Defining Ḥimyaritic

The linguistic landscape of southwest Arabia in the early Islamic period according to the testimony of the 9th century scholar al-Hamdani

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Introduction

Between the 5th and 9th centuries CE, the social, political, and linguistic situation in Southwestern Arabia changed dramatically: the old South Arabian kingdoms were destroyed in a series of attacks from Ethiopia, after which the region turned into a contested area between the Byzantine and Persian empires. The Islamic tradition tells us that Muhammad sent an envoy to the local governor, who promptly converted to Islam, with the local population following suit. [1] However, As G. Rex-Smith pointed out, the historical veracity of this retelling is doubtful at best, which leaves us with a huge gap in the history of late pre-Islamic and early Islamic Southwest Arabia of at least two hundred years. [2]

The first local history to appear after the annexation of Yemen was written in the 9th/10th century CE by the scholar Muḥammad al-Hamdānī, [3] born in Ṣan'ā' and wrote (among others) a book entitled *Ṣifat ǧazīrat al-'arab,* "the Description of the Peninsula of the Arabs", in which he describes in great detail the different geographical and topological characteristics of the Arabian Peninsula. Although this work is interesting to scholars of all different backgrounds and specialisations, for this thesis I will focus on a chapter entitled *luġāt ahli hāḏihī l-ǧazīra,* in which he describes the linguistic landscape of southwest Arabia at the beginning of the 10th century CE. The significance of this chapter is that it is the very first linguistic testimony following the end of the epigraphic record in the area.

In my thesis I will first outline the linguistic history of pre-Islamic Southwest Arabia, in which I will discuss the different languages used in this corner of the Peninsula, and our sources for studying them. In particular, I will try to describe in detail what the linguistic situation of Yemen was immediately before the Islamic conquests. Following this, I will translate Hamdani's chapter *insert name,* and attempt to elucidate the meaning of some of his technical vocabulary, which has been the subject of debate among specialists to this day. Once this is settled, I will

[1] C.E. Bosworth, "Badhām; Badhān", in Vol 2. *The Encyclopædia of Islam, New Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1960),

[2] G. Rex-Smith notes that "one of the greatest frustrations […] is the plain fact there is so little information available concerning what can be called the "pre-dynasty" history of the country [Yemen]."
G.R. Smith,. et al."al-Yaman" in Vol 9. of *The Encyclopædia of Islam, New Edition*. (Leiden: Brill, 1960). 271-272.

[3] Henceforth *Hamdani*.

compare his testimony to both pre-Islamic linguistic evidence and the modern dialectal landscape, to highlight points of continuity and discontinuity.

The linguistic landscape of Southwest Arabia in the pre-Islamic period.

Our knowledge of the linguistic landscape of this area in the pre-Islamic period is based almost exclusively on epigraphic material of a group of closely related language commonly called Ancient South Arabian. [4] The epigraphic material consists of a rather large amount of both formal and informal inscriptions, either carved into rock or incised on dried palm-leaf sticks. [5] Although trying to find a system of absolute dating for these inscriptions has proven to be difficult, the first inscriptions of this nature can confidently be dated to the 11th century BCE, [6] some 1500 years before the arrival of Arabic speakers in the area.

The earliest attestations of ASA are found only in Sabaic, but from the 8th century onwards, we find different varieties appear over the area right up unto the 2nd century BCE, at which point the unification of southwest Arabia led to the extinction of all ASA languages, with the exception of Saba'ic. Classifying these languages has been proven problematic, mostly because they express a degree of linguistic variation that makes it hard to simply categorise them as all being part of the same dialect continuum, and might very well be considered individual languages. [7]

[4] Henceforth ASA.

[5] P. Stein, "Ancient South Arabian", in *The Semitic Languages – An International Handbook*, ed. Stefan Weninger, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2011), 1044-1046.

[6] Drewes, A.J, et al, "Some absolute dates for the development of the South Arabian script", in *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, 24, (2013), 205-206.

[7] In the end, the discussion is one concerned mostly with semantics and personal opinions: therefor I choose to simply call them different variations of Ancient South Arabian, thus avoiding this discussion altogether.

Table 1. 3rd person singular enclitic personal pronouns, "his; hers" *in ASA* [8]

	Sabaic	Qatabanic	Mina'ic	Ḥaḍramitic
msc.	*-hw*	*-s^1(w)* [9]	*-s^1, -s^1ww*	*-s^1, -s^1ww*
fmn.	*-h*	*-s^1*	*- s^1, -s^1yw*	*-s^3/-$\underline{t}$, -s^3yw/-$\underline{t}$yw*

*Table 2. Causative verbal stem (*h-; s-)*formations in ASA* [10]

	Sabaic	Non-Sabaic
SC	*ḥfʿl*	*sfʿl*
PC	*y-ḥfʿal*	*y-sfʿl*

As seen above, we find that the different ASA languages express phonological differences, in which Sabaic *h* corresponds with non-Sabaic *s^1*. This correspondence itself is not strange (as it occurs frequently) [11], but it is somewhat interesting that it occurred in a group of languages very closely related to each other, and it raises the question whether or not these languages were mutually intelligible or not. Additionally, in order to better understand to what degree these languages share similar features, we can look at a rare bilingual Sabaic-Qatabanic inscription, dated to the first century BCE.

Table 3: YMN 1 & 2 [12]

Qatabanian	Late Sabaic
1. *$\underline{D}$rḥn bn (ʾb)[$\underline{d}$ḫr] bn*	*$\underline{D}$rḥn bn ʾb$\underline{d}$ḫr bn $\underline{H}$bz=*
2. *$\underline{H}$bzn w-$\underline{D}$rft qny w-brʾ*	*n w-$\underline{D}$rft ẓrb w-rs^3ʿ w-br=*
3. *w-s^1qḥ mqbr-s^1 Ṣnʿn w-kl ms^3*	*ʾ w-hqḥ mqbr-hw Ṣnʿn w-kl*

[8] P. Stein, "Ancient South Arabian", in *The Semitic Languages*, 1055.

[9] Although it is well-known to which sounds the phonemes s^1, s^2 and s^3 correspond in other Semitic languages, it is not known how they were pronounced, which is why this orthography is used.

[10] Stein, "ASA", 1059.

[11] E.g., Greek *homo* and Russian *samo*, "same; self".

[12] Text taken over from C. Robin, "Les langues de la péninsule arabique", in *Revue du monde musulman et de la méditerrannée* 61 (1991): 99.

4. *wd-s[1] w-gn'-s[1] w kl 's[2]q-s[1]* *ms[3]wd-hw w-mwrty-hw w-gyr-*

5. *l-qtbr b-s[1] 'ḥrr w-ḥrtw by=* *hw w-mbr't-hw l-qtbrm*

6. *[t]-s[1] Ġyln* *b-hw kl 'ḥrr w-ḥrtw b=*

7. *yt-hw Ġyln*

Translation

1. Drḥn son of 'Abdḫr son of
2. Ḫbzn and Drft acquired, constructed, built and
3. was laid in his tomb *Ṣn'n*, [13] and all of its
4. rooms, its two passage ways and its limestone walls
5. and its entire construction for burying
6. in it all the free men and women of his
7. house Ġyln

Apart from Additionally, it is evident that the Sabaic inscription is longer and uses additional constructions, such as in the phrase *w-rs[3]' w br'*, "he built and constructed", which might be explained as some kind of idiomatic expression or simply the usage of a verb with a specialised meaning that had no direct equivalent in Qatabanic.

Table 4. Examples of lexical variations between Qatabanic and Sabaic found in YMN 1 & 2

Qatabanic	Sabaic	English translation
qny	*ẓrb*	"to acquire"
gn'	*mwrt*	"access way"
's[2]q	*gyr*	"lime-plaster"

Apart from these minor lexical variations, the fact that this author chose to use both Qatabanic and Saba'ic demonstrates that he considered these languages to be different enough to merit their being written side-by-side as a part of the same expression. At the very least, this implies that a speaker of Saba'ic considered Qatabanic to be a different language altogether, and vice versa.

[13] Meaning "the constructed" (compare Arabic *Ṣan'ā'*)

By the beginning of the Common Era, all the ASA languages – with the exception of Sabaic – had disappeared in written form. The reasons for this disappearance find their roots in a long political process starting from the fifth century BCE onwards, when the king of Saba suffered a catastrophic defeat against the Qatabanians and Minaeans, which directly led to the end of the Sabaic kingdom as the main political power in southwest Arabia. A few centuries later, around 200 BCE, an a group of tribes around the area of Ẓafār (Southwest Yemen) formed a political alliance and became known as the Ḥimyarite confederacy, [14] who in the centuries following able to annex all of the other South Arabian kingdoms and unify the area [15]

The Ḥimyaritic period is particularly interesting for several reasons: firstly, from this period some two hundred different inscriptions have been found that employ a language which Qatabanic, but rather reflect a variant of Sabaic. [16] This is peculiar as the Ḥimyarite heartland had not been under Sabaic but under Qatabanian control, so one might expect that the Ḥimyarites would sooner use a form of Qatabanic. However, their choice to employ Sabaic might have been a politically motivated, reflecting the notion that the Ḥimyarites considered themselves to be the successors of the Sabaean kingdom.

Additionally, the term 'Ḥimyar' was not employed by the rulers of these kingdoms themselves: although the word *ḥmyr*(*m*) is found in epigraphic material, it is almost exclusively used to denote a tribe (rather than a state), for example in this inscription:

CIH 350 [17]

1. [… …]r (s²)ʿbn Ḥs²dm b-hgrn [..]ḍ b-(s²)[ʿ]—

2. [bn] (Ḥ)myrm w-tqdm mʾtn ʾs¹dm w-hġrw ʿ—

[14] N. Nebes, "The Martyrs of Najran and the End of Himyar: on the Political History of South Arabia in the Early Sixth Century" in *The Qur'ân in Context,* ed. Angelika Neuwirth et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 32-35.

[15] C. Robin, "Quelques épisodes marquants de l'histoire subarabique", in *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 61, (1991).

[16] P. Stein, "The 'Ḥimyaritic' Language in preislamic Yemen – A Critical Re-evaluation" in *Semitica et Classica*, 1-1 (2008), 203.; P. Stein, "Ancient South Arabian", 1046.

[17] A. Beeston, *Sabaean Inscriptions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937) , 41-43.

Translation [18]

1. [… …] the tribe of Hšdm on the land of [..]ḍ of
2. the tribe of the Ḥimyarites; and he led two hundred men and raided […]

The Ḥimyarite rulers themselves chose to employ the term *mlk s[1]b w ḏ-rydn*, "King of Saba and Dū Raydān", directly reflecting an earlier Sabaic formula, which was later expanded to include the regions of Ḥaḍramawt and Yamnat (*mlk s[1]b w ḏ-rydn w-ḥḍrmwt w ymnt*). [19] The Ḥimyarites reigned supreme right up until the year 530 CE, at which point South Arabia was invaded by the kingdom of Ethiopia, which was then annexed, after which the local writing culture ceased to exist. [20]

After the Ethiopian invasion, it is not exactly clear what happened in southwest Arabia. It is clear however, that the five centuries of Ḥimyarite rule in the area had a lasting impact on the medieval Arab perception of this region: for example, in his *Ta'rīḫ*, Ṭabari mentions an inscription left by the mythical king called Yusār Yuʿfir al-'Anʿam. [21]

Arabic	Translation
hāḏa l-ṣanamu li-yusār 'anʿam al-ḥimyarī	This is the statue by Yusār 'Anʿam, the Ḥimyarite
wa laysa warā'a-hu maḏhab;	Behind it there is no passage

[18] Translation provided by the Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions (CSAI), hosted by the University of Pisa.

[19] CIH 540, courtesy DASI.

[20] The reasons for the Ethiopian invasion on the surface seem to have been religious: in 519 South Arabia was invaded by the Ethiopians for the first time, after which it seems that the local Ḥimyarites were left in power as some kind of puppet state. This invasion resulted in a shift from a traditional pro-Persian stance to a more pro-Byzantine inclination, leading to a backlash among several South Arabian tribes, who subsequently rallied around king Yusuf Dū Nuwās and which finally resulted in the massacre of the Christian population of the town of Naǧrān (see map 1). Obviously, the slaughter of their co-religionists did not sit well with the Christian Byzantine emperor and his Ethiopian allies, which led to a second Ethiopian invasion and the subsequent assumption of direct control in South Arabia.

N. Nebes, "Martyrs", 46-52.

[21] M. al-Ṭabarī, Vol. 5 of *Tarīḫ al-rusul wa l-mulūk*, ed. M. De Goeje, (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 291-292.

fa-lā yatakallafanna d̲ālika aḥadun.	No one will ignore it
fa-yu'ṭib	lest he perish horribly.

The fact that the Tabari quotes this inscription in a rhymed Arabic indicates that we are not dealing with an actual Ancient South Arabian inscription, but several of his observations are rather interesting and astute. For example, he explicitly mentions that Yusār had a statue made out of bronze (*'amara bi-ṣanamin nuḥāsin*), which would correspond with what the material commonly used in the construction of statues and statuettes. [22] Additionally, Tabari provides us with the formula of the demonstrative plus noun, followed by *li-* plus personal name, which occurs very frequently in inscriptions throughout the peninsula. In retrospect we can say that while the medieval Arabs probably were not aware of the meaning of these inscriptions, there was at least some kind of awareness of their exotic origins; but as Chaim Rabin has pointed out, at the same time, everything from South Arabia was simply called Ḥimyaritic. [23]

Additionally, some early Islamic material – both by Hamdani as well as other early scholars – provide us with snippets of what the early Arabs considered to be Ḥimyaritic. [24] One of these is a small fragment which survived in some early Muslim traditions, which goes as following: [25]

Table 6.

"Ḥimyaritic"	Arabic equivalent	English translation
ra'ayku bi n-ḥulm	*ra'aytu bi l-ḥulmi*	I saw in a dream
ka waladku ibnan	*'an waladtu ibnan*	that I gave birth to a son
min ṭīb	*min d̲ahabin*	of gold

[22] "In mSab Zeit wird die Personenmidwung durch die Weihung von Statuetten (*ṣlm*) aus Bronze (*d̲hb*) abgelöst" P. Stein, *Lehrbuch der sabäischen Sprache, 1. Teil: Grammatik* (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz Verlag, 2013), 21.

[23] C. Rabin, *Ancient West Arabian* (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1951), 42.

[24] Including one "funny" anecdote about the difference between the Arabic and "Ḥimyaritic" menaings of the verb *wat̲aba*, "to jump" and "to sit", which as been repeated so often I cannot bring myself to mention it here. C. Robin, *Langues*, 108.

[25] A. Rubin, *Ancient West Arabian*, 48.

Of course, the differences between the "Ḥimyaritic" and the Classical Arabic are rather minimal: its variations express themself in the suffix conjugation of the verb, the form of the definite article, and the word for gold. Interestingly, both the suffix conjugation with *-k* and *k* as a particle appear in (Late) Saba'ic – but the latter not as the conjuction "that", but as an adverb "when". [26] The presence of a definite article *n* will be discussed in more detail later.

In general, we can conclude that the linguistic landscape of southwest Arabia in the pre-Islamic period was defined by a large variety of different languages which all served both public (i.e. political, religious and administrative) roles but also had functions in private life, and appear to have had a lasting influence on the medieval Arab perception of this area, even though their knowledge of these languages seems to have been superficial at best.

[26] P. Stein, "ASA", 1060; CIH 540

Hamdani's text [27]

Muḥammad al-Hamdānī was born in Ṣanʿā' around the year 890, and although fairly little is known of his youth, [28] he received his foremost education in Mecca, after which he traveled through the Middle-East for several years. [29] As for his family, Hamdani himself notes in the tenth volume of al-'Iklīl that he descended from one of the oldest Arabic Bedouin tribes (the *Banū Hamdān*), an assertion doubted by *al-Iklīl's* editor, who notes that some of Hamdani's ancestors' names were not traditionally used by Bedouin tribes (*wa yarā l-bāḥiṯu bayna 'ismā'i 'ābā'i l-hamdānī ismāʿa lam yuʿatadi l-badū istiʿāmila-hā miṯla yūsufa wa yaʿqūba*). [30] Regardless, it is obvious that Hamdani at least self-identified as a "proper" Arab, which is important to remember when examining his testimony.

After a prolonged stay in Iraq, Hamdani returned to the Arabian Peninsula and settled in Ṣaʿda; Yemen itself at the time was a contested area, split between two contesting dynasties as well as a plethora of local, *de facto* independent tribal leaders. [31]

The *luġāt* of the people of this peninsula

1. The people of aš-Šiḥr and al-As'ā'[32] are not completely intelligible, the Mahra are completely unintelligible, and they [i.e. their language] resembles that of barbarians.
2. The Ḥaḍramawt are not completely intelligible, although perhaps there are some amongst them who do, the most intelligible are the Kinda, the Hamdān and several amongst the Ṣudaf.

[27] The edition used for this thesis is the book edited by Muhammad Ismaʿil al-Akwaʿ and printed in Yemen in 1974. Later editions are also available, but these often contain misprints. For a full transcription refer to appendix I.

[28] *wa lā naʿrifu šayʾan ʿan awwali ḥayāti-hi*

M. al-Ḥawālī, ed. *Ṣifat ǧazīrati l-ʿarab*, (Riyāḍ: Manšūrāṭ dāri l-yamama li l-baʿṯi wa l-tarǧamati wa l-našri, 1974), 8; O. Löfgren, "al-Hamdānī", in Vol 3. of *The Encyclopædia of Islam, New Edition* (Brill: Leiden, 1960), 15.

[29] M. al-Ḥawālī, ed. Vol. 1 of *al-Iklīl*, (Beirut: Dār al-ʿUda, 1975), 1.

[30] Ḥawālī, *Ṣifat,* 7.

[31] G. Rex Smith, "Early and Medieval History of Ṣanʿā', ca. 622-953" in *Ṣanʿā' – An Arabian-Islamic City* (London: Scorpion Publications, 1983), 49-50; Ḥawālī, *Ṣifat,* 15.

[32] This city is nowadays called al-Mukallā, and is located in the east of Yemen, some five-hundred kilometers east of Aden. *Ṣifat jazīrat al-ʿarab,* 82.

3. The camps of Maḏḥiğ, Ma'rib, Bayḥān and Ḥarīb are intelligible, as there is little corruption in their speech. [33]

4. The camps of Ḥimyar and Ǧa'da are not comprehensible, and in their speech is some element of Himyaritic. There is a drawl in their speech and they elide vowels, and say *yā bin ma-'amm*, "oh son of my uncle" instead of *yā bin al-'amm*, and *sima'*, "listen!" for *'isma'*.

5. In Laḥğ, Abyān, Daṯina and al-'Āliya they speak more clearly, and the nobility from Kinda and the Awadiyun are the most eloquent amongst them.

6. ʿAdan's dialect is a corrupted hybrid, and those who speak it are idiots, except those who received education.[34]

7. There is no fault in the language of the Banū Maǧīd, the Banū Waqīd and the Aš'ar.

8. The commoners of Ma'āfir are unintelligible, but its nobility is more examplar.

9. Likewise, the Sakasīk in the middle of the highlands of Kilā', are under pressure by the Ḥimyaritic language [35], there's something confounding in their speech.

10. The vernacular of Suḫlān, Jayšān, Warākh, Ḥadir, al-Ṣuhayb and Badr is close to that of the fields of Ḥimyar. Amongst the Ǧublān, Yaḥṣib and Ruʿayn are the most intelligible, and in the speech of Ǧublān there is an element of complexity. From Ḥaql Qitāb up to Ḏimār [36], the Ḥimyaritic is genuinely incomprehensible. The nobility of Maḏhiğ are like Radmān and Qaran,

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[33] The term *sarwu,* translated here with "" appears frequently throughout the text, particularly in reference to Yemeni/Himyarite tribes. The root *s[1]rw* appears in late Saba'ic, but appears to mean something like "pasture" . Additionally, Kazimirski notes four possible interpretations: "a slight elevation of the land"; "a [military] field (of the Himyarites)"; "glory"; and "chief, prince"; due to lack of clarity, I have chosen to go with "fields".

[34] The Arabic phrase is *wa fī ba'ḍi-him nawkun wa hamāqatun illa man ta'adaba*. The term *nawk* is translated in Ibrahim al-Selwi's *Jemenitische Wörter in den Werken von al-Hamdānī und Našwān und ihre Parallelen in den semitische Sprachen* as "übermäßige Dehnung der Worte und Vokale" but gives no good explanation why this would be a good translation. It does not appear in Lané's dictionary, Kazimirski gives the translation "stupide", and the *lisān al-'arab* notes that its synonym is in fact *ḥamāqa*.

I. al-Selwi, *Jemenitische Wörter in den Werken von al-Hamdānī und Našwān und ihre Parallelen in den semitische Sprachen* (Berlin: Verlag von Dietrich Remer, 1978), 5.

M. Ibn Manẓūr, Vol. 9 of *Lisān al-'arab* (Cairo: Bulāq, 1890), 116-119.

A. De Biberstein-Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire arabe-français contenant toutes les racines de la langue arabe*, (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1869), 1370.

[35] Here Hamdani employs the term *lisān,* see below.

[36] Whereas the town is usually known as Ḏimār, Hamdani uses the orthography Damār.

and its highland is like Radāʿ. Isbīl, Kawmān, al-Ḥadā, Qā'ifa and Diqrār are intelligible, as are the Ḫawlān. The speech of Saḥammar, Qurd, al-Hibla, Mulḥ, Laḫğ,[37] Ḥamḍ, Watīh, Samh, Ans and Sat' is mediocre, and inclines towards incorrectness, while that of Harāz, al-Uḫrūğ, Šammu, Maḏīḫ, al-Aḥbūb, and the nobility of Aqyān, al-Ṭarf, and al-Ma'alal is between intelligible and unintelligible speech, and in it are influences from incomprehensible Ḥimyaritic, in particular with the settled people from those tribes.

11.In the land of the Aš'ar, the ʿAkk and Ḥakam bin Saʿd in the middle of the Tihāma and its lowlands, their language contains nothing bad, except in those who live in the villages. Hamdān's upper classes is a mixture of intelligible people – such as the ʿUḏar, the Hanwam, and the Ḥağūr – and untelligible people, like some amongst the Qudam and the al-Ḥağar. The Bawn of Hamdān, consisting of the Mushriq and the Ḫašab speak an Arabic which is mixed with Ḥimyaritic. The highland Ǧāhir Hamdān are understandable, and below them the Ḫaywān, who are understandable too. There are is much Ḥimyaritic [spoken] up to Ṣaʿda. The land of Sufyān b. Arḥab is understandable, except when they say (for example): *'m-rağul* and *qayyad baʿirāk* and *ra'aytu akhawāk,* and they share this replacement of the lām with the mīm (in *al-rajul* and *al-baʿīr*, and whatever resembles that) with the tribes of ʿAš'ar and ʿAkk, and some amongst the people of the Tihāma.

12. The ʿUḏar Maṭīra, Nahm, Murḥiyya and Ḏaybān, and those who inhabit the Raḥba from amongst the al-Ḥārith tribe speak clearly, and the highland Ǧawf and the Aṯāfat and Ḫurfān the land of Sufyān b. Arḥab, The inhabitants of Ǧawf are understandable too, except their neighbours who mingled with people from Tihāma. The tribes of the northern Nahm and Nu'mān Murhaba, Ẓāhir Banī ʿIlyān, Ẓāhir Sufyān and Šakir are intelligible.

13. The people of Wadīʿa and Banū Ḥarb have *imāla* in all of their speech, although the Banū Sa'd are rather comprehensible. From Ḏimār up to Ṣanʿā' the speech is mixed, that being the

[37] Probably a different Laḥağ from the one mentioned before. It also appears to refer to a tribe here, possibly corresponding with the tribe of Laḥağ b. Wā'il.
ʿU.R. Kaḥḥāla, Vol 3. of *Mu'jamu qabā'ili al-'arab al-qadīma wa l-ḥadīṯa* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿilm wa l-lāmiyyāt, 1968), 78.

land of the Dū Ǧurra. Traces of genuine Arabic remain in the speech of the people of Ṣan'ā' as well as fragments of Ḥimyaritic speech. Ṣan'ā' is multilingual and there the dialects, vernaculars and pure language mingle, and in every quarter there is a different language, and whoever draws near to Ša'ūb, will find it contradicts the rest. The spoken language of the Šibām of Aqyān [38], Muṣāni' and Takḫlā is completely Ḥimyaritic. The tribe of Ḫawlān Ṣa'da and its surrounding highlands are understandable, but the people of its valleys speak a corruption. The educated from al-'Arḍ in Wadī', and the Ǧanb, and Yām, Zabīd, Banū al-Ḥārīth, 'Āmir, and additionally Šakir from Naǧrān up to the land of Yām, and Sanḥān, Nahd, and the Banū Usāma, 'Anz, Khatḥam, Hilāl, 'Āmir b. Rabīa, including the people of the highlands of Ḥaǧar, Daws, Ǧāmid, Šakar, Fahm, Taqīf and the Banū 'Alī are all understandable, except the hillbillies of those tribes between Sarāt Khawlān and al-Ṭā'if, who live below the highlands.

14. And as for the plains, they are intelligible there, except who inhabit the villages; and it is the same in the Ḥiǧāz and the lower Naǧd up to Syria and Diyār Muḍar and Diyār al-Rabīʿ who are all intelligible, except the villagers. These are the *luġāt* of the Peninsula without going into details.

Hamdani's technical vocabulary

Table 4; *linguistic terminology in luġāt ahl hādi-hi l-ǧazīra*

Arabic term	Frequency	English translation/approximation
faṣīḥ/fuṣahā'	19	intelligibility
luġa	10	vernacular
kalām	4	speech
(al-)himyarī(ya)	5	"Ḥimyaritic"
ġutm	3	(foreign)incomprehensible speech
(al-)'arabī(ya)	2	"Arabic"

Before discussing the actual linguistic content that Hamdani provides us with, I would like to look more closely at some of the terminology that he employs and what this means for him. The problems start at the very first line, when he introduces the name of the chapter:

[38] Meaning the tribe of Šibām in Aqyān, instead of the Šibām in Ḥaḍramawt.

In modern Arabic usage, the term *luġa* is used to mean "language", in the sense of a foreign language (eg., *al-luġa al-'arabiyya; al-luġa al-faransiyya*, etc.), and it is certainly possible to translate the title of this chapter as "the languages of the people of this peninsula". [39] However, looking at the employ and context of this term throughout the entirety of the text, we find that Hamdani uses it whenever he qualifies the way people speak, either to indicate there is "nothing bad with their *luġa*" (*lā ba'sa fī / bi luġati-him*) or that something is wrong with it (*luġatu-hum muwalladatun radiyyatun*). When we compare this to the way the term was used by the early Arabic grammarians, we find that the original meaning of *luġa* seems to have been more closely associated with "manner of speech". [40] Bearing this in mind, a translation of *luġa* with a term like "speech variation" or "vernacular" might be closer to the situation which Hamdani was describing.

By glancing at the frequency with which Hamdani employs his linguistic terminology (see table 4), it becomes obvious that the term *faṣīḥ* (pl. *fuṣahā'*) is used the most, implying that Hamdani is attempting to classify the way people speak Arabic on a gradient scale of comprehensibility, but it is "not quite clear what criteria based his good and bad marks". [41] Additionally, we find that the term most commonly used in the sense of a foreign language, "*lisān*" occurs only once (*wa l-sakāsiku wasaṭu l-bilādi l-kilā'a maṯīl ma'a 'asratin mina l-lisāni l-ḥimyarī*), but it is unclear whether or not Hamdani actually means something else here or is just employing the term in order to avoid repetition of *luġa*.

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[39] For example, Christian Robin simply translates the name of the chapter as *Langues des inhabitants de cette péninsule*; whereas Chaim Rabin opts for the term "dialects".
C. Robin, "Langues", 104; C. Rabin, *Ancient West Arabian*, 43.

[40] For example, the grammarian Sibuwayh uses *luġa* whenever he is confronted with a lexeme he personally disliked, but "could not avoid mentioning" due to their presence in the Arabic corpus available to him. Additionally, the definition of luġa given in the 10th century by the grammarian Ibn Ǧinnī is that of "the sounds with which every person express their intentions", which indicates not so much *language* as much as simply *speech*, whereas by the 15th century already, we find that the two terms were used more-or-less completely interchangeably.
Tamás Iványi, "Luġa" in Vol. 3 of *The Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 88.; Uṯmān b. Ǧinnī, *Kitāb al-ḫaṣa'iṣ fī 'ilmi uṣūli 'ārabiyyatin, al-juz'atu l-ūlā*, 77.; Cees Versteegh,. *Arabic Grammar and Qur'ānic Exegesis in Early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 99.

[41] C. Rabin, *Ancient West Arabian*, 44.

Hamdani is attempting to classify the way people speak Arabic on a gradient scale of comprehensibility, but it is "not quite clear what criteria based his good and bad marks". [42] Additionally, we find that the term most commonly used in the sense of a foreign language, "*lisān*" occurs only once (*wa l-sakāsiku wasaṭu l-bilādi l-kilā'a maṯīl ma'a 'asratin mina l-lisāni l-ḥimyarī*), but it is unclear whether or not Hamdani actually means something else here or is just employing the term in order to avoid repetition of *luġa*. Additionally, the relatively low frequency with which the languages Arabic and Himyaritic are actually named in the text implies that Hamdani is generally not talking about completely different languges throughout this chapter.

So what other terminology does Hamdani employ? Confusingly, at one point he does actually employ the more commonly classical word for "language" (*lisān*), noting that the Sakāsik tribe are pressurised by "the Ḥimyarite language" (*wa l-sakāsiku wasaṭi baladi l-kilā'a naǧdīyatun maṯīl ma'a 'asratin mina l-lisāni l-ḥimyarī*). However, it is still unclear if he uses this term to explicitly refer to a different language (as opposed to *luġa*) or that he simply uses it in order to avoid repetition of *luġa*.

The term *ġutm*, which can be translated here with the meaning of "completely incomprehensibility" appears three times: firstly, Hamdani employs it while speaking about the inhabitants of Mahra (*mahratun ġutmun yušākilūna l-'aǧama)*, a region on the current Yemen-Oman border, where a language only distantly related to Arabic is spoken even to this day. [43] The other situation s in which it appears is when Hamdani is describing the speech of the people of Ma'afira, noting that the commoners are completely incomprehensible, whereas the upper

[42] C. Rabin, *Ancient West Arabian*, 44.

[43] Mehri being one of the Modern South Arabian langauges, which were first described by westrn scholars in the 19th century: although these languages are Semitic too, they are not intelligible to any speaker of Arabic and mutual intelligibility between speakers of other MSA languages is limited at best.
M.C. Simeone-Senelle, "Modern South Arabian", in *The Handbook of Semitic Languages*, ed. Stefan Weninger, et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter GmbH, 2011), 1075-1109; 1113

classes speak better (*sāfilatu l-ma'āfirati ġutmun wa 'āliyatu-hā amṯalu.*). Finally, he notes the tribe Hamdān is a mixture of people who are "intelligible" and completely incomprehensible (*hamdānun man kāna fī sarāti-hā min ḥāšida ḫalīṭī min faṣīḥin* […] *wa ġutmin* […]). It is evident that the languages spoken by the Mehri are completely incomprehensible for a speaker of Arabic, which could imply that there was some spoken language in Ma'afira (which is far to the west of where Mehri is spoken) which was as incomprehensible to an Arab ear as the Modern South Arabian languages – although sadly Hamdani does not provide us with any lexical data about these so-called incomprehensible languages, which – for now – leaves us with little more than conjecture.

Leaving aside the problems of Hamdani's "incomprehensible" languages, and returning to his gradient scale of good and bad Arabic, assuming that his notion of "good" and "bad" Arabic cannot simply be equated with Classical and non-Classical Arabic respectively – and there is no text-external indication of what these terms means – then it follows that we simply have to look closely in what contexts Hamdani employs them:

The linguistic landscape according to Hamdani's testimony

Hamdani clearly distinguishes between the speech of the commoners on the one hand and the elite on the others, such as in the case of the aforementioned inhabitants of the Ma'āfir region (*sāfilatu l-ma'āfirati ġutmun wa 'āliyatu-hā amṯalu.*) and observes the same phenomenon in Ḥaḍramawt: he notes that the "nobility of the 'Awdiyūn are the most eloquent amongst them" (*wa l-awdiyūn 'afṣaḥu-hum*), so it becomes evident that Hamdani displays a degree of bias towards a certain elite group, the notable exception being the "nobility of Aqyān", whose speech is influenced by "incomprehensible Ḥimyaritic" (*wa šarafu aqyāni* […] *ḫalīṭī min mutawassaṭin bayna l-fuṣaḥā'i wa l-lukna-ti wa bayna-hā mā 'adḫala fī l-ḥimyariyyati l-muta'aqqidati*).

This bias becomes more evident when we look at his description of the vernacular spoken in Aden: he describes the spoken language there as a "corrupted hybrid", spoken by "idiots" – "except those with education" (*'adan luġatu-hum muwalladatun radiyyatun wa fī ba'ḍi-him nawqun wa hamāqatun 'illā man ta'addaba*).

Additionally, Hamdani also observes a supposed difference between the speech of the nomadic population and that of the settled population, in many cases mentioning that the Arabic of a certain region is either generally bad – but particularly so with the settled population, such as in the aforementioned case of Aqyān – (*wa bayna-hā mā ’adḫala fī l-ḥimyariyyati l-muta‘aqqidati lā sīmā l-ḥuḍuriyyati min hāḏihī l-qabā’ili*); or that the Arabic is generally comprehensible – except that of the settled population (*lā ba’sa bi-luġati-him ’illā man sakana min-huma l-qarā*).

Finally, in the second-to-last line of his testimony, Hamdani actually goes out of his way to state that outside of South Arabia everyone speaks relatively understandable, good Arabic (*wa ka-ḏālika l-ḥiğāzu wa nağdu al-suflā fa-’ilā l-šām wa ’ilā diyāri muḍarin wa diyāri l-rabī‘a-ti fī-hā l-fuṣāhā‘u*) once again excepting those people who live in the villages (*illā fī qarā-hā*).

So what kind of actual linguistic observations is Hamdani making? Sadly, his testimony does not provide us with much actual data, but there are four instances in which he clearly refers to specific linguistic phenomena.

Firstly, he observes that “the people of Wadi‘a and Banū Ḥarb have *’imāla* in all of their speech” (*balada wādi‘ati banū ḥarba ’ahlu imālatin fī ğamī‘i kalāmi-him*). Popularly, *’imāla* is known as the raising of the vowel /a:/ to /e:/, most commonly observed in the Levantine Arabic dialects, but historically was used to refer to the raising of /a:/ to /i:/ in cases where the long ā appeared in the environment of i, and – more importantly – was not considered an “incorrect” phenomenon. [44] Interestingly, the phenomenon of raising /a:/ to /e:/ has been described in the contemporary dialect of Ẓalā‘, [45] but it does not appear to be very widespread. Without any real lexical information however, it remains unclear what Hamdani is in fact describing when he uses the term *’imāla*.

[44] A. Levin, “’Imāla” in Vol. 2 of *The Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Lingusitics*, (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 312-314.

[45] M. Vanhove, “Les dialectes arabes des régions sud, centre, et est du Yemen: perspectives de recherches, in *Chroniques yémenites*, 6-7 (1999), 3.

Secondly, Hamdani observes the use of the definite article "am" in the phrase "they say "*yā bni m-ʿamm*" instead of "*yā bni l-ʿamm*" (*wa yaqūlūna yā bni am-ʿammi fī yā bni l-ʿammi*); somewhat later on he notes that the tribes of ʾAšʿar, ʿAkk, and Ḥakam b. Saʿd "share the replacement of the *lām* with the *mīm* with them [i.e. the tribe of Sufyān b. ʾArḥab]" (*wa yašraku-hum fī ʾibdāli l-mīmi mina l-lāmi fi l-raǧuli wa l-baʾīr wa mā ašbaha-hu*). The phenomenon that Hamdani describes here is the use of the definite non-assimilating article *ʾam-* instead of the Arabic partially assimilating article *ʾal-*, which is still relatively widespread in many contemporary Yemeni dialects, particularly in the west and central regions of the country. [46]

It is not exactly clear where the definite article came from, but it was probably not introduced as an influence from any ASA language: although there are some inscriptions from South Arabia which exhibits a particle *hn-*, which is similar enough to the *ʾam-*article, it has not been established that it was in fact a definite article. [47] Additionally, the Ancient North Arabian languages – a group of Semitic langages much more closely related to Arabic than ASA – all innovated articles to express definiteness, including *h-*, *hn-*, *ʾl-* and *hl-* which were diffused all through the Arabian Peninsula at the time, [48] and a process from *hn* to *hm* with a subsequent loss of the *h* seems to be the most logical explanation for its presence in some Yemeni Arabic dialects.

Thirdly, Hamdani mentions an imperative *sima'* , which he contrasts with Classical Arabic *ʾisma'* (*wa yaqūlūna* […] *sima' fī ʾisma'*). Although variations of the imperative without the initial glottal stop appear throughout the spoken Arabic dialects – either with an initial consonant

[46] P. Behnstedt, "Zum Bestimmten Artikel und zur Ortsnamenkunde im Jemen" in *Zeitschrift für Arabische Linguistik,* 47 (2007), 50-51, 56.

[47] For example, it is found in an inscription called "The Hymn of Qāniya", which has the line *w-mn ms²qr hn bḥr w-ṣḥk,* but so far nobody has been able to provide an accepted translation, and so *hn* might be a demonstrative or a conditional (such as Arabic *ʾin*).

C. Robin, " Les plus anciens monuments de la langue arabe" , in *Revue du monde musulman* , 61 (2009), 122.

[48] A. Al-Jallad, "On the genetic background of the Rbbl bn Hf'm grave inscription at Qaryat al-Faw", in *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies,* 14.

cluster and a lengthened second vowel (i.e. *f'ōl*) or with an initial vowel (i.e. *if'il*) [49] – there are no attested spoken variations with an initial glottal stop, and thus seems to be a Classical Arabic innovation. The fact that Hamdani chooses here to single out this particular form of the imperative as being incorrect may tell us something about his perception of "good" and "bad Arabic: it could mean that his notion of good Arabic at least included some kind of glottal stop, which although rare, is attested in some Arabic dialects.

Finally, Hamdani notes that the people in the land of Sufyān b. 'Arḥab generally speak comprehensible Arabic, except when they say *qayyad ba'īrāk*, "he tied your two camels" and *ra'aytu aḫawāk*, "I saw your two brothers" (*baladu sufyāna bin 'arḥaba fuṣaḥā'u 'illā fī muṯuli qawli-him 'm-raǧulu wa qayyad ba'īrāka wa ra'aytu aḫwāka*). Here, Hamdani's notion of "incorrect" Arabic makes sense: coming from the point of view of Classical Arabic, one would expect a form *ba'īrayk* and *aḫawayk* respectively, these nouns being the object of the verb and thus declined in the accusative case.

However, as far as we know, there is not a single Arabic dialect that retains case declension for any noun, meaning that we probably have to interpret Hamdani's observation as a result of a phonological process – most likely the collapse of the diphthong /ay/ to /ā/. Evidence of this process has been documented in the Arabic spoken in some Alevite villages in the north of Syria, and it is not unrealistic to propose that a similar form of monophthongisation occurred in other places as well. [50]

Once again, this raises the question of what Hamdani considers to be "good Arabic":
if we assume that no single spoken dialect of Arabic possesses an initial glottal stop in their imperative, for what reason would Hamdani then opt to consider only one of these bad Arabic, without mentioning the other?

[49] O. Jastrow & W. Fischer. *Arabischen Dialekte*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1980), 62-63.

[50] W. Arnold, "Antiochia Arabic", in Vol. 1 of *The Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, (Leiden: Brill, 2010). 113.

Hamdani's testimony provides us with an overview of the linguistic situation of the region through the perception of an early Arabic-Islamic scholar, who considered his own heritage to be closer to that of the "nomadic Arabic-speaking Bedouin" than that of the sedentary "foreign" population of Ancient Yemen, and it is mostly through this perspective that we have to contextualise Hamdani's observations: he is interested not so much in giving an objective overview of the vernaculars and languages being spoken in southern Arabia, as he is in classifying the different tribes and peoples of the region ranked according to the way they speak Arabic. One the one side of the scale we find the nomads, the educated (*al-ta'addub*) and the upper classes (*al-'āliyya*) who are generally capable of expressing themselves understandably. This is contrasted with the sedentary population (*al-ḥuduriyya; man sakana al-qarā*), the lower classes (*al-sāfila*) and the idiots (*nawk wa ḥamāqa*), who either speak a corruption (*muwallada*) or something completely incomprehensible (*ġutm*).

Conspicuously missing from Hamdani's observations are whatever remained from the ASA languages: although Hamdani frequently mentions "Ḥimyaritic" (*al-ḥimyariyya*; *al-lisān al-ḥimyarī*), and notes that the vernaculars of some of the people possess an "element of Ḥimyaritic" (*šay'un mina l-taḥmīr*), there is nothing that indicates that these "Himyaritic influences" have anything to do with Saba'ic or any other South Arabian language. In fact, when he does explicitly mention supposed elements from Ḥimyaritic, we find that these can be more easily and logically explained as a variety of Arabic. As such, it would appear that Hamdani simply utilises the term Ḥimyaritic in two situations: firstly, when he is confronted with "irregularities" in spoken varieties of Arabic – which are still understandable – but which he cannot explain purely coming from Classical Arabic.

This is not to say that Saba'ic had completely disappeared at this time, and when one looks at the different regions and areas described in Hamdani's testimony where they speak "pure, incomprehensible Ḥimyaritic" (*al-ḥimyariyya al-quḥḥa al-muta'aqqida*), we find that these correspond fairly well with the areas in the heartland of the Ḥimyarite confederacy. [51] The fact that Hamdani explicitly calls these languages "completely incomprehensible" most likely

[51] Cf. Chaim Rabin's map of Ḥimyaritic in *Ancient West Arabian*, 46.

indicates that there was some language still being spoken in this part of the Peninsula which was completely incomprehensible to a speaker of Arabic, but at the same time did not constitute the same thing as a *ġutm*. Thus it appears that to Hamdani "pure Ḥimyaritic" still constituted something different than merely another completely incomprehensible language.

Conclusions: The linguistic landscape of early Islamic South Arabia

Hamdani's observations to a certain degree have to be treated with some reservations: despite his being born in Ṣanʿā', he obviously considered himself to be an Arab first and foremost, and thus in his own perception, had very little to do with the with the so-called "Ḥimyarite" civilisations of pre-Islamic Yemen. As such, Hamdani did not pay too much attention to the different linguistic particularities of the spoken languages in Southwest Arabia, especially in cases where he did not understand their origins, categorising these variations simply as "Ḥimyaritic", without going into further detail.

However, this is not to say that all awareness of the presence of the ancient pre-Islamic kingdoms had been completely lost to him or to other Islamic writers of the same period: Tabari's testimony of the mythical king Yusār al-Anʿam, as well as Baladhuri's citation, although likely not reflecting an actual spoken language at the time, do reflect a degree of consciousness concerning the strangeness of the area: to the medieval Arabs, the ancient peoples of Yemen employed a language similar enough to Arabic, but still merited remarks due to their oddness.

It appears that in Hamdani's text, these particularities were either too difficult to understand or he was simply not interested. In his chapter, he seems mostly concerned with a sliding scale from "good" to "bad", without indicating what these mean: it would appear however, that at this time different varities of Arabic were still in a process of slowly displacing the languages spoken during the pre-Islamic era – a process which has still not been completed to this day, and which

led to a comparatively large degree of heterogenisation in the area: Hamdani mentions the the article with *am-*, but many other particular features have been recorded in the area. [52]

So what is Hamdani interested in? It would appear that his sliding scale from good to bad Arabic mostly divides among three lines: rural (good) – urban (bad); nomad (good) – sedentary (bad); educated (good); uneducated (bad). These distinctions indicate that he was probably not concerned with recording the *native* speech of the inhabitants of the area, but rather the degree to which they spoke a higher register of Arabic. Whether this register is exactly the same as the Classical Arabic used to this day is a different matter altogether, as at this point the notion of *faṣīḥ* had not yet necessarily come to mean "Classical Arabic", but simply meant "intelligible". Therefor, it would seem that in this chapter Hamdani was mostly interested in recording the use of Arabic in the area, and his mentioning of non-Arabic is mostly an afterthought, or simply a way to explain linguistic features he did not understand.

In retrospect, I would argue that the most important piece of information that we can gain from Hamdani's text is that in the centuries between the fall of the pre-Islamic civilisations and the introduction of Islam into the area, the degree of awareness towards the former had shifted completely: whereas in the 1st century BCE, a native speaker from the region considered Sabaic and Qatabanic to be two completely different languages, a few centuries later the two were conflated and simply considered to be an "incomprehensible Ḥimyaritic". This demonstrates clearly that the cultural and linguistic focal points of Southwest Arabia had shifted northwards, from Zafar towards Mecca; and from Saba'ic towards Arabic.

[52] See for example, M. Vanhove, "Les dialectes du Yémen".

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Appendix 1: Full transcription of Hamdani's chapter

luġāt ahli hāḏihi l-ǧazīrati

1. ahlu l-šiḥri wa l-'as'ā'a laysū bi-fuṣaḥā'a mahratun ġutmun yušākilūna l-'aǧama.

2. ḥaḍramawtu laysū bi-fuṣaḥā'a wa rubbamā kāna fī-him al-faṣīḥu wa afṣaḥu-hum kindatun wa hamdānun wa ba'ḍu l-ṣudafi.

3. sarwu maḏḥiǧa wa ma'riba wa bayḥāna wa ḥarība fuṣaḥā'u wa radiyyu l-luġati min-hum qalīlun.

4. sarwu ḥimyara wa ǧa'data laysū bi-fuṣaḥā'a wa fī kalāmi-him šay'un mina l-taḥmīri wa yaǧurrūna fī kalāmi-him wa yaḥḏifūna wa yaqūlūna yā bni m-'ammi fī yā bni l-'ammi wa sima' fī 'isma'.

5. laḥǧu wa 'abyanu wa datīnatu afṣaḥu wa l-'āmiriyūn mina l-kindati wa l-awdiyūn 'afṣaḥu-hum

6. 'adan luġatu-hum muwalladatun radiyyatun wa fī ba'ḍi-him nawqun wa hamāqatun 'illā man ta'addaba

7. banū maǧīda wa banū wāqida wa l-'aš'aru lā bā'sa bi luġati-him.

8. sāfilatu l-ma'āfirati ġutmun wa 'āliyatu-hā amṯalu.

9. wa l-sakāsiku wasaṭi baladi l-kilā'a naǧdīyatun maṯīl[53] ma'a 'asratin mina l-lisāni l-ḥimyarī sarātu-hum fī-him ta'aqqudun.

10. saḫlānun wa ǧayšānun wa warāḫun wa ḥaḍirun wa l-ṣuhaybu wa badrun qarībun min luġati sarwu ḥimyara wa yaḥḍibu wa ru'aynu afṣaḥu min ǧublāna wa ǧublānu fī luġati-him ta'aqudun haqlu qitāba fa-ilā ḏimārin al-ḥimyarriyatu l-qaḥḥatu l-muta'aqidatu sarātu maḏḥiǧ miṯlu radmān wa ḥaranun wa naǧdu-hā miṯlu radā'a wa 'isbīlun wa kawmānun wa l-ḥadā'u wa qā'ifatun wa diqrārun fuṣaḥā'u ḫawlānun l-'āliyatu qarībun min ḏālika saḥammarun wa qardun wa l-ḥublatu wa mulḥun wa la ḥaǧun wa ḥamaḍun wa 'utmatun wa watīḥun wa samḥun wa 'unsun wa 'alhānun wasaṭun wa 'ilā l-lukna-ti aqrabun harāzun wa l-'a ḫrūǧu wa šammun wa māḍiḥun wa aḥbūb wa l-ǧahādibu wa šarafu aqyāni wa l-ṭarfu wa wādi'u wa l-ma'alilu ḫalīṭī min mutawassaṭin bayna l-fuṣaḥā'i wa l-lukna-ti wa bayna-hā mā 'adḫala fī l-ḥimyariyyati l-muta'aqqida-ti lā sīmā l-ḥuḍuriyyati min hāḏihī l-qabā'ili.

[53] Possibly *muṯayl*, "very similar to".

11. baladu l-’aš‘ari wa baladu al-‘akki wa ḥakami bni sa‘di min baṭni tihāma-ti wa hawāzu-hā lā ba’sa bi-luġati-him ’illā man sakana min-huma l-qarā hamdānun man kāna fī sarāti-hā min ḥāšida ḫalīṭī min faṣīḥin miṯla ‘uḏara wa hanwama [54] wa ḥağūra wa ġutmin miṯla ba‘ḍi qudama wa ba‘aḍi l-ğabra nağday baladi hamdāni l-bawnu min-hu l-mašriqu wa l-ḫabu ‘arabiyyun yuḫliṭu l-ḥimyariyya-ta ğāhiru hamdānu al-nağdī min faṣīḥin wa dūna ḏālika ḫaywān fuṣaḥā’u wa fī-him ḥimyariyyatun kaṯīratun ’ilā ṣa‘data wa baladu sufyāna bin ’arḥaba fuṣaḥā’u ’illā fī muṯuli qawli-him ’m-rağulu wa qayyad ba‘īrāka wa ra’aytu ahkwāka wa yašraku-hum fī ’ibdāli l-mīmi mina l-lāmi fī l-rağul wa l-ba‘īr wa mā ašbaha-hu l-’aš‘aru wa ‘akka wa ba‘ḍu ḥakama min ’ahli l-tihāmati.

12. wa ‘uḏaru maṭirati wa nahmu wa murhibatu wa ḏaybānu wa sakanu [55] l-raḥbati min balḥāriṯa fuṣaḥā’u ṣunāfu bi-l-ğawfi l-‘alā dūna ḏālika ḫirfānu wa ’aṯāfat lā ba’sa bi-faṣāḥati-him sakanu l-ğawfi illā man ḫalaṭa-hum min ğīrati la-hum tihamiyīn qābilu nahmi l-šamālī wa nu‘mānu murhabata fa-ẓāhiru[56] bnī ‘aliyyāni wa ẓāhir sufyāna wa šākirin fuṣaḥā’u.

13. balada wādi‘ati banū ḥarba ’ahlu imālatin fī ğamī‘i kalāmi-him wa banū sa‘da afṣaḥu min ḏimāra ’ilā ṣan‘ā’a mutawassiṭun wa huwa baladu ḏī ğurrata ṣan‘ā’u fī ’ahli-hā baqāyā mina l-‘arabiyya-ti al-maḥḍati wa nabḏun min kalāmin ḥimyara wa madīnatu ṣan‘ā’a muḫtalifatu l-luġāti wa l-lahağāti li-kulli baq‘atin min-hā luġatun wa man yuṣāqibu ša‘ūba yuḫālifu l-ğamī‘a šibāmu aqyāna wa l-maṣāni‘u wa taḫlā ḥimyariyyatan mahḍatan ḫawlānu ṣa‘data nağdī-hā fuṣaḥā’u wa ’ahlu qaddi-hā wa ġawri-hā ġutmun ṯumma al-fuṣaḥā’u min l-‘arḍi fī wādi‘atin fa-ğanabin fa-yāmin fa zubaydin fa banī l-ḥāriṯ fa-mā ittaṣala bi-baladi šākirin min nağrān ’ilā arḍi yām fa-arḍi sanḥām fa-arḍi nahdin wa banī ’usāma-ti fa ‘anzin fa ḫaṯ‘ama fa-hilālin fa-‘amiri bni rabī‘a-ti fa sarāti l-ḥağari fa dawsin fa-ġāmidin fa šakara [57] fa-ṯaqīfu fa bağīla-ti fa-banū ‘alī ġayra ’an ’asāfila sarwāt hāḏi-hi l-qabā’ili mā bayna sarātu ḫawlān wa l-ṭā’ifi dūna ’a‘ālay-hā fī l-fuṣaḥā’i

[54] An interesting feature of this name is the prefix h-, which might very well be a causative h-, as seen in Sabaic. The Arabic equivalent is the glottal stop -’ (e.g., *fa‘ala – ’af‘ala*)

[55] Possibly a collective of *sākin*, “inhabitant”.

[56] This could be a personal name.

[57] M. Ḥawālī notes that the actual form is *yaškur*, but I’ve not been able to locate either of these places.

14. wa ’amā al-‘urūḍu fa-fī-hā l-fuṣaḥā’u mā ḫalā qarā-hā wa ka-d̲ālika l-ḥiǧāzu wa naǧdu al-suflā fa-’ilā l-šām wa ’ilā diyāri muḍarin wa diyāri l-rabī‘a-ti fī-hā l-fuṣāhā‘u illā fī qarā-hā fa hād̲i-hi luġātu l-ǧazīra-ti ‘alā l-ǧumla-ti dūna l-tab‘iḍ wa l-tafnīni