpheme *čīn*.

Genitive *giyy* and *šiy*

The morpheme *giyy*, more or less equivalent to English ‘of’, was recorded by Enam Al-Wer sporadically in the speech of one single elderly informant in 1987 who was born in the first years of the 20th century. It never occurred again afterwards in any of the recordings that we made from 2005 onwards in Salt and its environs, in more than 20 hours of recorded speech from mostly NORM speakers. Here are some of the tokens that she recorded:

- (1) *btisma* ‘ *b-gīt* *il-mayye* *hāḏa* *čēf* *ngul-lo*, *wazīr* *il-mayye*  
 you.hear about-GEN DEF-water DEM how we.say-to.him minister DEF-water  
 ‘You must have heard about the one of the water, what’s his name, the minister of water’
- (2) *haḏīč* *gīt* [NAME]  
 DEM.F GEN [NAME]  
 ‘[NAME]’s wife’
- (3) *giyyāt* *it-thillil*  
 GEN ART-songs  
 ‘(The ladies) who sing’

Example (1) shows that *gīt* refers to a singular masculine, here a man. In example (2), the referent is a woman. It appears therefore that *gīt* is unmarked for gender in the singular. In (3), the referent is feminine plural and the allomorph takes the shape *giyyāt*. No masculine plural occurs in the corpus. According to this, the paradigms in Table 7.3 can be inferred:

Since the masculine plural is missing from the corpus and no gender distinction was recorded in the singular, we may assume that in the plural, too, gender is neutralised. This would make *giyyāt* unmarked for gender, as shown in Paradigm (1). However, it is equally possible that gender is only neutralised in the singular but not in the plural. We would therefore

Table 7.3 Possible inflexions of *giyy* in Salti

	Paradigm (1)	Paradigm (2)	Paradigm (3)
M.S	<i>gīt</i>	<i>gīt</i>	<i>giyy</i>
F.S			<i>gīt</i>
M.PL	<i>giyyāt</i>	<i>giyyīn</i>	<i>giyyīn</i>
F.PL		<i>giyyāt</i>	<i>giyyāt</i>

have to posit a hypothetical form *giyyīn*, as shown in Paradigm (2). Paradigm (3) was obtained through elicitation. The problem is that it contradicts the recorded data from spontaneous speech because it restores gender distinction everywhere. I suspect Paradigm (1) to be original because there is no reason for gender distinction to be neutralised in the singular and not in the plural. The questions that remain are what to do with the elicited paradigm and where it may come from.

The morpheme *šiy* poses similar problems. Equivalent to *giyy* in function, it looks formally like an interdialectal form between Palestinianian *šēt* ~ *šīt* and local *giyy*. It was recorded



in the speech of an old woman, aged 88 in 2007, from the village of Fuheis, whose inhabitants all came from Salt. She unfortunately passed away a couple of years later.

- (4) *dār* 'ammi 'īd min hōn šīt is-salṭ  
 house my.uncle 'Īd from here GEN DEF-Salt  
 'The uncle's house, the one in Salt'
- (5) *ṭabb* 'a š-šaḡar šīyy ahl-i hāḡ  
 he.arrived on DEF-tree GEN family-1SG DEM  
 'He suddenly arrived to the trees, those belonging to my family'

Contrary to *giyy*, which exhibits no gender distinction, *šīyy* appears to inflect for gender, at least in the singular. In (4), *šīt* refers to *dār* 'house', which is feminine in Arabic. In (5) *šīyy* refers to the collective *šaḡar* 'tree', which triggers masculine agreement. The problem is that no plural forms occurred in the corpus and I could not elicit any paradigm as none of my informants would even recognise this form. I can only posit two paradigms (Table 7.4), one in which gender distinction is maintained everywhere, as in Paradigm (2) and one in which gender distinction is neutralised in the plural but not in the singular, as exemplified in Paradigm (1).

As mentioned above, *giyy* and *šīyy* are no longer part of the present-day dialect of Salt. Besides these two speakers, the only genitive morpheme that occurs in the corpus is pan-Levantine *taba* ' , whose inflections were recorded as follows: *taba* ' (masculine singular), *taba* 'it (feminine singular), *taba* 'īn (plural). A hypothetical feminine plural *taba* 'āt was also elicited but was not recorded in spontaneous speech.

#### *Adverbs* ams 'before, some time ago' and ḡadd 'in the future'

In most sedentary dialects of the Levant, 'tomorrow' and 'yesterday' are expressed respectively with *bukra* and *mbāriḥ*. These are the forms that were indeed recorded most consistently in Salt. In the traditional dialects of Ḥōran, as described by Cantineau (1940, 1946), *ḡadd* commonly means 'tomorrow'. As far as *ams* is concerned, Cantineau (ibid.) says he heard it once in Irbid in northern Jordan but doubts its authenticity and concludes that it is not part of traditional Ḥōrani. Palva (2008) discusses these two items in the dialect of Salt and Kerak. He says *ḡadd* is a recessive feature in Salt, where it means 'tomorrow', but does not talk about the existence of *ams*. The adverb *ams* is only mentioned for Kerak, in the sense of 'yesterday' and he sees it as a borrowing from Bedouin dialects that oppose *albāriḥ* 'yesterday evening' and *ams* 'yesterday'. Further elicitation from Salt and Ḥōran (Enam Al-Wer and Areej

Table 7.4 Possible paradigms of *šīyy*

	Paradigm (1)	Paradigm (2)
M.S	<i>šīyy</i>	<i>šīyy</i>
F.S	<i>šīt</i>	<i>šīt</i>
M.PL	<i>šīyyāt</i>	<i>šīyyīn</i>
F.PL		<i>šīyyāt</i>

Al-Hawamdeh, p.c.) suggests that all four adverbs are found in both areas. In Ḥōran *mbāriḥ* and *bukra* mean respectively ‘yesterday’ and ‘tomorrow’, whereas *ams* and *ḡadd* are reported to mean respectively ‘lately’ and ‘in the future’. It is striking to see that this had gone unnoticed by Cantineau (1946). As far as Salt is concerned, while *ams* and *mbāriḥ* as well *ḡadd* and *bukra* can be synonyms, *ams* and *ḡadd* can also mean respectively ‘lately’ and ‘in the future’. This is indeed what is suggested by the recorded tokens. The adverb *ḡadd* occurred only twice in speech of the same informant that exhibited *ḡiyy* (6), and *ams* only once in the speech of a male peasant, aged 77 in 2006 (Example 7). In (6), the meaning is undoubtedly ‘in the future’, and in (7), *ams* can only be interpreted as ‘lately’, further confirmed by the phrase *gabəl šahər* ‘a month ago’. Here again, although there is no direct discrepancy between elicitation and data from spontaneous speech, the latter only confirms part of the former.

(6) *walla* ‘ayyat *titwaḡḡaf*, *ḡadd* *biṭma* ‘ *biyye*  
 by.God she.refused she.gets.employed, in.the.future he.greeds in.me  
 ‘She refused to take the job, (pretexting) ‘(my husband) will be greedy on me in the future’ (because of the money I earn)’

(7) *awwal* *ams* *gabəl šahər* *ruḥt* *xayyaṭt il-lbās* *hāḡ* ‘ *a tukkānit-ku*  
 first lately before month I.went I.sewed DEF-garment DEM to shop-2PL.M  
 ‘Some time ago, a month ago, I went and had this garment sewed at your shop’

### The particle *čin*

The particle *čin* is nowadays rare, but not as rare as the morphemes discussed above and it occurred in both older and more recent recordings, albeit only in the speech of the most conservative speakers. The presence of /č/ suggests an etymological /k/: *čin* < *kin*. Two etymologies are usually put forward: the verb *kān* ‘he was’ or the conjunction *ka’inn-* ‘as if’. It is not uncommon in Arabic dialects for the verb *kān* to grammaticalise into a conditional marker ‘if’. In certain dialects, conditional *kān* reduces to *kin* as in West-Sudanic Baggāra (Manfredi 2010). In Salt, the conditional is realised *čan*. The local reflex of the conjunction *ka’inn* is either *ka’inn-* or reduced *kann-*. Although this cannot be ruled out, I have never heard a raised reflex *kin* of *ka’inn* in Jordan.<sup>5</sup> It appears therefore quite unlikely that Salti *čin* harks back to either *kān* or *ka’inn*, as these have different reflexes in the local dialect. Most probably, *čin* was borrowed from a neighbouring variety. Amongst the varieties with which Salti has been in contact, one finds central Jordanian Bedouin dialects of the *ygūlu* type, such as the ‘Adwān. There is ample evidence from local history that this tribe has been in close contact with Salt throughout history, and so, much of the Bedouin stock found in Salti must come from this dialect. The problem is that the dialect of the ‘Adwān has never been described and the only *ygūlu* dialect that enjoys near full-length description is that of the ‘Aḡārma (Palva 1976). With the help of Noura Al-Wer I was able to record in 2012 a prominent member of the ‘Adwān clan in the Jordan Valley. The interviewee turned out to be unable to speak in his own variety to strangers, so the dialect recorded was highly koineised, but at some point, a *čin* slipped out. The speaker was putting so much effort in controlling his speech that he himself noticed it and almost apologised. This is the only piece of evidence I have for the presence of *čin* in the dialect of the ‘Adwān. Since Salti *čin* is in all likelihood a borrowing from ‘Adwāni, it is useless to look for an etymology within Salti. In consequence, I can only rely on its

distribution in Salti in order to work out its semantics because there is no textual evidence in the original dialect.

- (8) *yīgi* [NAME] *bičbi* *čin* *gaḥaf* *min* *ha-š-šhēbiyyāt* *u* *šarad*  
 he.comes NAME he.leans PRT he.swallowed from DEM-DEF-sweets and he.fled  
 ‘[NAME] turned up, leaned forward, swallowed at once some of the sweets and ran away’
- (9) *ummi* *tiṭ’am-na* *čin* *gālat* *yaḷla* *xuḍin* *il-bahāyim*  
 my.mother she.feeds-1PL PRT she.said INT take.F.PL DEF-animals  
 ‘My mother would feed us (in the house) and then she would suddenly say, take the animals (and go graze them)’

From examples (8) and (9), *čin* (glossed here PRT, i.e., particle) appears to modify the aspectual value of the process and to give it a punctual and telic flavour (hence the translation ‘at once, suddenly’). Most of the tokens recorded are followed by a perfective, which reinforces a punctual and telic reading. When asked about the meaning of *čin* in isolation, speakers usually interpret it as the contraction of *ka’inn* ‘as if’, without the semantic shift. Here again, we notice a discrepancy between elicited semantics and what can be inferred from spontaneous speech. It is very likely that in the dialect of the ‘Adwān, *čin* derived from either the auxiliary *kān* of the conjunction *ka’inn*. Since data from this dialect are lacking, the best way to provide a likely etymology is to consider two grammaticalisation paths and evaluate which one is more likely to occur:

- (a) Past auxiliary *kān* ‘he was’ to telic/punctual preverbal modifier *čin*  
 (b) Conjunction *ka’inn* ‘as if’ to telic/punctual preverbal modifier *čin*

Although this deserves a research project in its own right and no definite answer can be provided at this point, it seems to me that option (a) is more parsimonious than (b). In other words, the leap to a preverbal particle denoting telicity seems shorter from a past auxiliary than from a conjunction meaning ‘as if’.

## Conclusion

As noted above, traditional dialects can be defined in linguistic terms using the two-dimensional matrix of diachrony/synchrony. Diachronically, it was shown that the dialect of Salt exhibits a number of features that can be safely labelled archaic because they are attested in previous stages of the language and absent in other, more innovative varieties. Synchronically, the traditional nature of the dialect materialises in the presence of a large number of highly localised features, absent from the target variety (in the cases discussed above the target dialect is Ammani). Many of these features are actually innovations, such as the affricate /č/ or the disjoint negation *a- . . . -š*. This means that the linguistic particularism of traditional dialects should not be looked at exclusively from a conservative/innovative dichotomy: traditional does not necessarily mean conservative, nor does mainstream necessarily mean innovative, although these notions may at times overlap. It was also shown that many of these features were vestigial variants. The identification of these vestigial variants is crucial for our understanding of the evolution of the dialect. This can only be achieved by collecting large corpora of spontaneous speech from the most conservative or broadest

speakers in the community, e.g. speakers that still normally produce the traditional variety of the dialect. One question that may arise is: how do we know whether a speaker is conservative or not? Or, to put it differently, how can we assess the conservatism/broadness of a speaker? Relying on vestigial variants is highly problematic because they may never even surface in the corpus. This can be achieved by looking at the intra-speaker distribution of the reflexes of high-frequency items. These are mostly phonological variants, but can also be morphological and syntactical variants. Sociolinguistic studies in Arabic usually focus on phonological variants, but a more complete picture would arise if all the other levels of analysis were also subject to investigation. One example in the dialect considered here is the existential maker, realised *bī* in the traditional dialect. Increasingly, *bī* is being replaced by *fī*, more common regionally and characteristic of the dialect of Amman. Merely calculating the ratio of *bī* against *fī* would actually suffice to safely put any speaker along the scale of broadness. This can also be used to assess any corpus qualitatively. The quality of a corpus for the study of a traditional dialect is paramount, often because most of these dialects are changing in the direction of the varieties of larger diffusion and many local features fall into oblivion. The problem of data collection is particularly acute for outsider researchers in contact situations. Because speakers of traditional dialects in contact situations tend to limit their use of the traditional variety when interacting with individuals whom they judge familiar, recording the proper dialect may often be impossible for an outsider. The only way to overcome this problem is to ensure the presence and active participation of a member of the local community. The first rounds of fieldwork that I carried out in Salt were not successful, mostly because I conducted the interviews myself. This became obvious to me when one of my informants would always speak to me in a highly koineised variety, and switch to the traditional dialect when addressing his wife. I started recording the traditional dialect when I managed to be accompanied by a well-informed local. I decided to withdraw and remain discreet and let them conduct the interviews. The gap happened to be so huge between the two kinds of speech recorded that I now avoid conducting interviews myself as much as possible when I investigate a dialect in contact situations. Once the corpus is collected, the identification of all these vestigial variants can only be made by carefully transcribing the whole corpus. Due to the very low rate of usage of such variants (vestigial), the corpus itself may not be enough to fully describe their morphosyntax and semantics. The usual way to overcome this problem in descriptive linguistics is to resort to elicitation to fill the gaps. It was shown in the discussion above that there may be discrepancies between elicitation data and corpus data. This is, of course, due to the fact that since these features are not part of the active repertoire of most speakers, the elicited paradigms and semantics are partly based on reconstruction and speaker's intuition, which may well turn out to be inaccurate. Description should therefore be primarily corpus-based and have priority over elicitation. Consequently, the quality of the corpus, in terms of both broadness and size, is paramount. This being said, one central question remains: why should we care about documenting traditional dialects? Putting aside a nihilistic stand, documenting traditional varieties are important because much like endangered languages, they reflect a portion of human knowledge and experience that is worth preserving, both for the communities themselves and for linguistics. It was shown above that traditional dialects often exhibit many intricacies whose analysis reveals complex patterns that add to our knowledge of language. Another reason is that we can only achieve a proper understanding of present-day language practices once we have at our disposal accurate descriptions of earlier stages of the language. In cases where written records are lacking, the only option left is to document the speech of those who are still able to speak traditional dialects.

## Notes

- 1 Notwithstanding a couple of eccentric experiments in which parents would address their children in Standard Arabic.
- 2 There is no agreement amongst historians of modern Jordan as to the motivation behind the choice of Amman rather than Salt (see Al-Wer 2007a: 74, endnote 1 for a brief discussion of this choice).
- 3 See also Hornsby (2006) for a reconsideration of dedialectalisation in Picard in northern France as process of level-by-level attrition.
- 4 In the case of New Zealand English, for instance, Trudgill was fortunate to discover radio recordings from individuals who were born in the second half of the 19th century and represent “the first generation of New Zealand-born Anglophones” (Trudgill 1999: 319). Access to the speech of the first generation in cases of new dialect formation is important, as research has shown (see Trudgill 2004: 163 for a synthesis of similar case studies involving varieties of English in the New World).
- 5 The closest example that comes to mind is in coastal Palestinian *kinn-ak miš min ha-d-dyār* ‘it looks like you are not from here’.

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