

The Modern South Arabian Languages

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0. INTRODUCTION

0.1. In the South of the Arabian Peninsula, in the Republic of the Yemen and in the Sultanate of Oman, live some 200,000 Arabs whose maternal language is not Arabic but one of the so-called Modern South Arabian Languages (MSAL). This designation is very inconvenient because of the consequent ambiguity, but a more appropriate solution has not been found so far. Although there exists a very close relationship with other languages of the same Western South Semitic group, the MSAL are different enough from Arabic to make intercomprehension impossible between speakers of any of the MSAL and Arabic speakers. The MSAL exhibit many common features also with the Semitic languages of Ethiopia; their relationships with Epigraphic South Arabian (Sahaydic Languages, according to Beeston) remain a point of discussion.

There are six MSAL: Mehri (=M), Harsūsi (=H), Baḥari (=B), Hobyōt (=Hb), Jibbāli (=J), Soqōṭri (=S).

As regards the number of speakers and the geographical extension, Mehri is the main language. It is spoken by the Mahra tribes (about 100,000 speakers) and some Beyt Kathir, in the mountains of Dhofar in Oman, and in the Yemen, in the far eastern Governorate, on the coast, between the border of Oman and the eastern bank of Wadi Masilah, and not in the Mukalla area, contrary to Johnstone's statement (1975:2); in the North-West of the Yemen, Mehri is spoken as far as Thamud, on the border of the Rub' al-Khali.

The Yemenite Mehri speakers distinguish two groups among the Mehri dialects; they call the variety of Mehri spoken at the West of Ras Fartak [*mehriyət*], and [*mehriyōt*] the Mehri of the *Sharqiya*, the eastern area (including the Mehri of Dhofar). Johnstone (1975:2) quotes *məhrəyyət* as the name of the language in Dhofar, and makes a distinction between a southern Mehri dialect, including the Mehri of the Yemen, and a northern Mehri dialect (Dhofar Mehri).

The Mahra inhabitants of the desert steppe of the Yemen, as well as in the mountains of Dhofar in Oman, are semi-nomads who breed camels, cows and goats. Some bedouins in the Yemen are owners of four-wheel drive cars which enable them to trade with other countries of the Peninsula, providing supplies for numerous shops in the coastal towns and villages of the Mahra. In the area of Qishn, bedouins cultivate palm-trees.

Ḥ [*ḥərsīyət*] is spoken by the *Harāsīs* and the *ʿIfār*, in the area of Jiddat al-Harāsīs (north-east of Dhofar). The number of speakers was put at no more than 600 by Johnstone (1977:x), but this reckoning was made during the period when many Harāsīs had left their region to go and work in oil wells. Since then, the founding of the National park in Jiddat al-Harāsīs provided employment and gave the possibility to many emigrants to come back, and thus putting off the danger of the disappearance of their language which was quite real in the seventies.

Baṭḥari is the language of the *Baṭāḥira* who live on the south-western coast of Oman, in the Jāzir area, between Hāsik and Ras Sharbithāt. Their number is put at about 300 (Morris 1983:130); they are ‘pastoral cave-dwellers and fishermen’ (Johnstone 1975:94).

Ḥ and are very closely related to M; as for Hb [*həwbyōt*], the very recent development of the research on this language (at least, Hobyot spoken in the Yemen) allows to relate it to the Mehri group, even though regular contacts with J speakers have an effect upon this speech. The Hb speakers, less than one hundred in number, claim to belong to the Mahra tribe. They breed camels, cows and goats in the mountains, on the border between Oman and the Yemen (in the area of Jadib and Hawf, and Haberut seems to be the northern boundary of their area). They spend the rainy season with their cattle in caves, up in the mountains, and then go down to their settlements (made of round houses covered with branches).

The J language [*gəblēt*]/[*šherēt*] received many names in the scientific literature, the most common of which being Šxauri, Eḥkili, Qarāwi, Šḥeri Johnstone (1981:xi-xii) chose during fieldwork the name of *Jibbāli* that the speakers do not consider pejorative. It is spoken in Oman ‘by a number of communities of different social status and tribal origin, numbering together about 5,000’ (Johnstone 1975: 94). J speakers live in the mountains of Dhofar where they are semi-nomads, rearing camels and cows, and collecting frankincense; in the coastal villages of this area (Raysut, Salāla, Mirbaṭ, Sidḥ ...) they carry on various jobs. The Baṭāḥira, who breed cattle in the mountains of Wādi Ezdaḥ, east of the road to Thamrit, speak J (Morris 1983:143, n.1); the inhabitants of the Kūria Mūria Islands are fishermen who speak a specific variety of the J language.

Like the J speakers, the Soqoṭris have no particular word for their language; it is named Soqoṭri [*səkāṭri*]. It is spoken in the Yemen, on the island of Soqoṭra and the neighbouring islets of ʿAbd-al-Kūri and Samḥa. The inhabitants of Soqoṭra are put at 50,000, those of ʿAbd-al-Kūri at about 250 (Naumkin 1988:342, 359) and at ten or a dozen in Samḥa. On the coasts the inhabitants are fishermen and they cultivate date-palms; in the mountains cave-dwellers bedouins rear camels, cows and goats; in hamlets people cultivate millet, and in the eastern area, they collect the gum of the Dragon's Blood tree. The inhabitants of ʿAbd-al-Kūri and Samḥa live on fishing, and they partly sell their fish in Haḍramawt.

0.2. Dialectology and sociolinguistic situation

M, J and S have a very rich dialectology for which sociological and geographical parameters are relevant. The dialectal variety is a linguistic fact of which the speakers themselves are well aware of. It concerns all linguistic levels: phonetics, phonemics, morphology, syntax and lexicon.

In the Mehri language, there is a very clear distinction between the variety spoken in Dhofar and in the far east of the Yemen and the western variety. Within one and the same dialectal area there are, in addition, differences between bedouin varieties and city or village dwellers varieties. The dialect of Qishn, the former capital of the Mahra is very prestigious in the Yemen.

In J, Johnstone (1981:xii) makes a distinction between the central, eastern and western dialects.

Regarding S, it is possible to distinguish four groups between the surveyed dialects: the dialects of the northern coastal villages (including the main one, Hadibo), those of the southern coast, the varieties spoken by the bedouins in Hagher Mountains (in the center of the island), and the dialects of the area of Qalansiyah (far west). The dialect of ʿAbd-al-Kūriis

apart whereas that of Samḥa belongs to the western dialects of Soqotra (Naumkin 1988:343, 344).

The languages spoken in Dhofar have a particular status because they are in contact with both Arabic (as the other MSAL) and the other MSAL of the region.

Native speakers use their mother tongue for private purposes, in the family circle and with other speakers of the same language; many a speaker uses several MSAL, when these languages are closely related.

Intercomprehension between Sor J speakers and speakers of any other MSAL is impossible. When in contact with each other, they resort to Arabic, as with Arabic speakers. Both in Oman and in the Yemen, Arabic is the language used for official intercourse (administration, school, army). As for cultural activities, the texts collected since 1898 in M, J, S and B prove that these languages possess a rich oral literature consisting mainly of tales and poetry.

0.3 Discovery of the MSAL

The first documents that bear witness of the MSAL are quite recent, going back to 1835 only, when J.R. Wellsted published in his 'Memoir on the Island of Socotra' a wordlist of 236 items in S. They are transcribed in Latin and Arabic scripts, translated both in English and Arabic. In 1838, Fulgence Fresnel described the *Ehkhili* variety, which gives us the first description of Jibbāli. All along the nineteenth century, travellers, scholars and explorers played their parts in the discovery of these peoples and their languages. The historical turning point for the knowledge of the MSAL is 1898, when the *Südarabische Expedition* of the Imperial Academy of Vienna started. The three scholars, Müller, Jahn and Hein began their systematic collection of texts, which will be studied grammatically and lexically later on by Bittner (1908-1917), Jahn (1915), Leslau (1938) and Wagner (1953). The surveys concerned Mehri, Soqotri, and Jibbāli (then named *šxauri*). In 1929, Thomas collected the first data about H and B, calling the attention of the semitists on the existence of two new MSAL (Thomas, 1937). More than 30 years later, Johnstone started his work on the languages of Dhofar: H, J and M, he alluded (1981: xii) to the existence in this area of the unknown Hobyōt language, and he quoted some Hb words in his *Mehri Lexicon* (1987). In 1983 the *Mission Française d'Enquête Linguistique au Sud Yémen* discovered that this sixth MSAL is spoken in the Yemen and started its linguistic study. During that period Morris has been working on J and B in the Dhofar.

1. PHONOLOGY and PHONETICS

1.1. The consonants

The consonantal system of the MSAL is the closest, among the Semitic languages, to the reconstructed system of proto-semitic. They are the only ones with three alveolar fricatives, which are maintained in the Gəʕəz, Hebrew and ESA scripts.

In addition, the MSAL also have a phoneme ʃ.

Another typical feature of the MSAL is the post-glottalized realization, as in the Ethiopian languages, of the emphatic consonants of the Semitic; it is of great interest because it questions the hypothesis of a Cushitic influence on the Semitic languages of Ethiopia in this matter.

	plosive	fricative	ejective	nasal	liquid	rolled
labial	<i>b</i>	<i>f</i>		<i>m</i>		
interdental		<i>t</i> <i>ḏ</i>				
denti-alveolar	<i>t</i> <i>d</i>		<i>ʈ</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>r</i>
		<i>s</i> <i>z</i>	<i>ʂ</i>			
palato-alveolar		<i>ʃ</i>	<i>ʃ̣</i>			
lateral-alveolar		<i>ʃ̣</i>	<i>ʃ̣̣</i>			
palatal		<i>y</i>				
velar	<i>k</i> <i>g</i>	<i>x</i> <i>ɣ</i>	<i>ḳ</i>			
labio-velar		<i>w</i>				
pharyngeal		<i>ħ</i> <i>ʕ</i>				
laryngeal	<i>ʔ</i>	<i>h</i>				

REMARKS

The Central dialect of Jibbāli (cJ) has a phoneme /š/ (labialized ṣ̣) contrasting with /ʃ/: *JL ebrítš* ‘your(Sg.f.) daughter’ *ebrítṣ̌* ‘his daughter’, where the Eastern dialect only has /ʃ/.

Only S does not have interdentals. The merging of the interdentals with the dentals in some city dialects in western Mahra is a sociolinguistical phenomenon and does not lead to infer that the consonantal system of Yemeni Mehr lacks interdentals.

In Soqotri, the merging of the velar fricatives /x/ and /ɣ/ with the pharyngeals /ħ/ and /ʕ/ is particular to some dialects only, those studied before 1985; in other dialects the velar fricatives do occur, even in native words:

SQa xǝmǝh (*SQb ḥǝmǝh*) ‘five’; *SQa ɣáyɣ̣* (*SHo ʕáyɣ̣*) ‘man’.

To Semitic */š/ (~ /s/ in Arabic and Ethiopian) corresponds /š/ or /h/ in the MSAL. In J /š/ frequently corresponds to M /h/, to S /h/ or /ʃ̣/:

JL ɛlšén, *lišén*, *MQn lṣ̌ín*, *SQa léṣhén* ‘tongue’; but *JL šōʔ* (*b > Ø*), *ML hōba* *SQb yhōbǝʕ* ‘seven(m.)’; *JL -hum*, *MQn -hǝm*, *SQa -hǝn/-ṣ̌ǝn* suf. pers. pr.3Pl.m.

1.1.1 The laterals *ʃ̣* and *ʃ̣̣*

These fricatives have an apico-alveolar articulation: the tongue-tip is on the alveolar ridge and the lateral fricative sound is produced by the air flowing out of the passage opened by lowering the mid section of the tongue and retracting the corner of the mouth, generally at right side. The glottalized *ʃ̣̣* is often voiced (see below). This lateral articulation of *ʃ̣̣*, the Arabic reflex of *ṣ̌*, had been described in the 8th century by Sībawayhi.

1.1.2 The ejective consonants

The prevailing articulation of the ‘emphatic’ consonants is not, as in Arabic, a velarization, but a post-glottalization, as described for Ethiopian languages. For greater convenience, these consonants are written with a subscript dot, but the articulation is indeed ejective: [*ṭʔ*], [*ṭʔ̣*], [*ṣʔ*], [*ṣʔ̣*]/[*ṣ̌ʔ*], [*ṣ̌ʔ̣*], [*ḳʔ*]. The degree of this glottalization varies, depending on the position of the consonant in the word and on the dialects concerned: for instance, in some Soqotri dialects, the glottalization is weaker, and in the Mehri dialect of Qishn, the constriction of the glottis is not complete and provokes a laryngealisation or creaky voice; under such conditions, some emphatics become voiced (for instance *ʔ* is often pronounced as [ḏ̣]). Johnstone (1975:98) has shown that, in the languages of Dhofar, glottalized consonants are to be grouped with the voiced consonants from a morphological point of view: for instance,

words with initial voiced or glottalized consonant take the prefix *a-/ε-*, which is the definite article in the nominal system and a morpheme *e* of derivation in the verbal system, this morpheme *e* being zero in front of voiceless consonants.

In the Mehr of Qishn, laryngealization may spread to the direct vicinity of the consonant or even to the entire word (Lonnet et Simeone-Senelle 1983:191-3).

1.1.3 The glottalized palato-alveolar *ṣ̌*

This phoneme *ṣ̌* ([*ʃ̣*] in Central J) occurs in all the MSAL. There are few occurrences of it and the phoneme never appears in the same words in the six MSAL:

MQn hašbáʔ, *ML šəbáʔ*, *HHt hīšəbáʔ*, *B (ML) hašbáʔ*, *HL hašbáʔ*, *J (ML) ʔəšbáʔ*, but *JL ʔišbáʔ*, *HHf ʔišəbáʔ*, *SQb ʔəšbaʔ* ‘finger’.

ṣ̌ may be connected with some rules of phonetic evolution. This phonologized variant often proceeds from the palatalization of /*k/*:

J (ML) šuyēt, *JL šuyēt*, *ML káymat* ‘judgment day’, *SHr šédhər*, *ML kādər* ‘pot’, *J (ML) məšḥayrér*, *JL məšḥérér*, *ML məḥhayrīr* ‘shin-bone’;

it may be a very particular evolution of /*s/* (cf. above) or /*š/*: *ML šəfdēt*, *HL šəfdáyt* ‘frog’ (see Arabic *dufdaʔa*), but in a few occurrences, no explanation can be provided:

SQa šáʔšaʔ ‘to take a little sip’, *hənšeh* ‘(name of) shellfish’; *MQn šənšōn* ‘snail (col.)’; *MQn šáffī*, *ML šəffáy*, *HHt šīfēʔ*, *(ML) šəffáyh* ‘elbow’; *MDt bəšīn*, *HHf bišīn* ‘Tristram's grackle’ (here, *ṣ̌* may be a variant of *š* before *ʔ*); *JL šúrúm* ‘to sulk’.

1.1.4 The pharyngeal *ʕ*

ʕ has a particular status in H and in some dialects of Mehri where it occurs very rarely (e.g., out of 403 words with a /*ʕ/* in the root, [*ʕ*] occurs only in 44 words, mainly borrowed words from Arabic). Generally, the pharyngeal is replaced by the laryngeal *ʔ*, or is only but a virtual phoneme influencing the length and the timbre of the vowel in contact, sometimes inducing a diphthong. In Mehri, this phenomenon seems to be less common in the dialects of the Yemen (except those of the area of Qishn) than in the Mehri of Dhofar:

< *ʕfi* >: *MDt, MJB ʕəfər*, *MQnB ʕəfər*, *ML ʔ ʕəfər*, *HL ʔəfər*, *Hb ʕəfər*, *B (ML) ʕəfər*, *JL ʕəfər*; *S (ML) ʕəfər* ‘red’.

Often, where *ʕ* occurs, its status is unstable; the same speaker for the same word may or may not pronounce it: *MDt sáʕtayt* or *sátayt* ‘three’, and its occurrence is not predictable:

MDt, Hb fām (sg.), *fāʕmtə* (pl.) ‘foot, leg’; *ML rēʕi* ‘herder’ and *rō* ‘to herd’.

1.1.5 In M, Hb, H, the initial and non-etymological *h* and *ḥ* may be the development of the laryngeal *ʕ*.

MQn, ML həbēr, *HL ḥəbyār* ‘female camels’; *MQn, ML háyb*, *Hb həb*, ‘father’;

in a word such as *MQn ḥəróh*, *ML ḥərōh*, *HL ḥərīh*, (*B (ML) ərīh*) ‘head’, *ḥ* seems to be the trace of a lost article (absent in MY, H, Hb but not in MO).

1.1.6 The so-called *parasite h* in Soqotri

A typical feature of S, the occurrence of this non-etymological and non-morphological *h* (in nouns and very rarely in verbs) is related to the particular evolution of the long vowels and to the rules of stress in S: stress falls on the penultimate or antepenultimate syllable, the vowel (formerly long) of the syllable might be preserved by this *h* (more rarely by *ʔ*): *SQb šAləlhən/ šAləlihən* ‘small valley, small stream’; *SHo líbʕən* ‘white’.

A particular articulation of the consonants, with the vocal cords apart at one end, occurs in S, and this phenomenon ([^h]), called murmur or breathy voice, may affect the neighbouring vowels and therefore contribute to the occurrence of the parasite *h* (Lonnet and Simeone-Senelle 1995).

1.1.7 Palatalization

The palatalization is common to all the MSAL (cf. the Semitic root <*kbd*> ~ <*šbd*> in MSAL) and a palatalized consonant may be phonologized (cf. /š/).

Palatalized /g/, /k/ and /k/ occur in all the MSAL, but to different degrees: /g/ > voiced pre-palatal [ž], [žʸ] in S, [ž] (labialized ʒ) in JL, voiced palato-alveolar [ǰ] in M and Hb:

SQb [ǰážəh], *SAK* [ʳ ážʸ əh] ‘woman’; *JL* [ǰážét], *HHt* [ǰoǰǰít] ‘big girl’; *MQn* [ǰaǰǰén] ‘boy’.

In some S dialects, /k/ > [c], /k/ > [ç], when in contact with /i/:

SQa ikóṭəb ‘he writes’, *di-káʳ* ‘of the house’ and *SQb* icóṭəb, dʒaʳ.

1.1.8 The retroflex clusters

In the M and the Hb of the Yemen, /r/ plus a following denti-/lateral-alveolar consonant have both a retroflex articulation:

MQn [kírʃ], *HHt* [kérʃ] ‘belly’; *MMf* [kárʔət] ‘womb’; *MQn* ʔešēr-l-šigartən > [ʔešérʃiǰáʔtən] ‘the barks of trees’, *MJb* haršōm > [haržōm] ‘tops of the feet’.

1.1.9 The consonants /m/ and /b/

In J, these two etymological consonants never occur in intervocalic position; this non-occurrence affects the length and timbre of the vowel; the long vowels and the nasalized ones are the phonetic results of this phenomenon:

JL erhím, erhīt/ erhēt ‘beautiful’; ǰōr //yǰēt/yǰbírə ‘to meet’.

In M, in the paradigm of a few verbs, /b/ does not occur in intervocalic position:

MQn ʔalóm ‘they requested’ (*ʔalób* ‘he requested’); *MQn* šōʔ/ yəšōʔ, *ML* šāʔ/ yəšōʔ ‘he took/ he takes’.

1.1.10 The processing of /l/

In Jibbāli, and in some Soqotri dialects, /l/ has a fricative variant ž.

JL [ǰízól] (*ML* ǰilól) ‘cooked/boiled (food)’; *SQa* [šázəʳ] (*SHo* šálʳ) ‘rib’.

In Eastern M and sometimes in H, /l/ > w:

ML [yaǰáwbən] (<*yaǰálbən*) ‘it upsets’; *ML* [əwbōn] (*MQn* ləbōn) ‘white’; *HL* [həwǰāt] (*MQn* həlǰāt, *ML* hewǰāt) ‘circle’, with an analogical plural [hewēǰ] (*ML* hēlēǰ).

In stressed syllable *l* is reduced to zero and the length and timbre of the vowel change: *ML* sēmək ‘I was safe’ (/sólmaq/).

1.1.11 In pausal forms, some final voiced consonants are often devoiced and realized ejectives in MY. In some dialects of Soqotri, only final /ʳ/ is concerned:

MJb dəmég > [dəmēxʳ] ‘brain’; *MQn* ǰīd > [ǰítʳ] ‘good’; *SQb* ʔōdəʳ > [ʔōdəhʳ] ‘back’

1.2. The vowels

	Front	Central	Back
close	<i>i</i>		<i>u</i>
half-close	<i>e ø</i>		<i>o</i>
		<i>ə</i>	
half-open	<i>ɛ œ</i>		<i>ʌ ɔ</i>
open	<i>a</i>	<i>ɑ</i>	

Not all the vowels occur in all the MSAL. Systems vary according to each language. The quantity and timbre of the vowels are linked to stress rules and the consonantic environment (i.e. the occurrence or not of the glottalized, pharyngeals, velars ...).

Among the MSAL, and S are noticeable on account of the richness of the vocalic timbres. Diphthongs *ay*, *aw* frequently occur in M, H, Hb, but rarely in S and almost never in J.

In M the vowel system has 2 or 3 (according to the dialects) short vowels /a/, /ə/, (/ɛ/), 6 long vowels /ī/, /ē/, /ē̄/, /ā/, /ō/, /ū/. As Johnstone noted (1975:103), it is difficult to distinguish phonetically *ō* from *ū* (even the same speaker may in the same sentence use *āmārūt* or *āmārōt* 'she said'), and *ī* from *ē*, even if rare minimal pairs do occur such as *ML kəbkīb* 'star' ≠ *kəbkēb* 'entry' and *ktōb* 'book' ≠ *ktūb* 'he wrote'.

In J and S, the range of vowels is: *i, e, ɛ, ə, a, ɔ, o, u* (Johnstone 1981:xv).

In these two MSAL, in which the range of vowels is larger, the contrast between long and short vowels is not always phonological.

In J, the long vowels result from the integration of the definite article (ɛ-/a-) or from the processing of *b/w* or of *y*.

JL ʔernī, def. *ʔērnī* 'hare', *ʔəb*, def. *ʔōb* 'door', *šəgēb* <*š-gwb*> 'to answer', *ōšəf* <*wšf*> 'to describe', *kəl* <*kbl*> 'to accept', *lūn* <*lbn*> 'white(m.)', *gēr* <*gyr*> 'to oppress'.

In J, nasal vowels are combinative variants resulting from the influence of *m* in intervocalic position:

JL <*xmr*> *xēr* 'wine', *oxōr* 'to make drunk', *axtīr* 'to drink wine'; *ylūr* <*lm*> 'it shines'.

In MY, in Hb and in S, vowels in contact with nasal consonants are frequently nasalized:

MQn [*amūšʌŋ*] 'I chew'; *HHf* [*tūm^h*] 'you (Pl.m.)'; *SQaB* [*gās*] (*SQa gans*), *SNd* [*ʔās*] (*SQb ʔans*) 'elbow'.

1.3 OTHER PHENOMENA

1.3.1 Syllabic structure and stress

The most common syllabic structures are Cv(C) or Cv:. In initial position, we find (C)Cv(C) or (C)Cv:, and in final position: Cv(C(C)) or Cv:(C).

In J, triconsonantic groups occur: *JL šəttf* '(meat) to become dry', *ššfēf* 'to be able to be dried', *īkkēb* 'he stoops'.

The stress in M, Hb, B, H is on the last long syllable or on the first syllable if there are only short syllables in the stress unit.

J is particular in the sense that a word or a stress unit can have several stressed syllables: *JL minšērōt* (*ML mənḵərēt*) 'middle finger'. When a word has only one stress, it is on the same syllable as the Mehri word: *JL mišəndōt* (*ML məkəndēt*) 'thumb'.

In S, the general trend is to have the stress towards the beginning of the word. This phenomenon has led to the dividing of the vowel, having lost stress and length, by the emergence of a so-called *parasite h*:

SQa *ḳāṭmehəm* (*ML* *ḳəṭmīm*, *JL* *ḳəṭmīm*) ‘butter’; *SQa* *ʔirhez* (*MQnB* *hayrēz*, *ML* *yərēz*, *JL* *ʔiróz*) ‘rice’.

1.3.2 Gemination

Gemination occurs in all the MSAL to various degrees according to the languages, but this phenomenon is very rare in S. It never has a morphological value (as in Arabic, for instance). Its origin may be lexical with roots C2 = C3, or C3 = C4, or C4 = C5:

MDt *dəkk* ‘he sprung up’, *sxəwəllōt* ‘she staid’; *ML* *ḳəṭəbbūt* ‘doll’; *HHf* *mğəllōt* ‘type of house’; *JL* *ṣahəbbūn* ‘fawn(Pl.m.)’ (*ṣahbōb*, Sg.), *eṣəḥḥəš* ‘he cured him’ (*aṣḥāḥ* ‘he cured’).

The origin may also be phonetic or morpho-phonetic, due to the assimilation of some radical consonants in contact with *t* (derivational morpheme *e*):

MDt *ḥadḏūr* <*ḥ-t-ḏr*> ‘to take care’; *MQn* *ʔəṣṣəd* <*ʔ-t-ṣd*> ‘to be anxious’; *ML* *ḳəṣṣəl* <*ḳ-t-ṣl*> ‘to be broken’; *HL* *ḥəttəm* <*h-t-mm*> ‘to be sad’; *JL* *múttəs* <*m-t-ss*> ‘to be bitten’;

and in J, in the derived verbal themes (by vocalic prefix and vocalic modification): in the perfect, *eṣṣókər* ‘to squint’ <*ṣkr*>, and/or in the imperfect: *yəṣṣókərən*, *ífḥós* ‘he boils’ (*efḥés*, caus. of *fḥés*).

The process of gemination in the MSAL is interesting and related to the syllabic structure. In the morphological variation of verbs and nouns, gemination does not affect the same consonant; a shifting of gemination may occur, and according to the forms of the paradigms, gemination affects either a consonant of the root or the derivational morpheme *e*: *MQnB* *fəttək* <*f-t-kk*> ‘he got rid of’ and Sg.3f. *fəkkōt*, *ḳəṣṣáwr* <*ḳ-t-ṣr*> ‘he shortened’, and Sg.3f. *ḳəṣṣarūt*, *lṣəḥḥəs* <*ṣ-ḥ-ṣṣ*> ‘he tracks(subj.)’; *HL* *ḳəṭṭəbōt* <*ḳṭbb*> (Pl. *ḳəṭəbāb*) ‘doll’; *JL* *dekk*/*yəddək*(subj) ‘to bump (against)’; *míxxəl*, a.p. of *axlél* ‘(water) to penetrate’.

2. MORPHOLOGY

2.1 Personal pronouns

2.1a Independent pronouns

	<i>MY (ML)</i>	<i>HHf</i>	<i>HL</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>SQa, SQb</i>
Sg.					
1c.	<i>hoh</i> (=)	<i>hoh</i>	<i>hoh</i>	<i>hé</i>	<i>həh(hən)</i> , <i>ho^h</i>
2m.	<i>hēt</i> (=)	<i>het</i>	<i>hēt</i>	<i>het</i>	<i>het</i>
2f.	<i>hēt</i> (=)	<i>hit</i>	<i>hēt</i>	<i>hit</i>	<i>hit</i>
3m.	<i>heh</i> (=)	<i>heh</i>	<i>hah</i>	<i>še</i>	<i>y^heh</i> , <i>heh</i>
3f.	<i>seh</i> (=)	<i>seh</i>	<i>sēh</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>se^h</i>
Du.					
1c.	<i>tī</i> (<i>əkáy</i>)	<i>tī</i>	<i>ətī</i>	<i>tī</i>	<i>ki^h</i>
2c.	<i>tī</i> (<i>ətáy</i>)	<i>tī</i>	<i>ətī</i>	<i>tī</i>	<i>tī^h</i>
3c.	<i>hī</i> (<i>hay</i>)	<i>hī</i>	<i>hī</i>	<i>ši</i>	<i>he^hi</i> , <i>hi</i>
Pl.					
1c.	<i>nḥa</i> (<i>ənḥa</i>)	<i>nḥa</i>	<i>ənḥā</i>	<i>nḥa</i> , <i>nḥan</i>	<i>ḥan(hən)</i>

2m.	<i>tēm</i> (ətēm)	<i>tum</i> [tūm ^h]	<i>ətōm</i>	<i>tum</i>	<i>tan</i>
2f.	<i>tēn</i> (ətēn)	<i>ten</i> [ten ^h]	<i>ətēn</i>	<i>ten</i>	<i>tan</i>
3m.	<i>hēm</i> (=)	<i>hum</i> [hūm ^h]	<i>hōm</i>	<i>šum</i>	<i>yhan</i>
3f.	<i>sēn</i> (=)	<i>sen</i> [sen ^h]	<i>sēn</i>	<i>sen</i>	<i>san</i>

The dual pronouns bear the marker of the nominal dual *-i*. In the Mehri language of Qishn and the surrounding area, there are no dual pronouns (pronominal and verbal duals are obsolete).

Independant pronouns generally stand for the subject of the sentence. It can be apposed to a noun with a suffix pronoun: *MQn beyt-i hoh* ‘it is my house’. With the connecting particle *ḏ/d-*, it is used to express possession: *MQn səkkēr-k d-hēt* ‘it is your sugar, (sugar) for you’. *HHf lhētə ḏ-hi* ‘their(du.) cows’, *SQb di-ḥan kaʿr* ‘our house’. It can follow some prepositions: *JL lə-hés šé* ‘like him’.

2.1b Suffix pronouns

	Table: Pr. with N.Sg./Pl.//Verb & Prep.				
	<i>MY = ML</i>	<i>HHf</i>	<i>HL</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>SQb</i>
Sg..					
1c.	<i>-il/-yε // -ī, əy</i>	<i>-il/-iyɔ // -ī</i>	<i>-il/-yε // -ənī(yə)</i>	<i>-il/-i</i>	<i>-ɔy^h, əʔ</i>
2m.	<i>-k/-kε // -ūk</i>	<i>-k/-kε // -ōk</i>	<i>-ək/-iyək // -ōk</i>	<i>-k/-εk</i>	<i>-k</i>
2f.	<i>-š/-šɛ // -īš, ēš</i>	<i>-š/-šɛ // -īš</i>	<i>-əš/-iyəš // -əš</i>	<i>-š/-εš</i>	<i>-š</i>
3m.	<i>-h/-hε // -eh, ih</i>	<i>-h/-hε // -eh</i>	<i>-əh/-iyəh // -əh</i>	<i>-š/-εš</i>	<i>-h, -š</i>
3f.	<i>-s/-sε // -īs</i>	<i>-s/-sε // -ēs</i>	<i>-əs/-iyəs // -īs</i>	<i>-s/-εs</i>	<i>-s</i>
Du.					
1c.	<i>-ki/-iki // -īki, əki</i>	<i>-ki/-eki // [?]</i>	<i>-ki/-iki // -əki</i>	<i>-šil/-εši</i>	<i>-ki</i>
2c.	<i>-ki/-iki // -īki, əki</i>	[?]	<i>-ki/-iki // -əki</i>	<i>-šil/-εši</i>	<i>-ki</i>
3c.	<i>-hi/-ihi // -īhi, əhi</i>	[?]	<i>-hi/-ihi // -əhi</i>	<i>-šil/-εši</i>	<i>-hi</i>
Pl.					
1c.	<i>ən/-iən // -yən, īn</i>	<i>ən/-yən // -ēn</i>	<i>ən/-iyən // -əyn</i>	<i>ən/-εn</i>	<i>-ən</i>
2m.	<i>kəm/-ikəm // -īkəm</i>	<i>kum/-īkum // -ōkum</i>	<i>kəm/-ikəm // -ōkəm</i>	<i>-kum/-εkum</i>	<i>-kən</i>
2f.	<i>kən/-ikən // -īkən</i>	<i>kən/-ikən // -ēkən</i>	<i>kən/-ikən // -īkən</i>	<i>-kən/-εkən</i>	<i>-kən</i>
3m.	<i>həm/-ihəm // -īhəm</i>	<i>hum/-īhum // -ōhum</i>	<i>həm/-ihəm // -ōhəm</i>	<i>-hum/-εhum</i>	<i>-hən,</i> <i>-šən</i>
3f.	<i>sən/-isən // -īsən</i>	<i>sən/-īsən // -īsən</i>	<i>sən/-isən // -īsən</i>	<i>-sen/sεn</i>	<i>-sən</i>

In *ML*, *HL*, *JL*, the suffix pronouns can only be added to a definite noun (with an article): *ML a-ǧərōy-əh* ‘his speech’ (*MQn ǧərōyəh*), *HL a-mkō-kəm* ‘their place’, *JL ērúnésš* ‘his goats’ (indef. form is *ʔerún*).

In *M*, *Hb*, and *H*, the suffix pronoun is different after a noun and after a verb or a preposition. It also varies according to the number of the noun.

In *JL*, pronouns only vary according to the number of the noun but have the same form after a singular noun, a verb or a preposition.

In *S*, there is only one set of suffix pronouns. The 3m. has a *h* or *š* base.

When added to a verb or a noun, the suffix pronoun entails modifications of the basic pattern of the word, vocalic timbre and quantity, syllabic structure and stress:

MQn ǧagēnōṭ-ǧagēnátš ‘her girl’, *ǧagēnūtən-ǧagēnátse* ‘her girls’; *səbūṭ-səbṭáyš* ‘he beat her’, *isūbāṭ-isəbṭōš* ‘he beats her’ *HHf ǧəwōṭə-ǧwōṭīhum* ‘their brothers’. *ML*

nəxrīr > *anxráyri* ‘my nose’. *HL hādōtan* > *hādōtihəm* ‘their hands’, *bəgōd* > *bəgədəyn* ‘he chased us’. *JL rēs* > *éresésən* ‘their heads’, *kórsš* > *kirsšš* ‘he thumped him’.

At the 1st Sg., after some preposition, the suffix pronoun is *-ni*: *MQn hīni*, *ML háyni*, *HL hāni*, *JL hīni* ‘for me’. In *HL*, *-ni* is used with numerous prepositions: *tāni* (*ML tey*, *JL tō*), *bāni* (*ML bī*, *JL bī*), *əm-bēnyēni wə bēnyūk* ‘between me and you’; and with most verbs: *ənkʹəni* ‘he came to me’, *bəgədəni* ‘he chased me’, but *təxōmi* ‘you want me’; after many transitive verbs, the dependent pronoun is suffixed to the accusative marker *t*: *MQn sīnk tēs* ‘I saw her’.

Some prepositions in *M*, *HHf*, *HL*, *JL* are followed by the same affixed pronouns as the plural nouns: *MQn nxālīhəm*, *HHf*, *JL lxinúhum* ‘under them’.

In *MDt*, the suffix pronouns, after some prepositions, such as *đār* ‘on’, *mən* ‘from’, are identical to those used with the singular nouns: *đeyrək* ‘on you’ (but *būk* ‘to you’), *mənk* ‘from you’, and *đeyrki*, *mənki* (Du.2) (but *bīki*).

In *S* personal suffixes are very rarely suffixed directly to nouns or verbs (cf. below 3.8).

After a verb, the pronoun is usually suffixed to the accusative marker *t* or a prep. *SQa*, *SQb sīnək teh* ‘I saw him’, *SQa bīdə ʹayhən* ‘he lied to them’.

2.1.2 Interrogative pronouns:

mōn (M, H), *mūn* (Hb), *mān*(B), *mun* (J), *mon* (S) ‘who?’

mun mən (J) ‘which of?’

hēsən (M), *īnīh* (Hb), *hīnē* (B), *hāsən*, *hāsən* (H), *ʹinē* (J), *īnem* (S) ‘what?’.

2.2 Nouns

Substantives have two genders (masculine and feminine), and three numbers (singular, dual and plural). Johnstone (1975:112) claims that the dual is obsolete in the MSAL, except in *S*; yet, it seems that nominal dual is still vivid in *MY* and *Hb*.

2.2.1 Singular nouns

2.2.1a The main patterns are:

'CvC(v)C, 'Cv:C(v)C, C(v)'CvC, C(v)'Cv:C, and in *J* 'Cv'CvC, and for the quadrilaterals CvCCv:C, or 'CvCCvC in *S*:

ML dabh, *HHf debh* ‘honey’, *HL dəbš* ‘date-syrup’, *JL debš* ‘honey’; *SQb ʹans* ‘elbow’;

ML šāhar, *MQnB šāhar*, *HL šahr* ‘back’; *MQnB*, *HHf*, *SQa šxōf*, *ML šəxōf*, *HL šxōf*, *JL nūsub* ‘milk’; *ML gəlēt*, *JL gālēt* ‘mistake’ (with a diphthongization in *HL*: *gəlawt*).

MQnB, *ML kətmīm*, *HL kətmáym*, *JL kətmím*, *SQa kətmehəm* ‘fresh butter’.

2.2.1b The feminine marker is the ending *-(v)t* in *M*, *Hb*, *B*, *H*, *J*, and *-h* in *S* (but *-t* occurs at the dual and plural). The vowel preceding the morpheme *e* is /o/, /u/, /i/ (long or short, according to the phonological system of the language):

JL ngəst ‘pollution’; *MQn gağēnōt*, *ML gəgənōt*, *JL gəbgót*, *SML ʹəwgínoh* ‘girl’; *ML gəggēt*, *HHf gəgīt* ‘big girl’; *MQn*, *ML rēsīt*, *HL rəsēt* ‘snake’; *SQb gázəh* (Du. *gázéti*) ‘woman’; *MQn hərmēt*, *ML hərmēt*, *JL hərmét* ‘woman’; *JL šədfét* ‘chance’; *MQn kənəmīt*, *ML kənəmūt*, *BM kənəmōt*, *JL šínít* ‘louse’.

In *S*, there exists also a feminine form marked by a vocalic opposition: *SQa táhrər* (m.), *táhrer* (f.) ‘wild goat’, *sībæb* (m.), *sībīb* (f.) ‘old’.

In *M*, *B*, *H* and *J*, some feminine nouns (borrowings from Arabic) have an *-h* ending:

MQn makīnah ‘motor’, *BM ḥeśmeh* (but *BML ḥeśmēt*) ‘honour’, *HL kāmāh* ‘measure’, *ML tāwrāh*, *JL tōrāh* ‘revolution’.

2.2.2 Dual

The dual marker for nouns is the suffix *-i*. In M, Hb, H, J nouns are usually followed by the numeral 2. The speakers don't consider this *-i* as a nominal suffix, but as a numeral prefix; in *MQn /ḥarmēti-trīti/* is pronounced [*ḥarmēt-itrīti*]. In S, the numeral is usually omitted: *SQb fārḥāši d-bērki* ‘(the two) articulations of (the two) knees’. In M, Hb, H, J, some duals function as plurals (Cf. Johnstone 1975:113).

2.2.3 Plural

As in all the languages of the South Semitic group, the MSAL have internal and external plural. A few plurals are suppletive plurals.

In all languages, one singular noun may have several plural forms: *ML* (Sg. *šaffāy*) *šafōf*, *šafāwwat*, *šafūtān* ‘elbows’; *HHf* (Sg. *segerēt*) *sigōrtā*, *šogēr* ‘paths in a mountain’.

2.2.3a Internal plurals

Johnstone (1975:113) compares some of these plural patterns with Ethiopic rather than with Arabic.

The singular pattern is modified but does not have an affix. The most common patterns are ((Sg.)/Pl.):

- CCv:C (plural of many feminine singulars)

ML (*nəḫtāt*)/*nəḫāt*, *JL* (*nəḫtōt*)/*nəḫōt* ‘dots’; *HHf* (*nəbōt*)/*nbēb*, *JL* (*nibbōt*)/*nbēb* ‘bees’.

- CCv:CC, CCvCC (in J CC'Cv'CC), for quadrilaterals (the long vowel may sometimes be diphthongized, or stressed (in J only where *w > b*):

MQnB (*mkaṭār*)/*mkaṭār* ‘caravans’; *ML*, *HL* (*mənḫāl*, *mənḫəl*)/*mənōḫəl*, *JL* (*múnḫul*)/*minēbḫəl* ‘sieves’; *JL* (*mənšēf*)/*minēbšēf* ‘mattresses’.

A very common internal plural for quadrilaterals is based on a vocalic opposition in the last syllable: *i/e*, or *ə* (S), (sing.) > *o*, *ɔ/u* (pl.).

MQn, *ML* (*ḥənīd*)/*ḥənōd*, *JL* (*nīd*)/*nūd* ‘waterskins’; *MQn*, *ML*, *HL* (*nḫērīr*)/*nḫērōr*, *JL* (*naxrēr*)/*naxrōr*, *SQb* (*náhrər*)/*náhrur* ‘noses’; *HHf* (*iḳéybīn*)/*iḳéybūn* ‘scorpions’.

Some plurals patterns correspond to Arabic *plural of plural*:

ML (*xaf*)/*xafāwf* ‘hoofs’ (in J *ɔxfōf*); *HL* (*mōtān*)/*mātāwwān* ‘flesh of backs’ (cf. Pl. *ML* *mātūn*, *JL* *motún*).

2.2.3b External plurals

The singular pattern may or may not be modified, and the plural is marked by a suffixed and/or a prefixed morpheme *e*.

- Suffixes *-vt* and *-(v)tə(n)*. Many feminine nouns, and some masculine nouns have this pattern:

ML (*təmriṭ*)/*təmartān* ‘ear lobes’; *MQn* (*hangəlūt*)/*hangáltān* ‘jellyfishes’; *HHf* (*ḥōrām*)/*ḥayr ḥmte* ‘roads’; *SQa* (*rēy^heh*)/*re^hihētān* ‘female herders’.

- Suffix *-t*, *-h*/-*t* in S:

MQnB (*gəmmōl*)/*gəmmōlāt* ‘camel drivers’; *HHf* (*kāšər*)/*kašōrt* ‘leopards’; *HL* (*yārāb*)/*yārābāt* ‘sacks’; *SQa* (*šáhrəh*)/*šáhrət* ‘sisters-in-law’.

- Suffix *-īn* and *-ihān* (in S):

MQn (*dənōb*)/*dənbīn* ‘tails’; *ML* (*kəroš*)/*kərsáyin*; *HHf* (*kəroš*)/*kərsīn* ‘mosquitoes’; *HL* (*šōb*)/*šōbbēn*, *ML* *šōbbīn* ‘monitor lezards’; *JL* (*gífún*)/*gəfənin* ‘tulchans’; *SQb* (*ʕéyg*)/*ʕəgəhən* ‘men’; *SHr* (*kəʕód*)/*kuʕédén* ‘camel-calves’.

- This type of plural includes those with an *m*- prefix, and those with ʔ , with or without a suffix *-t/-h(S)* masculine, and *-tən* feminine. (cf. Ar. *broken* plurals *m-CāCīC*, *ʔCCāC*, *ʔCCīCat*):

ML (*nīdēx*)/*mənādəx* ‘smokes’; *JL* (*kalbət*)/*mkalbət* ‘turnings (on a path)’;

HHt (*bīr*)/*hābyōr* ‘wells’; *HL* (*slēb*)/*həslōb* ‘weapons’, (*gawf*)/*həgwəft* ‘chests’; *MQn* (*bōb*)/*həbwəbət* ‘doors’; *ML* (*hirīt*)/*ahyártən* ‘female donkeys’, (*hāwš*)/*əhwəšət* ‘ponds’; *JL* (*šōb*)/*əšbət* ‘monitor lezards’; *SQa* (*kódəher*)/*ʔakdərəh* ‘pots’.

- In *JL* (cf. also Johnstone 1975:113), some plurals with *-i* come from the dual. They are used (and felt) as plural:

JL *lhōti* ‘cows’, *gagénāti* ‘girls’, *hérnāti* ‘mountains (dim.)’.

2.3 Adjectives

Like nouns, adjectives have two genders, but the plural of many adjectives is often of common gender. Except in S where there is a dual for adjectives, adjectives in the other MSAL have only two numbers.

Usually, feminine is marked by a *-t/-h* ending added to the masculine form, but, in S, it may also be marked by a vocalic opposition:

SQa *gəʕəlhal*, *gəʕəlhəl* ‘round’, *xəbxəb*, *xəbxəb* ‘clumsy’ (it is very scarce in M: *MJahn* *duwōl*, *diwōl* ‘worn out (pl.)’);

In all the MSAL, there are feminine adjectives without a feminine marker:

MQn *hanōb*, *ML* *nōb*, *BM* *nawb*, *JL* *um* ‘big’;

it is often the case for adjectives concerning only females: *SQa* *gāhləl* ‘pregnant’, *ībši* ‘gravid’.

Many adjectival patterns are common with nouns. The *C(v)CīīC* (or *CvCáyC*) pattern is, like in Arabic, more common with adjectives than with nouns:

MQn, *HL* *dəwīl*, *ML* *dəw áyl* ‘old’; *MQn* *səx īf*, *ML* *səx áyf*, *JL* *sxíf* ‘idiot’; *SQa* *kaʕánhen* ‘curved’.

Although in M and H, only the passive participle functions as an adjective, there are some adjectives patterns *Cā/āC əC* (cf. Ar. *CāCīC*): *ML*, *HL* *ʔāgəz*, *JL* *ʕəgəz* ‘lazy’.

In J, the participle with *-ún* (f. *-únt*) suffix also has an adjectival (and sometimes adverbial) function: *JL* *sədrún*, *sədrúnt* ‘stiff’, *rəgf ún* ‘timid’ (and ‘shivery’); there are also some examples in *HHf*.

Some examples of adjectives: Sg.m., f./(Du.m., f.)/Pl. m., f. (or common)

HHf *reḳēḳ*, *reḳēḳət*/*riḳóḳ*, *riḳóḳte* ‘thin’; *bəṭəl*, *bəṭələt*/*bīṭəl*, *biṭóltə* ‘bad’; *fərhun*, *fərhənt*/*fərhānīn*, *fərhānintə* ‘happy’; *ʕəfər*, *ʕafərót*/*ʕāfər*. *ML* *ʔəfər*, *ʔāfərōt*/*ʔāfər*. *BML* *ʕāfər*, *ʕafərēt*/*ʕāfər*. *HL* *ʔāfər*, *ʔāfərōt*/*ʔāfər*. *JL* *ʕəfər*, *ʕafirót*/*ʕafirétə*. *SQa* *ʕəfər*, *ʕəfəroh*/*ʕəfri*, *ʕəfərót*/*ʕəfirīhin*, *ʕəfərētən*. *SJms* gives a common pl. *ʕāfirétən*, ‘red’.

In J, Hand mainly in S, the phrase: *ḏ/di-* + imperf./perf., often has an adjectival function (cf. above, 3.6.2)

HL *ḏ-isdōd* ‘(it is) sufficient’, *ḏ-kāṭak* ‘(I am) tired’, *ḏ-ḳtōt* ‘(she is) tired’; *JL* *də-mīlót* ‘full (f.)’; *SQa* *di-škər*, *di-škəroh*/*di-škəro*, *di-škərtə*/*di-škər* ‘kind.’

2.4 Deictics

2.4.1 Deictics referring to persons and things (demonstratives) : m., f./pl.

	near, 'this'	distance, 'that'
MY	<i>dōm, dīməh/lyōm</i>	<i>dēk(ə)m, dīk(ə)m/lyēk(ə)m</i>
ML	<i>dōməh, dīməh/əlyōməh</i>	<i>đákməh, đókməh/əlyákməh</i> & <i>đēk, đáyk/əlyēk</i>
Hb	<i>đen, đin/lōn</i>	<i>đóhun, đíhun/lóh(un)</i>
B	<i>đánəməh, đan, đin/īlūn</i>	
H	<i>đā, đī, đōn, देंəh/lō^h(HHf lénəh)</i> <i>đánəməh, đánəməh/lóləməh(lónəməh)</i>	<i>đēk, đīk/lək</i> or <i>đākəməh, ókəməh/ʔóləməh</i>
J	<i>đénu, đínu/izénu</i>	<i>đóhun, đúhun/izóhún</i> (nearby) <i>đókun, đúkun/izók</i> (further away)
S	<i>də^h, de^h&dəš/dihil/lénha</i> <i>dódha, dí dha/ólha*</i>	<i>dək, dəš/diki</i> <i>dódbok, dídbok/ólbok**</i>

*In some S dialects *ha* and not *ha*. *dódha* = *də-d-h/ha* <this-which/who-here>. One also seldom finds *dódbo^h*.

** *dódbok* = *də-d-bok* <this-which/who-there>

In all the MSAL (except S for demonstratives), there are deictic forms with an *-m* or *-n* ending (cf. adverbs).

2.4.2 Deictics referring to space

	near, 'here'	distance, 'there'
M	<i>boh, būm, bōm, bawməh</i>	<i>həlōk, həlókəməh</i>
Hb	<i>boh, bōmə, būwə</i>	<i>həlōh, həlók, həlókəmə</i>
H	<i>būməh</i>	<i>həlōk, həlókəməh</i>
J	<i>bo, bun, bíun</i>	<i>lhōn, lókun</i>
S	<i>ha/ha, bo^h</i>	<i>bok</i>

In S *ha/ha* and *bo^h* are used in compounds (cf. above): *lha/lha, lbo^h* 'here'; *diboh* /ʔid-boh/ 'to here'; as *boh* in *MQn*: *het lboh* 'bring here!'.

2.4.3 Deictics referring to time

'now': M *şəřōməh*, Hb *нāşлпə*, B *nāşəřəh*, H *nōşəh, nōşəřəh*, J *na^ʕşánu, náşanu*, S *ná^ʕa*.

'today': M *yemóh, yəmə*, Hb *axór*, B *hōr*, H *yəməh*, J *şhər, şher*, S *her*.

'tomorrow': M *gəhməh, gəhəməh*, Hb *gémə*, B *gəhəməh*, H *gəhəməh*, J *qəřəřəh*, S *qeriri, qerəřəh*.

'yesterday': M *yemšī, yəməšē*, Hb *əmsī*, J *ʔəmsīn*, S *ʔəmsīn*.

Anteriority and posteriority may be expressed with prepositions: 'before-' (M *fənə*, JErreur! Signet non défini. *fənē*-, S *fəne*-, *fon*-) or 'after' (M *bād*, J, S *ba^ʕd*) plus temporal adverbs:

M *fənəməš*, J *fənəmsīn* 'before yesterday'. M *bād gəhməh* 'after tomorrow'.

2.5 Numerals

The numerals in the MSAL have phonological, morphological and syntactical characteristics that distinguish them from Arabic and are of great interest for Semitic comparatism (cf. Johnstone 1983:225).

2.5.1 Cardinals m./ f.:

<i>MSr</i> (<i>ML</i>) <i>HHf</i>	<i>HL</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>SQb</i> (<i>SQa</i>)
<i>tāt/ tīt</i> (<i>tāt/ táy</i>) <i>ṭat/ ṭeyt</i>	<i>tād/ ṭet</i>	<i>ṭad/ ṭit</i>	<i>ṭad/ tēy^h</i> (<i>ṭad/ ṭah</i>)
<i>troh/ trīt</i> (<i>tārō, troh/ tráy</i> , <i>trēt</i>) <i>tro, troh/ tārīt</i>	<i>tārō/ tārāt</i>	<i>troh/ trēt</i>	<i>trōh/ trih</i> (<i>trōh/ treh</i>)
<i>šhalét/ šgatīt</i> (<i>šhālīt/ š ātáy</i>) <i>šhālót/ šhatéyt</i>	<i>šaláyš/ šāf(ṭ)áy</i>	<i>šhalét/ šotét</i>	<i>šéleh/ sé^otəh</i> (<i>šíleh/ sógtəh</i>)
<i>hárba/ərbōt</i> (<i>árba/ərbōt</i>) <i>ʔárbaʔ/ ʔərb^oáwt</i>	<i>ʔōrba/ rəbōt</i>	<i>ʔórbaʔ/ ʔərba^oót</i>	<i>ʔǎrbəʔ/ ʔírba^o</i> (<i>ʔérbēʔ/ ʔərbΛ^oah</i>)
<i>xáyməh/ xmōh</i> (<i>xáyməh/ xəmmōh</i>) <i>xāməh/ xəmmóh</i>	<i>xáyməh/ xəmmōh</i>	<i>xīš/ xōš</i>	<i>ḥīməh/ hóyməh</i> (<i>xōməh/ xōməy^h</i>)
<i>hett/ yittīt</i> (<i>hət/ yəttīt</i>) <i>het/ htet</i>	<i>hättəh/ yəttēt</i>	<i>šét/ štət</i>	<i>yhá^ot/ hītəh</i> (<i>yó^ot/ yētəh</i>)
<i>hōba/ yibéyt</i> (<i>hōba/ yəbáy</i>) <i>hōba/ hebí^oat</i>	<i>hōba/ həbáy</i>	<i>šōʔ/ šəb^oát</i>	<i>yhōbəʔ/ hīb^oə</i> (<i>yēbəʔ/ yēbə^oəh</i>)
<i>tmōni/ təmənēt</i> (<i>tmōni/ təmənyēt</i>) <i>temēni/ temēnit</i>	<i>təmōni/ təmənēt tōni/ tīnót</i>		<i>témōni/ téməneh</i> (<i>təmēni/ təmənəh</i>)
<i>səʔ/ séyt</i> (<i>sē/ sāt</i>) <i>soʔ/ sá^oet</i>	<i>sē/ sāʔáy, səʔáy</i>	<i>soʔ/ sa^oét</i>	<i>səʔ/ sé^o eh</i> (<i>saʔ/ sé^oəh</i>)
<i>āsər/ āsərīt</i> (<i>ʔāsər/ ʔāsərīt</i>) <i>ʔāsər/ ʔāsərīt</i>	<i>ʔāsər/ ʔāsərēt</i>	<i>ʔāsər/ ʔāsírét</i>	<i>ʔāsər/ ʔéséreh</i> (<i>ʔāsər/ ʔésíreh</i>)

The numbers 1 and 2 are adjectives, and 2 follows the noun in the dual. For 3-10, masculine numbers enumerate feminine nouns, and feminine numbers masculine nouns. They are usually followed by nouns at the plural form, and above 13 the noun is either plural or singular. After 12, 22, 32 ... the noun may be in the dual:

SQa ʔesíreh w^u - trōh šhēri <10 and-2 month(Du.)> ‘twelve months’.

In all MSAL, numerals used after 10 are usually Arabic borrowings. But some old Bedouin speakers still use the MSAL's number system above 10, specially for counting livestock. This system is as follows:

Number and noun agree in gender from 11 to 19. From 11 onwards the structure of numbers is: *tens* + ‘and’ + *units*

ML 11 *ʔāsərīt w- ɸāt* (HHf *ʕasərīt w-ɸat*) (+ m.), *ʔōsər w-ɸáyɸt* (+f.); 12 *ʔāsərīt w-trōh* (HHf *ʕasərīt w-troh*), *ʔōsər w-tráyɸt*, 13 *ʔāsərīt wə-sātáyɸt* (HHf *ʕasərīt w-šatáyɸt*), *ʔōsər wə-šhəlīt ...*

The tens, when not borrowed from Arabic, are made by suffixation of *-ah*, *-oh*, *-øh*, as in the Semitic languages of Ethiopia:

20 *ML ʕásərəh*, *SQa ʕásrəh*, but *MQn āšrīn*, and *JL ʕésəri*;

30 *JL səlóh*, *SQa səláh*, but *ML s əlátáyɸn*.

In S, from 30 onwards in some dialects and 40 in others, the multiples of 10 are constructed as follows: *units* + 10 (Pl.):

30 *SL séle ʕésárhen* <three tens>; *SQaB* 40 *ʔərbaʕ ʕasárən*, 50 *xéyma ʕasárən*, 60 *yáʕt ʕasárən*; 70 *yəbaʕ ʕasárən*; 80 *témene ʕasárən*; 90 *seʕ ʕasárən*.

100 *MQn miyēt*, *ML əmyīt*, HHf, *míyut*, *JL mút*, *SQa mít*. To count livestock, Bedouins use specific items:

ML ɸahōb ‘herd of about 100 camels’; *JL ɸəhōb* ‘herd of 15 camels (and upwards)’; *SQaB méhbər* ‘100 head of cattle’ *trəh méhbəri* ‘200’

1000 *MQn ʔelf*, *ML ʔēf*, *JL ʔof*, *SQb ʔalf*

In M, Hb, J and partially in H (Johnstone 1975:115-6), specific numerals are used for counting days above 2. The noun ‘day’ (f.) is at the singular form:

	<i>ML</i>	<i>HHf</i>	<i>JL</i>
3 days	<i>sələt yūm</i>	<i>shelt yōm</i>	<i>sələt ēm</i>
4	<i>rība --</i>	<i>rībaʕ --</i>	<i>rīʕ --</i>
5	<i>xáyməh --</i>	<i>xām --</i>	<i>xīš --</i>
6	<i>šīdət --</i>	<i>hett --</i>	<i>šet --</i>
7	<i>šība --</i>	<i>šēbaʕ--</i>	<i>šīʕ --</i>
8	<i>tīmən --</i>	<i>tēmən--</i>	<i>tīn --</i>
9	<i>tīsa --</i>	<i>tēsaʕ --</i>	<i>təʕʕ --</i>
10	<i>ʔáyəsər --</i>	<i>ʕésər --</i>	<i>ʕásər</i>

2.5.2 Ordinals

The ordinals in *ML* and *HL* are formed on the pattern of the *nomen agentis*, some ordinals are based on the ancient root of number; in *JL*, the data is not complete (cf. Johnstone 1975: 116); in *SL*, the ordinals, beyond *néšher* ‘1st’, are formed by the numeral preceded by *di-*: *di-h(y)óbeh* <which (is) seven> ‘seventh’

	<i>ML</i> m./ f.	<i>HL</i>	<i>JL</i>
1rst	<i>hāwīl/ hāwəlīt</i>	<i>hāwīl/ hāwəlēt</i>	<i>ʔénfīl/ ʔénfēt</i>
2nd <gyr>	<i>məšəgər/ məšəgərēt</i>	<i>məšəgər/ məšəgərēt</i>	<i>mš/ šágər/</i>
3rd	<i>sələt/ səwtīt</i>	<i>sələs/ səlśət</i>	[missing]
4th	<i>rōbaʔ/ rəbáyɸt</i>	<i>rēbaʔ/ rəbat</i>	[missing]
5th	<i>xōməs/ xəmhēt xāməh/ xāmhət</i>		<i>xīs/</i>
6th	<i>šōdəs/ šədtēt</i>	<i>hēt/ hētət</i>	[missing]
7th	<i>sōbəʕ/ səbáyɸt</i>	<i>hēbaʔ/ hēbaʔt</i>	[missing]

8th	<i>tōmən / təmənēt</i>	<i>tēmən/ tēmnət</i>	[missing]
9th	<i>tōsaʔ / tāsáyt</i>	<i>tēsaʔ tēsaʔt</i>	[missing]
10th	<i>ʔáyšəŋʔ ʔāsəŋrēt ʔāsəŋʔ ʔāsəŋt</i>		[missing]

2.6 Verbs

2.6.1. Root and Derived measures

Like all Semitic languages, the MSAL have a verbal basic measure and derived measures. There is also a vocalic internal passive.

2.6.1a The basic measure

There are two different types of basic verbs, based on semantic and morphological criteria. The patterns of active verbs (Johnstone's type A) are: $C\mathcal{C}\bar{o}/\bar{u}C$, $C\mathcal{C}\mathcal{C}$, and that of middle verbs (state verbs, middle-passive verbs, verbs whose subject is also the patient; Johnstone's type B) are: $C\bar{C}\mathcal{C}$, $C\acute{C}\mathcal{C}$. All MSAL have, with some verbs of type A, an internal vocalic passive, whose patterns are: $C\bar{o}/\bar{u}C\mathcal{C}$, $C\bar{i}/\acute{e}C\mathcal{C}$. This is a very dynamic passive formation in S.

2.6.1b The derived measures

As in all Semitic languages, the derived themes are characterized by internal vocalic modification, infixation (*-t-*), and prefixation (*h-/ʔ*, *š/š̄*, *n-*), but no derived measure is formed by gemination.

A prefixed vowel may occur in the theme with internal modification. For each verb, the prefixed morpheme *h-/ʔ* cannot be found in all the forms of the conjugation.

In some cases, type A and B verbs have a different pattern for the same derived measure.

Table of verbal themes (\bar{o}/\bar{u} in *M*, \acute{e}/\acute{i} in *JL* and *S*.)

Simple verb	<i>M</i>	<i>HL</i>	<i>JC/E</i>	<i>S</i>
A	$C\mathcal{C}\bar{o}C$	$C\mathcal{C}\bar{o}C$	$C\mathcal{C}\mathcal{C}/C\mathcal{C}\mathcal{C}$	$C\mathcal{C}\mathcal{C}$
B	$C\acute{C}\mathcal{C}$	$C\acute{C}\mathcal{C}$	$C\acute{C}\mathcal{C}$	$C\acute{C}\mathcal{C}$
passive	$C\mathcal{C}\bar{o}C$	$C\mathcal{C}\bar{o}C$	$C\mathcal{C}\bar{o}C$	$C\acute{C}\mathcal{C}$
Derived themes				
intern modif.	$(a)C\bar{o}C\mathcal{C}$	$(a)C\acute{C}\mathcal{C}$	$(e)C\bar{o}C\mathcal{C}/C\mathcal{C}\mathcal{C}$	$C\mathcal{C}\mathcal{C}, C\acute{C}\mathcal{C}$
- <i>t-</i> infix	(A) $C\bar{a}/\acute{a}tC\mathcal{C}$	$C\acute{a}tC\mathcal{C}$	$C\acute{t}C\mathcal{C}/C\mathcal{C}C\mathcal{C}$	$C\acute{t}C\mathcal{C}$
	(B) $\mathcal{C}t\mathcal{C}\bar{o}C$	$\mathcal{C}t\mathcal{C}\bar{o}C$	$\mathcal{C}t\mathcal{C}\bar{o}C$	
pref. <i>h-/ʔ</i>	$(h\mathcal{C})CC\bar{o}C$	$(a)CC\bar{o}C$	$(e)/(\acute{e})CC\bar{o}C$	$\mathcal{C}CC\mathcal{C}$
pref. <i>š-</i> (A)	$\acute{s}\mathcal{C}CC\bar{o}C$	$\acute{s}\mathcal{C}CC\bar{o}C$	$\acute{s}/\acute{s}\mathcal{C}CC\bar{o}C$	$\acute{s}\mathcal{C}CC\mathcal{C}$
	(B) $\acute{s}\mathcal{C}\bar{o}C\mathcal{C}$	$\acute{s}\mathcal{C}\mathcal{C}\mathcal{C}$	$\acute{s}/\acute{s}\mathcal{C}\bar{o}C\mathcal{C}$	$\acute{s}\mathcal{C}\bar{o}C\mathcal{C}^*$
pref. <i>n-</i>	$(\mathcal{C})nC\bar{o}C\mathcal{C}$	$(\mathcal{C})nC\bar{o}C\mathcal{C}$	$(\mathcal{C})nC\bar{o}C\mathcal{C}$	$(\mathcal{C})nC\bar{o}C\mathcal{C}$
Quad.	$(\mathcal{C})nC\mathcal{C}C\bar{o}C$	$(\mathcal{C})nC\mathcal{C}C\bar{o}C$	$(\mathcal{C})nC\mathcal{C}\bar{o}C\mathcal{C}$	$(\mathcal{C})nC\bar{o}C\mathcal{C}\mathcal{C}$

- Theme with internal modification (and possibly vocalic preformant)

In the M of Mahra, the derived theme does not have a prefix, and in the M of Dhofar, in H and J, it is often missing when C1 is a voiceless consonant (ejective consonants are considered as voiced consonants).

In all languages, the imperfect has an augmentative $-(\mathcal{C})n$ (acc./ inac. ind./ subj. 3 m.sg):

<i>ML, MQn</i>	(a)CǫCǎC/yǎCǎCCǎn/yǎ/ǐCǫCǎC (+ variants)
<i>HL</i>	(a)CǎCǎC/yǎCǎCǎCǎn/yǎCǎCǎC
<i>JL</i>	(e/ε)CǎCǎC/ǐCǎCCǎn/yCǎCǎC (ó or ǒ) (+ variants)
<i>S</i>	CǎCǎC/ǐCǎCǎn /ǐCǎCǎC (and CǎCǎC/yǎCǎCǎCǎn/yǎCǎCǎC)

The classification of these verbs as ‘intensive-conative’ (Johnstone 1975, 1981) does not seem to hold when one considers the semantic value of the verbs in all languages. When the form is derived from a simple verbal form, it is always transitive and the meaning is usually factitive or causative. When no corresponding simple form exists, the derived verb can be transitive or intransitive; some are denominative:

MQnB rōkǎb / irǎkbǎn/ lǎrōkǎb ‘to put (a pot) on the fire’ = *ML arōkǎb* = *HL arēkǎb* = *JL erókub* ‘to put (a pot) on the fire’ (*rēkǎb* (type B, trans.) ‘to ride’); *MQnB wūṭi / iwāṭiyǎn* = *HL awēṭa* = *JL ōṭi* ‘to bring down’; *ML MQn ṣōli / iṣályǎn/ lṣōli* = *ML aṣōli* = *HL aṣāl* = *JL eṣōli* = *SJms ṣáli* ‘to pray’; *JL egódǎl / gódǎlǎn/ ygódǎl* ‘to tie, chain (a prisoner)’; *SQa ḥōbi / iḥōbiǎn* = *ML ḥōbi* ‘(baby) to crawl’; *SJms zōmil / yzōmilǎn* ‘to saddle’.

In M, J, S some verbs have a different pattern:

SQa gēdǎḥ/ igīdhǎn/ lígdǎḥ ‘to come’, *ḥīsǎb/ iḥē sbǎn/ liḥsáb* ‘to count’, *šī/ tšīn* (Sg.2f.)/ *tšēi* (Sg.2f.) ‘to listen’; *ML sēwǎṭ/ yǎsǎwǎṭ/ yǎsēwǎṭ* ‘to consult’.

In J, verbs with C2 = *h* and *x* ‘have both the *ǎCǎCǎC* and *ǎCCǎC* pattern’ (Johnstone 1981:xxi).

In all MSAL there are also some idiosyncratic verbs of both types (*id.*:xxv-xxvi).

- Theme with *-t-* infix

In all languages, except S, there are two derived forms with *-t-*:

M, H (a, ǎ)CǎtCǎC/yǎCtǎCǎ(ǎ)C/ǐ/yǎCtǎ(ǎ)CǎC (type A verbs)

(a, ǎ)CtǎCǎ(ǎ)C/yǎCtǎCǎCǎ(ǎ)C/ǐ(ǎ)Cǎn/yǎCtǎCǎ(ǎ)C (type B)

J CǎtCǎC/yǎCtǎCǎC/yǎCtǎCǎC (verbs type A) = Hb

ǎCtǎCǎC/yǎCtǎCǎCǎn/yǎCtǎCǎC (type B). But in Johnstone some verbs are irregular (cf. Johnstone 1981: xxiii-xxiv).

S CǎtCǎC/ǐCtǎCǎC

Let us remind here that in M, H and J, *-t-* induces gemination and gemination shifts within the word..

The suffix *-n* occurs in the imperfect of type B verbs.

This form (in reference to Arabic) was classified as causative and reflexive, but the value is more often that of a middle verb, not a causative. The derived verbs do not always correspond to a simple theme:

MQn stǎlǎb / istǎlibǎn/ lstǎlǎb ‘to be armed, carry arms’ = *ML ǎstǎlǎb*; *ML xǎzzǎṭ* ‘to be notched; to have a hare-lip’ (*xǎzǎṭ* ‘to notch’); *ML kǎṭḥǎwl* = *HL ǎktǎḥǎl* = *JL ekṭḥǎl* ‘to apply khol’; *B(ML) yǎmtēzhǎn* ‘he jokes’; *HHf ihtǎmʿǎn* ‘he listens’ (*hēmaʿ* (type B) ‘he hears’); *ML sētǎm* (= *HHf sǎtǎm* another pattern) = *HL sǎtǎm* = *JL sǎtǎm* ‘to buy’ (*sēm* ‘to sell’); *JL xǎttǎm* ‘to be smelly’ (*xihm* ‘to become somewhat smelly’); *fǎtgǎṭ/ yǎftǎgǎṭ/ yǎftǎgǎṭ* ‘to burst; to be a great liar’ (*fǎgǎṭ*, type A, ‘to tell a lie’), *ǎftǎgǎṭ* ‘to be proved to be a liar’ (*efgǎṭ*, type B, ‘to prove s.o. a liar’); *S (ML) ǎstǎ?* <*swy*> ‘to be ready’, *SQa šṭḥédǎn* ‘we got excited’ (*SL šṭḥéd* ‘fear’), *ḳǎṭnǎ* ‘to eat’ (*ḳǎnǎ* ‘to feed’), *tǎktǎnǎḥ* ‘you come back(Sg.2m.)’, *ʿǎṭbǎṭ* ‘to look at’.

Some of these derived verbs have a reciprocal value:

ML batǵǵǵs-ǵm = JL bǵtǵǵǵs-ǵm = HL batǵǵǵs ‘they hated e.o.’ (*bǵǵǵs* ‘to hate’); *Hb ǵntǵwǵǵm = ML ǵntǵwǵǵm = JL ǵntǵǵh* (Pl.3m.) = *S (ML) ǵntǵǵho* (Du.3m.) ‘they fought e.o.’; *SQa yǵštǵǵbǵ* ‘they bit e.o (Du.3m.)’ (*ǵštǵǵb* ‘to bite’), *xǵtnǵǵǵ* ‘they fought e.o. (Du.3m.)’

- Theme with *h-* / *ʔ* preformant

ML, MQn hǵCCǵ(ǵ)C/yǵhǵCCǵ(ǵ)C/yǵ/lhǵ CC ǵC

HL (a)CCǵC/ya CC ǵC/yǵhǵ CC ǵC

JL (e/ǵ)C1C2ǵ(ǵ)C3/ǵC1C1ǵ(ǵ)C2ǵC3/yǵC1C2ǵC3, yǵC1ǵC2C3

S ǵCCǵC/yǵ CǵCǵC(ǵn)/lǵCCǵC

In M (specially in MY), the derivative morpheme *e h-* is often missing at the suf. conj. and indic. pref. conj. but is always present in the subj.

In J, the conjugation may induce the gemination of one of the radical consonants (C1 or C2) at some persons of the imperfect and perfect.

In S, the imperfect may have the augmentative *-n*.

The most common meaning of this form is causative, or factitive:

MQn frǵk/yǵfrǵk/lǵhǵfrǵk ‘to frighten’ (*frǵk*, type B, ‘to be afraid’); *ML xǵlǵf/yǵxǵlǵf/yǵhǵxǵlǵf* ‘to leave behind’ (*xǵlǵf*, type B, ‘to succeed’), *hǵǵbǵr* ‘to make s.o. patient’ (*ǵǵbǵr* ‘to have patience’); *HL ǵkǵǵǵd/yǵǵkǵǵǵd/yǵhǵǵkǵǵǵd* ‘to put down’ (*ǵkǵǵǵd* ‘to descend’) = M; *JL eǵǵǵk* ‘to make so. grind fine’ (*ǵǵǵk* ‘to grind fine’), *eǵǵǵl/yǵǵǵǵǵl/yǵǵǵǵl* ‘to cook’ (*bǵǵǵl*, type B, ‘to be cooked’) = *ML hǵǵhǵǵl/yǵhǵǵhǵǵl/yǵhǵǵhǵǵl* (*bǵhǵǵl*, passive) = *HL abhǵǵl/yǵabhǵǵl/yǵhǵǵhǵǵl* (*bǵhǵǵl*) = *S (Jms) ʔǵbhǵǵl*, passive *ǵbhǵl*, *SHo ǵnkaʔ* / *inǵkiʔen* ‘to bring’, passive *ʔǵnkaʔ*.

The value can also be middle, reflexive or middle passive:

MQnB = ML hǵnǵsǵr ‘to have had enough sleep’, *ML hǵǵrǵwb = JL eǵǵrǵb* ‘to be ill’ = *HL aǵrǵwb* ‘(woman) to feel labour pains’; *SQa ʔesǵǵǵmǵn* ‘we greet each other’ (Du.1, imperf. with suf. *-n*).

- Theme with *ǵ-* preformant (*ǵ-* in cJ)

As with the *-t-* derived form, in all languages, there is a different pattern for type A and B verbs.

M, H ǵǵCCǵ(ǵ)C/l/yǵǵǵCCǵ(ǵ)C/yǵǵǵCCǵǵC (A)

M ǵǵCǵCǵC/yǵǵǵ CCǵǵCǵn/yǵǵǵ CǵCǵC (B)

H ǵǵCǵCǵC/yǵǵǵ CCǵǵC ǵn/yǵǵǵ C ǵCǵC (B)

J ǵǵCCǵC/yǵǵǵ CǵCǵC/yǵ ǵ ǵCCǵC (A)

ǵǵCǵCǵC/yǵǵǵ ǵC ǵCǵn/yǵǵCCǵǵ(ǵ)C (B)

S ǵǵCCǵC/yǵ ǵ ǵCC ǵC/lǵ ǵCǵC ǵC

ǵǵCǵCǵC/yǵǵǵ ǵC ǵCǵn/lǵǵCCǵC (B)

This form is considered as ‘causative-reflexive’, but it also has other values, the most frequent being middle or passive. There are also some denominative verbs :

MQnB ǵǵfǵǵwt ‘she got married’ (*fǵǵk* ‘he gave in marriage’) = *HL ǵǵfǵǵk*; *ML ǵǵǵtǵm* ‘to be rubbed’ (*hǵtǵm* ‘to rub’); *HHf ǵǵǵǵbǵr/lǵǵǵǵǵbǵr/yǵǵǵǵǵbǵr* ‘to inquire’ = *MQn ǵǵǵbǵr = ML = JL ǵǵǵbǵr = SML ǵǵǵǵbǵr*, *ML ǵǵǵtǵ* ‘to be injured’ = *HL ǵǵǵtǵ = eJ ǵǵǵtǵ, cJ ǵǵǵtǵ*, *SQa tǵǵǵbǵn ǵǵǵtǵǵbǵb* ‘they think (Pl.3f.) they will be cured (passive subj., non-occurrence of

pref.)', *šārgah* 'to go out', *šəṭéyləm/yiṣṭéyləmən/ləšṭálm* 'to dinner at night' (cf. Ar. <ḏlm> 'darkness'); *MQnB šənsūk* 'to take a snuff' (*ʿnšīkat* 'pinch of snuff'), *ML šəsxáwī* 'to think so. a fool' (*səxáyf* 'fool').

- Theme with *-n* preformant

All the verbs are intransitive. It mainly concerns quadri-consonantal verbs.

The patterns are: *MQn naCiCūC*, *JL ənCəCəC* and *ənCəCəC*, *S nCáCiC* for tri-consonantal verbs:

MQn ʿmbēi /imbēin /ləmbēi 'to bleat' (*MJahn bʿy* 'to bleat'); *HL ənkáyṭa* 'to be thirsty; to be cut' (*káwṭa* <ktʿ> 'to be tired, to cut', *keṭeyāt* 'thirst'); *JL ənhérək* 'to move' (= *aḥtérék*); *SL nḥádid* 'to thunder';

and for quadri-consonantal verbs *ML, HL ənCəCCəC*; *JL (ə)nCəCCəC* and *(ə)nCəC(ə)CəC*; *S ənCáCəC*,

The meanings are middle, reflexive, reciprocal and sometimes intensive:

ML ənhətmūl 'to be smashed' (= *eJ(ML) nḥətmīl*) = *HL ənhəṭəmōl /yənhəṭəmōl /yənḥəṭməl* (*ḥəṭəməl* 'to smash'); *ML ənhədhūd* 'to jump up and down (to sob (poet.))'; *JL əndaḡdāḡ* 'to be tickled, to twiddle e.o.' (*edaḡdāḡ* 'to twiddle'; *SL ənḡárḡer* 'to be dusty' (*ḡárḡahar* 'dust'), *nmiskenoh* 'she became poor' (*miskīn* 'poor').

In J, the form is used for verbs of colour:

JL ənḡérkīm (*kerkūm* 'yellow dye') 'to become yellow' = *SL inkórkim*, *nʿífírér* 'to become red' (*ʿífər* 'red').

2.6.2 Conjugations

The system is divided between one suffix conjugation (perfect value) and two, sometimes three, prefix conjugations (indicative (imperfect value) and subjunctive; in J, MO, and some verbs in Hb, there is a particular conditional form).

More generally, we can notice:

- The verb has three numbers: singular, plural and, except for the M language of western Mahra, dual including the first person. In J, M of Mahra, and in Hb, the dual is becoming obsolete. In Mahra, the young speakers of M or Hb use more frequently plural instead dual.
- The first two persons (Sg., Du., and Pl.) of the perfect have the suffix /k/, as in the Semitic languages of Ethiopia and in some Yemenite Arabic dialects.
- The vocalic pattern of the subjunctive differs from the imperfect and has a prefix /-/ (for Sg.1c. Du.1c. in all the MSAL, and for Sg.3m., Pl.3m. in some languages).
- Active verbs (type A), and middle verbs (type B) have a specific vocalic pattern at the basic measure.
- There exists a vocalic passive for the basic measure of type A verbs and for some derived measures

The imperfect of some derived verbs has an *-n* suffix.

The future, in the MSAL (except in S has a special form that varies according to the language).

2.6.2.1a Perfect suffixes

	M+Hb+H	J	S
Sg. 1c.	-k	-k	-k
2m.	-k	-k	-k
2f.	-š	-š	-š

	3m.	--	--	--
	3f.	-ōt(ūt) / ēt	-ot	-oh
Du.	1c.	-ki	-šī	-ki
	2c.	-ki	-šī	-ki
	3m.	-ō/ē	-ó	-o
	3f.	-tō/tē	-tó	-to
Pl.	1c.	-ən	-ən	-ən
	2m.	-kəm	-kum	-kən
	2f.	-kən	-kən	-kən
	3m.	-əm/V	--	-V
	3f.	--	--	--

Dialectal variants are in brackets.

V = internal vowel change

2.6.2.1b.α Imperfect affixes

		M+Hb+H	J	S
Sg.	1c.	ə(ε)-	ə	ə
	2m.	t-	t-	t-
	2f.	t...V/i	t...V	t...V
	3m.	yə-(i)	yə	i-
	3f.	t-	t-	t-
Du.	1c.	ə...-o	ə...-ə(ə)	ə...-o
	2c.	t...-o	t...-ə(ə)	t...-o
	3m.	y/i...-o	yə...-ə(ə)	i...-o
	3f.	t...-o	t...-ə(ə)	t...-o
Pl.	1c.	n-	n-	n-
	2m.	t...V-əm	t-	t...V
	2f.	t...-ən	t...-ən	t...-ən
	3m.	y/i...V-əm	y-	i...V
	3f.	t...-ən	t...-ən	t...-ən

2.6.2.1b.β Affixes of the -n suffix imperfect and conditional, for M (Dhofar), and some verbs in Hb, J:

	Singular	Dual	Plural
1c.	? t...-ən	? t...-ay-ən	n...-ən
2m.	t...-ən	t...-ay-ən	t...-ən
2f.	t...-ən	t...-ay-ən	t...-ən
3m.	y...-ən	y...-ay-ən	y...-ən
3f.	t...-ən	t...-ay-ən	t...-ən

2.6.2.1c Subjunctive and conditional

The subjunctive in all the MSAL (except for some derived verbs) differs from the imperfect (as in the Semitic languages of Ethiopia). The conjugation of conditional, when it exists may be inferred from the subjunctive; the whole paradigm has an *n-* suffix.

In the subjunctive and conditional (except in H), an *l*- prefix is added to all vocalic prefixes: Sg.1c. and Du.1c., and in some Mehr dialects of the Mahra and in S Sg.3m., Du.3m. and Pl.3m (/y/ is realized as a vocalic [i]).

2.6.2.1d Non-occurrence of prefixes

In J and S, all the personal prefixes, or the *t*- prefix only, may be absent in the conjugation of some verbs: some derived verbs, simple quadriliteral verbs, simple hollow verbs and in the passive of simple and derived verbs. With these types of verbs, the prefix marker *l*- occurs in the whole paradigm of the subjunctive (and in conditional, in J).

2.6.2.2 Conjugations

2.6.2.2a Simple verb (type A). Active voice.

			Perfect		
	<i>MQn(ML)</i>	<i>HHf</i>	<i>HL</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>SQb</i>
Sg. 1c.	<i>ɾ(ə)kázk</i>	<i>ǧarébək</i>	<i>kətōbək</i>	<i>ḵódórḵ</i>	<i>ʕárəbk</i>
2m.	<i>ɾ(ə)kázk</i>	<i>ǧarébək</i>	<i>kətōbək</i>	<i>ḵódórḵ</i>	<i>ʕárəbk</i>
2f.	<i>ɾ(ə)kézš</i>	<i>ǧarébəš</i>	<i>kətōbəš</i>	<i>ḵódórš(š)</i>	<i>ʕárəbš</i>
3m.	<i>ɾ(ə)kūz</i>	<i>ǧarōb</i>	<i>kətōb</i>	<i>ḵódór</i>	<i>ʕárəb</i>
3f.	<i>ɾ(ə)kəzūt</i>	<i>ǧarəbōt</i>	<i>kətəbōt</i>	<i>ḵódórót</i>	<i>ʕaréboh</i>
Du. 1c.	<i>(rəkázki)</i>	<i>ǧarōbki</i>	<i>kətōb(ə)ki</i>	<i>ḵódóršīšī</i>	<i>ʕarébki</i>
2c.	<i>(rəkázki)</i>	<i>ǧarōbki</i>	<i>kətōb(ə)ki</i>	<i>ḵódóršīšī</i>	<i>ʕarébki</i>
3m.	<i>(rəkəzō)</i>	<i>ǧarébo</i>	<i>kətəbō</i>	<i>ḵódóró</i>	<i>ʕarébo</i>
3f.	<i>(rəkəztō)</i>	<i>ǧarébo</i>	<i>kətəbtō</i>	<i>ḵódórtó</i>	<i>ʕarébato</i>
Pl. 1c.	<i>ɾ(ə)kūzən</i>	<i>ǧarəbən</i>	<i>kətōbən</i>	<i>ḵódórən</i>	<i>ʕarəbən</i>
2m.	<i>ɾ(ə)kázkəm</i>	<i>ǧarəbkum</i>	<i>kətōbkəm</i>	<i>ḵódórkum</i>	<i>ʕarəbkən</i>
2f.	<i>ɾ(ə)kázkən</i>	<i>ǧarəbkən</i>	<i>kətōbkən</i>	<i>ḵódórkən</i>	<i>ʕarəbkən</i>
3m.	<i>rkūzəm(rkáwz)</i>	<i>ǧarəbum</i>	<i>kətōbəm</i>	<i>ḵódór</i>	<i>ʕarub</i>
3f.	<i>ɾ(ə)kūz</i>	<i>ǧarōb</i>	<i>kətōb</i>	<i>ḵódór</i>	<i>ʕarəb</i>

In all MSAL (with very few exceptions in *MQn*) Sg.3m. = Pl.3f. and in J Sg.3m. = Pl.3m. = Pl.3f.

In S, at Sg.3f., the same verb may have *-vh*, and *-vt*: *SQa* *ḥelībəh* or *ḥelībət* ‘it(Sg.f.) is milked’.

In M and H, the vowel of the suffix at Sg.3f., Du.3 is *ē* for passives and some derived measures.

			Imperfect		
	<i>MHf</i>	<i>HHf</i>	<i>HL</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>SQb</i>
Sg. 1c.	<i>ε tōbər</i>	<i>εǧōrəb</i>	<i>əlōbəd</i>	<i>əḵódər</i>	<i>əḵófəd</i>
2m.	<i>tətōbər</i>	<i>tǧōrəb</i>	<i>təlōbəd</i>	<i>tḵódər</i>	<i>təḵófəd</i>
2f.	<i>tətībər</i>	<i>tǧērəb</i>	<i>təlībəd</i>	<i>tḵídər</i>	<i>təḵófíd</i>
3m.	<i>yətōbər</i>	<i>yǧōrəb</i>	<i>yəlōbəd</i>	<i>yḵódər</i>	<i>iyófəd</i>
3f.	<i>tətōbər</i>	<i>tǧōrəb</i>	<i>təlōbəd</i>	<i>t ḵódər</i>	<i>təḵófəd</i>
Du. 1c.	<i>ε tbarō</i>	<i>εǧōrbo</i>	<i>əlbədō</i>	<i>əḵódóró</i>	<i>əḵáfədo</i>
2c.	<i>tətbərō</i>	<i>tǧōrbo</i>	<i>t əlbədō</i>	<i>tḵədéró</i>	<i>təḵáfədo</i>
3m.	<i>yətbərō</i>	<i>yǧōrbo</i>	<i>yəlbədō</i>	<i>yḵódóró</i>	<i>iyáfədo</i>

	3f.	<i>tətbəro</i>	<i>tǰōrbo</i>	<i>t əlbədō</i>	<i>tǰódóró</i>	<i>təḳáfədo</i>
Pl.	1c.	<i>nə tōbər</i>	<i>n ǰōrəb</i>	<i>nəlobəd</i>	<i>n əḳódər</i>	<i>nḳófəd</i>
	2m.	<i>tətábrəm</i>	<i>tǰōrb um</i>	<i>təlobədəm</i>	<i>t əḳódər</i>	<i>təḳófəd</i>
	2f.	<i>tətábrən</i>	<i>tǰōrb ən</i>	<i>təlobədən</i>	<i>t əḳódər ən</i>	<i>təḳófədən</i>
	3m.	<i>yətábrəm</i>	<i>yǰōrb um</i>	<i>yəlobədəm</i>	<i>yḳódər</i>	<i>ikōfəd</i>
	3f.	<i>tətábrən</i>	<i>tǰōrb ən</i>	<i>təlobədən</i>	<i>t əḳódər ən</i>	<i>təḳófədən</i>

The pattern changes in all MSAL, for all verbs, at the dual forms.

The vowel change occurs for S at Pl.3m.

In M (Mahra and Dhofar), Sg.2f. may be *t...V* or *t...V-i*, depending on the type of verb, but many verbs have both conjugations.

In HHf Pl.2,3m. are *tə*, *yə...-um*.

In all MSAL, Pl.2f. = Pl.3f.; in J and S, Pl.2m. = Sg.2m = Sg.3f.

		Subjunctive				
		<i>MQn(ML)</i>	<i>HHf</i>	<i>HL</i>	<i>JL</i>	<i>SQb</i>
Sg.	1c.	<i>lərkēz</i>	<i>ǰǰarēb</i>	<i>əlbəd</i>	<i>lḳódər</i>	<i>ləʕárəb</i>
	2m.	<i>tərkēz</i>	<i>tǰǰarēb</i>	<i>təlbəd</i>	<i>tḳ ódər</i>	<i>təʕárəb</i>
	2f.	<i>tərkēz(tərkēzi)</i>	<i>tǰǰarēb</i>	<i>t əlbəd</i>	<i>tḳídər</i>	<i>təʕárib</i>
	3m.	<i>lərkēz(yərkēz)</i>	<i>yǰǰarēb</i>	<i>yəlbəd</i>	<i>yḳódər</i>	<i>ləʕárəb</i>
	3f.	<i>tərkēz</i>	<i>tǰǰarēb</i>	<i>t əlbəd</i>	<i>t ḳódər</i>	<i>tə ʕárəb</i>
Du.	1c.	<i>(ərakzō)</i>	[?]	<i>əlbədō</i>	<i>ləḳódóró</i>	<i>ləʕrábo</i>
	2c.	<i>(t ərakzō)</i>	[?]	<i>t əlbədō</i>	<i>təḳódóró</i>	<i>təʕrábo</i>
	3m.	<i>(yərakzō)</i>	[?]	<i>yəlbədō</i>	<i>yəḳódóró</i>	<i>ləʕrábo</i>
	3f.	<i>(t ərakzō)</i>	[?]	<i>t əlbədō</i>	<i>təḳódóró</i>	<i>təʕrábo</i>
Pl.	1c.	<i>nərkēz</i>	<i>n ǰǰarēb</i>	<i>n əlbəd</i>	<i>n əḳdér</i>	<i>nəʕ áreb</i>
	2m.	<i>tərkēz əm</i>	<i>tǰǰarēb um</i>	<i>təlbəd əm</i>	<i>t əḳdór</i>	<i>təʕ áreb</i>
	2f.	<i>tərkēz ən</i>	<i>tǰǰarēb ən</i>	<i>təlbəd ən</i>	<i>t əḳdér ən</i>	<i>təʕ áreb ən</i>
	3m.	<i>lərkēz əm</i>	<i>yǰǰarēb um</i>	<i>yəlbəd əm</i>	<i>yəḳdór</i>	<i>ləʕárib</i>
	3f.	<i>tərkēz ən</i>	<i>tǰōrb ən</i>	<i>təlbəd ən</i>	<i>t əḳdér ən</i>	<i>təʕ áreb ən</i>

In *JL* (Johnstone 1981:xvii), the subjunctive dual differs from the imperfect dual (indicative), in *J* (Johnstone 1975:109) the indicative and subjunctive duals are identical.

Imperative

Except in *S*, the imperative form is identical to the subjunctive, without the prefix. In *M*, Sg.2f. always has the suffix *-i*.

In *S*, command is expressed by the indicative imperfect and the prohibitive by the subjunctive form after a negative particle.

Conditional

The conditional does not occur in the Mehri of *M* or in *S*. In *M*(Dhofar), *J*, it occurs rarely and it is limited to unreal hypothetical conditional sentences, the protasis of which is introduced by *lu* (*ML*), *wili* (*HHf*). In *H* and *Hb*, it is limited, under the same conditions, to certain verbs.

The prefixes are those of the indicative imperfect, the suffix is, in the whole paradigm, *-n*.

The pattern of the simple verbs of type A, is like the subjunctive.

	<i>ML</i> (type A)	<i>ML</i> (type B)	<i>HHf</i>	<i>J</i>
	to put st. straight	to get broken	to be, become	to be able ...
Sg. 1c.	<i>larkēzən</i>	<i>lətbīrən</i>	<i>lkīnən</i>	<i>ləḵdīrən</i>
2m.	<i>tarkēzən</i>	<i>tətbīrən</i>	<i>tkīnən</i>	<i>təḵdīrən</i>
2f.	<i>tarkēzən</i>	<i>tətbīrən</i>	<i>tkūnən</i>	<i>təḵdīrən</i>
3m.	<i>yarkēzən</i>	<i>yətbīrən</i>	<i>ykūnən</i>	<i>yəḵdīrən</i>
3f.	<i>tarkēzən</i>	<i>tətbīrən</i>	<i>tkīnən</i>	<i>təḵdīrən</i>
Du. 1c.	<i>larkəzáyən</i>	<i>lətbəráyən</i>	[?]	<i>nəḵdórón</i>
2c.	<i>tarkəzáyən</i>	<i>tətbəráyən</i>	[?]	<i>təḵdórón</i>
3m.	<i>yarkəzáyən</i>	<i>yətbəráyən</i>	[?]	<i>yəḵdórón</i>
3f.	<i>tarkəzáyən</i>	<i>tətbəráyən</i>	[?]	<i>təḵdórón</i>
Pl. 1c.	<i>narkəzáyən</i>	<i>nətbīrən</i>	<i>nkūnən</i>	<i>nəḵdérən</i>
2m.	<i>tarkēzən</i>	<i>tətbīrən</i>	<i>tkīnən</i>	<i>təḵdérən</i>
2f.	<i>tarkēzən</i>	<i>tətbīrən</i>	<i>tkūnən</i>	<i>təḵdérən</i>
3m.	<i>yarkēzən</i>	<i>yətbīrən</i>	<i>ykīnən</i>	<i>yəḵdórón</i>
3f.	<i>təbər</i>	<i>tətbīrən</i>	<i>tkūnən</i>	<i>nəḵdérən</i>

2.6.2.2b Simple verb (type B).

	<i>MHf</i> (<i>ML</i>)	Perfect <i>JL SQa</i>	
	to get broken	to shiver with fear	to get broken
Sg. 1c.	<i>təbrek(təbrək)</i>	<i>fédərk</i>	<i>gésəlk</i>
2m.	<i>təbrek(təbrək)</i>	<i>fédərk</i>	<i>gésəlk</i>
2f.	<i>təbreš(təbrəš)</i>	<i>fédərs'š</i>	<i>gésəls</i>
3m.	<i>tībər</i>	<i>fédər</i>	<i>gésəl</i>
3f.	<i>təbrō(təbrūt)</i>	<i>fīdirót</i>	<i>gésələh</i>
Du. 1c.	<i>təbrəki</i>	<i>fédərs'šī</i>	<i>gésəlki</i>
2c.	<i>təbrəki</i>	<i>fédərs'šī</i>	<i>gésəlki</i>
3m.	<i>təbrō(təbrō)</i>	<i>fédéró</i>	<i>gésələ</i>
3f.	<i>(təbartō)</i>	<i>fédértó</i>	<i>gésəltə*</i>
Pl. 1c.	<i>təbrən</i>	<i>fédərən</i>	<i>gésələn</i>
2m.	<i>təbrəkəm(-bər-)</i>	<i>fédərkum</i>	<i>gésəlkən</i>
2f.	<i>təbrəkən(-bər-)</i>	<i>fédərkən</i>	<i>gésəlkən</i>
3m.	<i>təbrəm</i>	<i>fédər</i>	<i>gésəl</i>
3f.	<i>tībər</i>	<i>fédər</i>	<i>gésəl*</i>

In M Sg.3f. (type B) = Sg.3f. (type A)

The conjugation of type B verb in *HHf* (*təbər*) and *HL* is the same as in M.

In *JL*, Johnstone gives *fédər* as a variant, in all the paradigm of the verb.

Imperfect

	MHf(ML)	JL S (ms)	
			to remember
Sg. 1c.	<i>ε t̄b̄ōi(ə-)</i>	<i>əfédór</i>	<i>ədəkər</i>
2m.	<i>tətb̄ōr</i>	<i>təfédór</i>	<i>tdékər</i>
2f.	<i>tətb̄ēi(təbáyri)</i>	<i>t̄f̄ídír</i>	<i>tdékir</i>
3m.	<i>yətb̄ōr</i>	<i>yfédór</i>	<i>ydékər</i>
3f.	<i>tətb̄ōr</i>	<i>təfédór</i>	<i>tdékər</i>
Du. 1c.	<i>(ətb̄əro)</i>	<i>nfədéró</i>	[?]
2c.	<i>(tətb̄əro)</i>	<i>tfədéró</i>	[?]
3m.	<i>(yətb̄əro)</i>	<i>yfədéró</i>	[?]
3f.	<i>(tətb̄əro)</i>	<i>tfədéró</i>	[?]
Pl. 1c.	<i>nətb̄ōr</i>	<i>nfédór</i>	<i>ndékər</i>
2m.	<i>tətb̄īrəm(tətb̄īr)</i>	<i>tfédér</i>	<i>tdékər</i>
2f.	<i>tətb̄ōrən</i>	<i>tfédór ən</i>	<i>tdékərən</i>
3m.	<i>yətb̄īrəm(yətb̄īr)</i>	<i>yfédér</i>	<i>ydékər</i>
3f.	<i>tətb̄ōrən</i>	<i>tfédór ən</i>	<i>tdékərən</i>

In M (ML), at Pl. the conjugation of indicative type B is the same as the Pl. passive voice (cf. below).

Subjunctive

Conjugation in (JL):

	Sg.	Dual	Pl.
1c.	<i>ləfdór</i>	<i>nfədəró</i>	<i>nəfdór</i>
2m.	<i>təfdór</i>	<i>tfədəró</i>	<i>tədfér</i>
2f.	<i>təfdír</i>	<i>tfədəró</i>	<i>təfdórən</i>
3m.	<i>yəfdór</i>	<i>yfədəró</i>	<i>yədfér</i>
3f.	<i>təfdór</i>	<i>tfədəró</i>	<i>təfdórən</i>

For type B, in M, the subjunctive pattern is the same as the indicative one with a /- prefix before some of the forms.

In S, it was not possible to elicit a full paradigm for the subjunctive forms of type B verbs.

2.6.2.2c The passive

The vocalic passive form occurs in all MSAL. It is particularly frequent in S which makes an important use of the impersonal passive.

The pattern of the passive of simple verbs is (perf./imperf./subj.):

MQn C̄C̄Ě̄/ĪC̄C̄Ě̄/IC̄C̄Ě̄; ML C̄əC̄əC̄/yəCC̄əC̄/yəCC̄əC̄

JL (ə)CC̄C̄/īĚ̄CC̄C̄/ĪCC̄C̄

SQa C̄C̄e/əC̄/C̄īC̄əC̄/ĪCC̄C̄

Examples of passive:

MQn (ML) act.:pas.

x̄l̄l̄ū̄k̄ :: x̄īl̄ē̄k̄/ix̄īl̄ē̄k̄ (x̄əl̄ū̄k̄::x̄əl̄ē̄k̄/ yəxl̄ō̄k̄ --) ‘to create’

l̄əb̄ūd̄ :: l̄īb̄ē̄d̄ (əwb̄ūd̄::deriv. form) ‘to strike’

d̄əḵ̄::d̄īk̄ē̄ḵ̄ (d̄əḵ̄::deriv. form) ‘to knock at the door’

ḵ̄l̄d̄ū̄h̄::ḵ̄īd̄ē̄h̄ (ø) ‘to whistle’

<i>HHf gelōd::gilēd/yəgəlōd/yəgəlod</i>	‘to hit’
<i>JL ktōb::ktīb</i>	‘to write’
<i>lōd::līd <lbd></i>	‘to strike’
<i>šēm::sīm <šʔm></i>	‘to sell’
<i>eršōk::eršīk</i>	‘to bless’
<i>kōr::kīr <kbr></i>	‘to bury’
<i>SQa ráħaš/iróħaš/lráħaš::rīħaš/rūħaš/lerħóš</i>	‘to wash, to cure’
<i>kádər::kūdər</i>	‘to cook’
<i>gōtəb::gītəb</i>	‘to carry (on the back)’
<i>šēdər::šīdə</i>	‘to divide’
<i>hōləb::hīləb</i>	‘to milk’

This vocalic pattern is valid for the passiv of the simple verb and for some derived measures:

<i>MQn hədķáwķ</i> (derived by <i>h-</i>):: <i>hdīķēķ</i> ‘to grind’
<i>ML həglōl</i> (derived by <i>h-</i>):: <i>aglēl</i> ‘to boil (rice)’
<i>JL oxōt::exīt <xbt></i> (derived by int. modif.) ‘to load’
<i>effōsx::efséx</i> (derived by infixed <i>-t</i>) ‘to undress, to untie’
<i>SJms ʔənkaʔ::ʔínkaʔ</i> (derived by pref.) ‘to make go, to bring’

Commonly, in J and S, the personal prefixes do not occur in the passive form, therefore the prefix *l-* occurs in the whole paradigm of the subjunctive: *SQa* Subj. Pl.2f.: *tšemaʔan::ləšmáʔan* (‘to make hear’, derived by prefixed *š*, <*hmʔ*>).

2.6.3 Verbal Tense and modalities

Particles, preverbs and auxiliary verbs or periphrastic constructions are used to express tense and modalities, as in most Semitic language where the verbal system is aspectual based, the prefix conjugation having an imperfect value and the suffix conjugation a perfect one.

2.6.3.1 Main aspectual-temporal markers:

- *ḏ/ḏ-* (M, Hb, H), *d-/ed-/id-* in J.

With the pref. conj., it does not occur before the *t-* prefix. It has a concomitant value:

MQn d-əhōriğ šīš mehrīyət ‘I am speaking Mehri to you’. *ML hoh ḏ-əšámələn təgərēt* ‘I am dealing with merchants’. *HHf ḏ-iʔámər* ‘he is saying’. *HL ḏ-ašáwwər* ‘I am stopping’. *JL d-igóləd* ‘he is hitting’ (*yğóləd* ‘he (always) hits’).

With the suf. conj., it is a resultative perfective, a means to express the state resulting from an accomplished process:

MQn šarōmah də-nfūs ‘now, he is gone’; *HL hoh ḏə-hēndək* ‘I am sleepy’; *JL ešəfəri ed-mížót míh* ‘the pan is full of water’.

- *ber/bər/ber*

In M, Hb, H it is an invariable preverb, in J and, *bər* is conjugated at the suf. conj. Its values and functioning are similar to Cl. Ar. *qad*.

With the pref. conj., examples are scarce; *bər* means ‘now, already’, and it often expresses that something has happened as opposed to circumstances or another state/fact:

MQn bər isyūr lēken ihōriğ láʔ ‘[baby] already walks but he doesn't speak (yet)’.

In *JL*, after *ber*, the imperf. is always with *d-*:

ber d-ikótəb ‘he is already writing’; *nhan bəran ed-nǝfəl ʕar šúǵlan* ‘we’ve been neglecting our work’.

With the suf. conj., *ber* insists on the completion of the process, with a resultative value: *MQnB wət mǵōrən bər kēsā, itáwyəm teh* ‘afterwards, when it is quite dried, they eat it’. *HHf hoh ber wtəlúmk* ‘I am prepared’. *HL hədōtya nǝf, bər rəhēsək tīsən* ‘my hands are clean, I’ve just washed them’. *JL bérót šəfhót* ‘she is past childbearing’. *SQb šarīt bər mīle?* ‘the tape is full (it has just stopped)’. *SQa bérəh se^h tāt* ‘she has eaten (she isn’t hungry)’.

With the future, it expresses imminence:
MQn bər hōm əlté (u mǵōrən xadmōna) ‘I am about to eat (and afterwards I’ll work)’. *JL bər ha-yǝktəb* ‘he is about to write’.

2.6.3.2 Future

S is the only language that does not have a special future conjugation (the pref. conj. is used).

- In M, H, and B the future is expressed by means of a verbo-nominal form, the active participle, that only has a predicative function. It varies in gender and number.

At the basic form, the participle has an *-a* suffix: *CəCCōn-a*, *CəCɿt-a/ (CəCCōn-i, CəCCáwt-i)/CəCēyC-a*, *CəCCūtən* (Sg.m., f./du.m., f.)/pl.m., f.). The active participle stem of the derived forms differs from the subjunctive pattern only by the addition of an *m-* prefix, and occasionally of an *-a* suffix. Gender opposition is neutralized at the plural of derived forms in *MQnB* and in *ML* (but not in *MQn*) and the common plural is identical to the nominal feminine plural: *MQnB məkəráwtən*, future (Pl.c.) of *hakrawr* ‘to go at midday’.

In these languages, the use of the verb meaning ‘to want’ followed by a verb at a subjunctive form also has a future value.

- In Hb, the future is made of *méd+*Suf.Pr.+verb. The Suf. Pr. refers to the subject, the verb is in the subjunctive (in some dialects, the particle is invariable):

HHf médiš-tətik hmo ‘she will drink water’, *HHt méd-yəntáwhəm* ‘they will fight o.a.’.

In J, the subjunctive is preceded by the preverb *ha-/h-*:

JL ha-yšóm ‘he’ll buy’; *ha-lǵád* ‘I’ll go’; *h-ihí* ‘he will look for’.

2.7 Adverbs, and other parts of speech

2.7.1 Adverbs

Besides temporal deictics, the common adverbs of time are: *sōbər* (M) *šēbər* (H) *sōbər* (J) *déhər* (S) ‘always’; *ʔábdan* (M), *bdan* (J) ‘never, ever’ (from Ar.); *mǵōrən* (M), *ləd* [zəd] *mǵóre* (Hb), *məǵārə* (B), *mǵōrhən* (rare)/*mətəlē* (H), *mǵóré* (J), *mser<mən+sar/ser>* (S) ‘afterwards, later on’; *ber/bər* (M, Hb, H, J, S) ‘already, just, probably’; *yəllilə* (M), *əlʕáynil/əlʕéni* (J) ‘tonight’, *ǵasré* (J) ‘at night’.

Some prepositions are used in constructions denoting time: *k-* in M, Hb, H, J, and *l-* in S for periods of the day: *k-šōbaḥ* (M, Hb, H), *k-ḥáṣṣáfl k-ḥáṣaf* (J), *lə-šabḥ* (S) ‘in the morning’, and part of the year in *MQn*: *k-xáref* ‘in autumn’.

2.7.2 Other parts of the speech

2.7.2a Prepositions

The prepositions common to all MSAL are: *b(ə)-* ‘in, with’, *h(ə)-* ‘to, for’, *l-* ‘against, on’, *k+N/š+Suf.Pr.* ‘with’, *mən* ‘from’, *t(ə)-* accusative marker for Pers. Pr.; *ḏār* (M, H)/*ḏér* (J)/*ṭār*

(*MQn*)/*thar* (S) ‘on’; *ənxāli* (M, H)/*nxín*, *lxín* (J)/*nḥaṭ* (S) ‘under’; *sār* (M, H)/*ser* (J)/*sar* (S) ‘behind’; *fən*, *fənw-* (M, B)/*fēn* (Hb)/*fēn* (H)/*fēne* ε, *fən-é*-(J), (*di-*)*fōnə*, *fēnə* (S) ‘before, in front of’.

Some prepositions do not occur in all the MSAL:

bād/*baʿd* (M, H) (cf. Ar.) and *əm-bād*/*mən-bād* (M), *mən-ḏér* (J) ‘after’; *bərk*/*brek* (M, Hb, B, H) ‘in, inside, at’; *tē*/*te*/*tā* (M, H, J)/*ʔetēʔ* (Hb) ‘up to’; *ʿan* (J) ‘from, than’/*ʿa(n)* (S) ‘from, to’; *ken* (J)/*kən*, *ken* (S) ‘from’; *ʔad*/*ʔid*/*d* (S) ‘in, to’/(*ʔe*)*d* (J) ‘to, up to’, *ʔed* ‘till’ (J); *yəl* (J)/*diək* *ʔad*+*ɔb*> (S) ‘towards’; *wé-* (M, H) ‘towards’; *ʿak*/*ʿamk* (J) ‘in, at’. (Cf. *ʿamk* (M, Hb, H, S) ‘middle’).

In M, Hb, B, H, J, *h-* ‘to, for’ is used in compound prepositions: *h-āl*, *h-al*/*h-ən* (M) ‘to, at, with’, *hné*+N. (*ML*), *hné*+Suf.Pr. (*MQn*) ‘at’, *hel*, *helt-* (H) ‘at’, *her* (J) ‘to, up to, for’, *hes* (J) ‘up to’.

Each language also has its own prepositions that do not occur in the others:

H: *wəl* ‘towards’, *əm-būn*, *mātōd* ‘after’.

J: *tél*+N./*tól*+Suf.Pr. ‘at, with’, *mən-tél* ‘from’, *ʔémt* ‘towards, to’ *her* ‘up to, to, for’.

S: *ʿaf*/*ʔaf* ‘up to, until’.

The same element can either be a preposition, a conjunction or an adverb:

J *hes* ‘up to’ and ‘then, when’ and *hīs*/*his*/*hes* (M), *hīs*/*həs*/*əs* (H) ‘when, since; like’, *hes* ‘like’ (Hb); *her* ‘up to, to, for’ and ‘if, when’ (J).

2.7.2b Conjunctions

- The main temporal conjunctions are: *teh*/*teʔ*/*te*/*tē*/*te*/*ta* (M, Hb, H), *tə-wət* (*MQn*), *ʔe*/*e*/*ʔa* (J) ‘until, till, then when’; *mət*/*mayt*/*mit* (*ML*, Hb, H, J, S), *wət*/*wet* (*MQn*), *her* (J), *ḥákt* ε- ‘when’, *hes* (M, Hb, H, J), *tə*/*tə*, *ʿam* (S) ‘when, as’; *lɔd*/*lɔt*, *sēʿ* (S) ‘when, while’; *lol*/*lól*, *ke*, *karámmə*, *kaném*(*m*)*ɔ* (S) ‘when, if’.

- The main causal conjunctions are: *ʔən*/*ʔən* (M, *yənn* (H), *l-ín*/*l-hin* (J). ‘because’.

- The main final conjunctions are: *l-egirēh*/*l-agərē* (M) (but *l-egeré* ‘because, for’ in J), *hér* (J), *uker*<‘and’+‘to be’>, *ker* (S) ‘in order to, so that’.

2.7.2c Interrogative particles

They are: *híne* (Hb), *híne*, *héní* (J) ‘why?’; *kō*, *kóh* (*ML*), *wəkō* (*ML*, *MQn*), *kə*, *wəkó* (Hb), *kəh* (J) and *hībáh* (*ML*), *hībóh* (*MQn*), *həbó* (Hb), *hābō* (B), *həbō* (H), *ʔifól*/*ʔifól*/*fəl* (S) ‘how? why?’, *mayt* (M), *mit* (J), *míh*/*míh* (S) - ‘when?’; *ḥō* (*ML*), *hō* (*MQn*), *hō* (Hb), *ḥān*(*ə*) (B), *ḥōnəh* (H), *hun*, *hútun* (J), *hən*/*ho*/*hoʔo* (S) ‘where?’; *wəlē* <*w*+neg.> (M), *flə*, *bé-flə* <*b* ‘and’+*lə* neg.> (J) ‘or else?’.

2.7.2d Verbal particles and auxiliaries

- Besides *be*, and *d*/*ḏ*, other verbal particle and auxiliaries are used to express durativity, iterativity, imminence, etc.:

ād/*ʔād*/*ād*+Suf. Pr. +perfect/imperfect, for the progressive (M, H);

ʿād/*ʔād*/*ād*+Suf.Pr. +*ʔar*/*ʔar* (restrictive particle) +*mən*+Suf.Pr. +perfect ‘to have just ...’ (M);

ḥal/*xal*+subj. (S), *ləbōd* (aux.) (H), *ʿɔd*/*ʿad* (aux., perf.) +indicative (J, S) ‘to keep on’;

wīka/*wēka* (aux.) +subj. (M, H), *lāʿaf*/*lógəf* (aux.) +imperf. ‘to be used to’; *ʔāzōm* <*ʿzm*> (aux.) +subj. ‘almost/very nearly’ in the past (M, H);

šor (aux.) +*d*/*ḏ*+imperf. (M) ‘to begin to’.

3. SYNTAX

3.1 Word order

3.1.1. In the sentence, the order may be: subordinate clause + main clause or *vice versa*. Emphatic and focusing phenomena are to be taken into account.

3.1.2. At clause level

- In nominal clauses, the order is Subject + nominal Predicate

SQa ṭāḥin nāfə di ġagētən ‘(to) grind (is) the work of women’; *MQn yimóh raḥmēt* ‘today it rains’ <today rain>; *BM kálləs eḳáʿ lə bəṭáḥrīt we héməhuw bit bəṭḥār* ‘all the earth (belonged) to the B. and their name (was) B.B.’ <all it (f.) earth to Bathari and name-them Bait Bithar>.

- In verbal clauses, the order is VSO or SVO, but if the subject is an independent pronoun it is always placed before the verb.

3.1.3 At phrase level

3.1.3a. Nominal phrases

- The definite article when it exists (in MO, H, J) is always prefixed to the definite item, noun or adjective (whose first consonant is voiced or ejective / glottalized).

- In a nominal phrase with two nouns, the word order is always: *Determinatum* + *Determiner*; the same with adjectives: N+Adj. (like in Arabic, in all MSAL that have a definite article, nouns and adjectives are both determinate when the noun is definite).

In all languages, except S, the word order in possession construction is: *Possessed*+*Possessor* (cf. 3.8 for S)

The Semitic direct construction (synthetical construction) is only found in some frozen constructions and special words (kinship nouns, parts of the body, and the item *baʿl* ‘owner, possessor, he of ...’). In the languages with a definite article, the two terms are usually definite, and if the determiner is a suffixed pronoun, the noun is definite, as opposed to Arabic syntax.

MQn bōli ḳāsən ‘they of (the inhabitants) Qishn’; *HL lēlt awkēb* ‘the wedding night’ <night entry>; *JL ēṭəb ɔz* ‘the teat of goat’; *SQa bər ḳāḳa* ‘nephew’ <son brother/sister>.

This construction very rarely occurs in Hb.

Usually a particle binds the *determinatum* to the determiner. This particle is *ḏ/d* after a singular noun, and *l* (*JL iz*) after a plural noun. In M, even with a plural noun the particle is often *ḏ/d*. In J, *ḏ* does not occur in a possessive phrase (the particle is *ē*). In the languages with a definite article, both items of the phrase may be definite.

MQn hadūtən l-nūr ‘(the) maternal aunts of Nur’; *MJb kīs ḏ²-tōmər* ‘sack of dates’; *HHf šinót ḏə-ḳanyún* ‘the sleep of babies’; *HL əsnéwwət ḏə-ḥəyḏōntən* ‘jaw-joints’ <joints of ears>; *BM nātuš le-ḥālīt* ‘spots of rust’; *JL mékék ḏə-ḳīt* ‘half a sack of food’, *eda^obéh iz-šxórtə* ‘curses of the old women’, *ēṭb é-ʔéméš* ‘the teat of its(f.) mother’; *SQb fəḳḥ di-ba^o* ‘half a brass’; *SAK ḳəṭrəḥ d-dər* ‘a drop of blood’.

3.1.3b. In verbal phrases:

The direct or indirect object follows directly the verb. When the complement is pronominal, it is often (always in S) introduced by the accusative particle *t*-. Verbs with three valencies have the pronominal complement preceding the nominal complement: V+(*t*-)Suf.Pr.+N. When both complements are pronominals, the order is the following: V+*t*-Pr.Suf. (*addresser*) + *t*-Pr.Suf.Obj.

MJb təlōm tē-sən ħmo ‘they ask them(f.) for water’, *ML təlāwb-əh šalḥ* ‘they asked him for a truce’, *MQn ūzāmm-əs te-h* ‘they brought it(f.) to him’; *HHf wuzum t-ī te-h* ‘he gave it to me’.

3.1.3c. In a complex sentence

In asyndetic constructions, the complement clause follows the main clause.

In hypothetical conditional sentence, the protasis mainly precedes the apodosis.

With causal, final and temporal clauses, the clause order varies.

3.2. Agreement rules

Generally, the subject governs person, gender and number agreement in the verb. Personal and deictic pronouns, attributives and predicatives adjective agree in gender and number (including dual in S) with the nouns they determine; except in S, a dual noun often governs a plural agreement. With multiple subjects, agreement is always Pl.m., even if one of the subjects is f.

Animated collective nouns govern a singular or plural (m. or f.) agreement:

ML ḥəbēr kálləs ‘all the camels’ <the-camels all-her>, *ḥəbēr əlyākəməh* ‘those camels’; only, the word for ‘cow’ in J and *HHf* is f. in sg. and m. in pl. as regards concord:

HHf dēnəh lēʔ wuzúm tī tīs ‘this cow, he gave it (f.) to me’, and in Pl. *lənəh lhētə, wuzúm tī tohum*.

3.3 Negations

The syntax of negation in all MSAL is different from that in Arabic. Each language has its own construction and in all of them (except in J) perfect and imperfect conjugations have the same negation as well as declarative, interrogative (with an indicative verb) and prohibitive (with an imperfect and subjunctive verb) sentences in five of the six languages, the Soqotri of Soqotra being the exception.

3.3.1. In MO, and some eastern dialects of MY, in Hb, in J, the negative particle has two elements (ə)l...laʔ ʔχ(l)...lʔ surrounding the negated term or phrase:

ML ʔəl səbēb-i laʔ ‘(it’s) not my fault’, *əl awágəbkəm təsīrəm wə-tkəlām aməlāwtəg wəṭōməh laʔ* ‘it is not fitting for you to go and leave the dead like that’, *əl təhēləz bey laʔ* ‘don’t nag me!’, *HHt nəḥa būm b-šḥéyr l-šīn siyērōt láʔ* ‘we, here in the mountains, we haven’t <with-us> cars’, *JL āxtér əl ksé míh hér yófhəs tíhum lʔ* ‘the caravan did not find water to boil their meat’, *embére ōrói ə yté ε yəsábáʔ lʔ* ‘the shy boy does not eat till he is satisfied’, *ə tšérk dšhun lʔ* ‘don’t do that!’, *əl égbəḏəš lʔ* ‘don’t anger him!’.

3.3.2. In Hb, depending on dialects, negation in declarative sentences may have only the second element, the construction being similar to what it is in MY, B and H. This variation can be observed within the use of individual speakers:

HHf (ə)l ixóm yánsəz šḥi láʔ ‘he doesn’t want to drink tea’.

In prohibitive sentences, in Hb, only the second element is present:

HHf tezēm láʔ ‘don’t give!’.

3.3.3. In MO, in prohibitive sentences the negation is often marked by the second item alone, and in *JL*, optionally in prohibitive sentences the first item occurs alone, in a reduced form: *JL ʔə tšktəb* ‘do not write!’.

Sometimes, in *ML*, the first element occurs alone in interrogative sentences, and in J, in complement clauses after verbs of fearing, hoping ... (Johnstone 1981:2).

3.3.4. In MY, B, and H, the negative particle is the morpheme *la?*. Always postposed to the negated term, it is often placed at the end of a clause:

MQn hēt hēs-t-ī hoh lá? ‘you are not like me’ <you like-Prep-me I Neg.>, *ḳādūrān ngārē šxōf dā hāybīt dā bōli gōdāb lá?* ‘we couldn't drink the milk of the camels of the inhabitants of Jadib’, *MQn tgirā ḳaḥwēt lá?* ‘don't drink coffee!’, *BM raḥak lā* ‘(it's) not far’, *HL əkhōl əgātér la?* ‘I cannot speak’, *təhéməh la?* ‘don't bother about it!’ (=ML *təhtəmməh la?*).

3.3.5. In S, in declarative sentences, the particle of negation is *ɔl* (realized sometimes [ɔʒ]) always preposed to the negated term or phrase:

SQb se ɔl ḥōwrəh ‘she (is) not black’, *ɔl fšek* ‘I didn't lunch’; *SQaB ɔl tənōdək káləm dīye* ‘you do not say anything good’; *SQa ɔl kə-ḳanəmk šərḳak* ‘when I feed, I don't succeed’.

In *SAK* the particle is *ɔ: ɔ tēymaʕ* ‘he doesn't hear’.

In prohibitive sentences, the negative particle is *ʔa/ʕa(n)/ḥa*, according to the dialect, followed by the subjunctive:

SHr ʔa tətə ‘don't eat!’, *SQb ʕa ləzʕam* ‘don't sit down!’ (subj. without pers. pref.), *SQa ḥa tīgdeḥən, ten* ‘don't come, you (Pl.)!’.

But, in the dialect of the islet of 'Abd-al-Kuri, the particle is *ɔl* + subj.: *ɔl tšémətə!* ‘don't speak!’

3.4 Interrogation

Intonation alone is enough to express interrogation:

MJb təhōrig məhriyōf? ‘do you speak the eastern Mehri?’.

Some *wh*-words are always in head position:

SQb hoʔo d-mése kōn? ‘where has it rained?’ <where of-rain it-was>, *īnem d-ḥaf de-ḥa w-ífol d-mey^h šem?* ‘what is this place here, and what is its name?’ <and-how of-him name>;

others always in final position:

MQn āmərək hībóh ‘what is it that you said? what did you say?’, *háməəs mōn?* ‘what is her name?’; *HHf nkaʕk men hō?* ‘where do you come from?’.

Among the latter, *wəlē* is always uttered after a pause:

MQn tḥōm ḥmo? wə lēʔ? ‘do you want water, or not?’

Interro-negative sentences are syntactically similar to negative sentences or interrogative ones:

MQn tḥōm ḳaḥwēt láʔ? ‘don't you want coffee?’; *S ɔl gəʕərək?* ‘aren't you ill?’ (=‘how are you?’).

3.5. Coordination (phrasal and clausal). Conditionals

3.5.1 Coordination can be only mere juxtaposition, but most often the coordinating conjunction *wə* (*w, ū, u*) in M, Hb, B, H, S, and *b* in J, is used. This particle is affixed to the second term of the coordination:

JL hé b-hét ‘you and I’, *gízi b-aḡád* ‘he was ill and he went ...’; *SQb b-ʕamḳ d-ḥadībo^h u-ḥáwləf* ‘between Hadiboh and Hawlef’.

In narratives, *w/b* often has the value of an enunciative particle, indicating a new step in the relation of events. It means ‘and thus, and suddenly’:

MJb ḡaggēn u-ḡath kōsəm āgizōn tūtōbən u-hem ṭáymən ‘a boy and his sister met women who were tanning and (thus) were thirsty’.

w may also introduce a causative clause:

SQaB ɔl idīnɔt w-ɔl šērət ‘she has not been found guilty because she did not harm’

When *w-* coordinates two negative clauses (‘nor, or, neither ...nor’), it immediately follows the negative particle, even in the languages where this is at the end of the phrase:

MQn gehmōna -lá škótra u-la kūryamūrya u-la ābdalkūri ‘I shall neither go to Soqotra nor Kurya Murya or ‘Abd-al-Kuri’ (compare with: *MQn gehmōna škótra-lá, kūryamūrya-lá, ābdalkūri-lá*, with the same meaning).

3.5.2 Conditionals

The apodosis is introduced by a particle.

3.5.2a Real conditional

The verb in the protasis is in the suf. conj. (complete aspect) or in the pref. conj. (uncomplete aspect), the verb in the apodosis is in the indicative imperfect, future or subjunctive/imperative.

- M (*u-*)*lū, lē* ‘(even) if’:

MQn ulū het kəhábk la? uzmenəs<fut.> ha ērs ‘even if you don't come, I'll go to the wedding’

ML l-aḥmēd lu hēt txáwdəm l-hēs táy ‘I would praise (God) if you were to work like me’

- M, Hb, H *ʔam, hām/ham, hóm* ‘if’:

MQn ham xərāgək, tḵōhk lá? ‘if I go out, you don't come’ or ‘if I am gone, you don't come’

ML hām həwrádkəm ḥámóhən, dəryēma<fut.> həbērikəm ‘if you take your camels down to our water, we'll kill your camels!’

HHf hóm nəkaʕ geḥme, mēdi-lʕamer heh ‘if he goes tomorrow, I'll tell him’

HL am bérək séllək téni əlá? ‘if you can't give me a lift’

- *MJb hən, MQn, Hb ʔen* ‘if’

MJb hən tḥóm tsənē imōʔ, thaḵəšəwm ‘if you want to see what it is, you spend the afternoon (at home)’ (*ḥóm* occurs always in the imperfect as V1 in an asyndetic construction).

MQn ʔen wuzúmkəməs l-mšā, ksyēya<fut.> ráwrəm ‘if you go to the South, you'll find the sea’

HJb ḫād ʔen séno xášməh, iḵərōb hənéh la ‘if someone sees his enemy, he doesn't go near to him’

- J *her, hel* ‘if, when’

JL hér siéréh ɔl zhōt híni ləʔ, ḥa-l-əmtéhek ‘if the car does not come to me, I shall get very annoyed’

- Hb *ḥad<ḥa+ḥ>* (for this construction, cf. J *mit/mid+ā/ē* ‘when’)

HHf ḥad siyūr ḥōf, inōkaʕ bə-tōmər ‘if/when he goes to Hawf, he brings dates’

- S *tə, lod / zəd* + subj.

SQa tə tigdalḥ<subj.> ḥan di-nəzəǵən ʔək əknuyoh ‘if you go, we'll give you food’ <we who-give to-you(Sg.) food>

SQb zəd ligdah ‘if he goes’

- S *ke*

SQaB kə rībən hes wu ʕesə tsókəf ‘if we advise her, then maybe she'll calm down’

- *MQn əlkā* (subj. Sg.3m. of *wīkaʕ* ‘to be, to happen’) + subj., and future in the apodosis:

MQn əlkā həybi l-nkā ha-bārīs, əmələya həfle h hanōbət ‘if my father goes to Paris, we’ll give a big party’.

3.5.2.b Unreal conditional

The verb in the apodosis is in the perfect or in a modal conj. (subj. or conditional) and, for an unreal condition in the present, the verb in the protasis is in the perfect.

- *MQn əlkā* (+ perfect in the protasis and the apodosis).

MQn əlkā kəhāb fənə sīlət yōm ksáyinī bə-bēti ‘if he had come three days ago, he would have found me at home’

- *ML, H lū/lō, Hb wili*. The conditional or the subj. occur in the apodosis.

ML lu sīnək tēk, l-əgrēbən <cond.> *tēk əlā?* ‘if I had seen you, I wouldn’t have known you’

HHf wili nōka^o mšin, hoh l-kīnən <cond.> *fərḥənt* ‘if he had come yesterday, I would have been happy’

HL lū ? əkān<subj.> ... ‘if I should be ...’

- *M ?əḏə* (rare), *J ḏ-kun* (<rel.+ ‘to be’ Perf.Sg.3m.>)

JL ḏ-kun ‘āzi bun l-ǧédən<cond.> *šəš ε mskét* ‘if Ali had been here, I would have gone with him to Muscat’

- *S I’am, lémən*

SQa I’am ‘égib lēšəm tan, əl zēǧə men hēdi di ‘əndōk-ən ‘if he had wanted to kill us, he would not have taken from our hands what he had given to us’

SQa lémən ǧədaḥk, sīnək ‘āli ‘if you had come, you would have seen Ali’

3.6 Subordination

3.6.1 Completive clauses

3.6.1a A lot of verbs (motion, opinion, will) can be used in an asyndetic construction with the verb of a completive clause, mainly when the subject is common to both verbs. The verb in the completive clause is generally in the subjunctive:

MQnB thōm tənḥāg ‘she wants to dance (subj)’; *HHf ekhól lésbaḥ* ‘I know (how) to swim’;

JL ‘ágəb yhélbəs ‘he wanted to milk it (f.)’; *SQaB ‘égbən nəḥərə? mən məkéylhi* ‘we wanted to look for a medicine-man’.

Only *SAK* does not know asyndetic constructions whatever the V1.

3.6.1b In *M*, the reported speech is introduced by the relator *d-/ḏ*:

MQn yāmərəm d-bōli yəntūf ḥamələya<fut.> *kəbōbər* ‘they say that the inhabitants of Yentuf are preparing torchlights’; *MGa ḥád yi?ōmər ḏe tiwī ‘asəbāt shēləm toh ‘āynən* ‘someone says that the flesh has been eaten up by the animals’.

3.6.1c In *SAK* the completive clause is always introduced by the conjunction *kə: egēboh kə tōbōš* ‘she wants/wanted to cry’. In the other MSAL, the conjunction is often linked to the semantics of the V1. Some of these elements are also prepositions or relators: *mən, l, d*, and the negative element *ə(J)* after verbs of dread and denial in *J* (+subj.):

MQn xzīw mən tāmērən<subj.> *hīni əl-hō wəzmītəna*<fut.>-*tēs* ‘they refused(f.) to tell me where they would go’

MQn hēs hoh kənnən əkōbi d-genni ixárgóm ‘when I was young, I thought that the ginns could appear’

JL gólōt o tzem-š<subj.> fəndél ‘she refused to give him sweet potatoes’
SHr hašáyk ?en seh təgodehən<imperf.> ‘I know that she comes/is coming’

3.6.2 Relative clauses

- A relative clause can be placed directly next to the word it determines with an anaphoric independent pronoun, introduced by the conjunction of coordination *w*, but it is mostly introduced by a relative pronoun; the antecedent is determined by the article in MO, H, J. Relative pronouns are identical to the genitive particle/relator. The relative clause also operates as an adjective (cf. 2.3), specially in J and S: *JL etéš e-xerəgót* ‘his woman who has died’ (= his dead woman); *SQa fərəhəm di-škerəh* ‘the girl who was good’ (= the good girl), Du. *ferīmi di-šəkərtə*, Pl. *fərhəm di-škar*, or *nomen agentis: di-yhórək* ‘who (m.) robs’ (= robber).

3.6.3 Adverbial clauses

3.6.3a Temporal clauses

Time clauses are introduced by a subordinative conjunction, some of which are always followed by the subjunctive.

After *te* meaning ‘until’, the verb is in the subj., but in the indic. when meaning ‘when’:

MQn ašlōb hallīw te lqalək<subj.> ūrīt ‘I am waiting for the night until I see the moon’

ML te gzōt həyáwm kərū tówyəh bərk dəhəlīl ‘when the sun went down he hid his meat in a cave’

HL ta yəzhəb<subj.> əsəkəm ‘till your supper is ready’

MQnB hes wəzūm tēs degēg, xazūt ‘when he brought the chicken to her, she refused (it)’

ML mət sábak ənkōna tək ‘when I have had enough I’ll come to you’

HHf hes isīyur həf, inōka^o bə-tōmər ‘when he goes to Hawf, he brings dates’

JL egebgót firóhót hes ktsót bə-xáték ódín ‘the girl was happy when she got a new dress’

JL hákt ē<e+ber> šéke ?iyyé?l ha-néhek hóhum ‘when they have watered the camels we’ll call them’

SQa ləd [zəd] itēbəl di-han ?erəhən məhādeb, ikēsə táhrer ‘when they come back from their field, they meet wild goats’

SAK ke kəšō^oəh izīdə wáya^o<Ar. wag^o> ‘when/if she gets up, the pain increases’

SAK ho^h šínk teš tə ntəf ‘he saw him when he felt’

SQa kaném^h təd géham lāxeym wukse ikōsə beyh šōdoh ‘when/if someone catches a shark, it happens that he finds a fish in it’

SHr ?am ətəhər škáttri wu ?əgəhk b-?eyēra ‘when I go to Soqotra, I take a plane’.

3.6.3b Purpose clauses

Purpose clauses are not always introduced by a conjunction, but the verb is always in the subj. (except with *ker/kor, kor* in S).

- Without conjunction:

MQn hēt lūni məgráf d-ħmo ləbrəd beh ‘you, bring me a tumbler of water in order/so that I freshen up (myself) with it’

- With a conjunction:

MGha siyērš mən fransa te būma legirēh təǵarīb mehrīyət ‘you came from France up to here, in order to speak Mehri’

JL embéré hógór tə hér l-əzémš<subj.> sé ‘the boy waited for me to give him something’

SQaB nʿámər ukən nórəbən<subj.> ‘we (shall) act in order to deliberate’ (the subject in both clauses is the same).

SQaB ʿégbən nəhárə<subj.> *mən mekhéyli kər yiráhaš*<indic.> ‘we want to go for the medicine-man so that he cures (us)’

SQa yəjtēri gémhəl kər tigídhən ‘he calls his she-camels so that they come’

3.7 Copula, existential and possessive expressions

3.7.1 Copula

As in all Semitic languages where nominal sentences are frequently used, the MSAL have recourse to copulas that make sentence boundaries clear. The verb ‘to be’, in all moods, or an aspectual-temporal particle + a suffix pronoun referring to the subject, act as copulas.

- *kēn, kun, kən* ‘to be’, as opposed to Arabic, it is not used with other verbs, but only as a copula of existence:

MQnB wət ikūn beh rīyeh, yīka? ‘when it is windy, it is cold’<when it-is to-it wind it-is-cold>. *MQnB tkūnən bər bəhīl* ‘they(f.) are already ready’.

HHf ʿafərēt tkun his tet ‘the demon(f.) is like a woman’. *HJb wayōl ikīn ṭwáli hābū la?, ikīn ʿar b-kāṭən* ‘the ibex are not (do not live) close to the people, there are only at the top of the mountain’.

JL ʾinēt tətólén kərǫfésən b-eṭúf b-əkkarkúm hér ətkénən lēnāti ‘women make up their faces with aloes and saffron to look (to be) white’.

In S, like any verb, the copula can be preceded by the verb modifier *ber*:

SQa berəh kənoh fham ‘(the fire, f.) was already (completely reduced to) coal’.

- *wīka* <*wkʿ*> ‘to be, to become’ can be used as a copula (M, H) in existential and possessive sentences:

MQn axōdəm l-gérēh lḳā šī drēhəm ‘I work to have money’ <I-work in-order-to I-should-be with-me money>.

- *ber*+Suf.Pr. referring to the subject is a copula in nominal clauses:

MQn wət bérhəm b-markēt isīməm šáyđ ‘when they are at the market, they sell fish’

MQn=MJb=HHf bərs bə-šáfōr ‘she is (now) in Dhofar’.

- *ʿād/ād/ʿōd/ʿōd*+Suf.Pr. referring to the subject (M,H) or conjugated at the suf. conj. (J,S) is an existential copula ‘to be, to stay’. In J *d-* occurs before the copula in positive clauses:

JL embéré? d-ʿód bún ‘the boy is still here’; *ʾəl ʿód leš mənýét lə?* ‘there is nobody like him’<Neg. Cop. for-him likeness Neg.>

3.7.2 Existential and possessive expressions

Nominal sentences (without copula or particle) may express existence **Erreur! Signet non défini.**, attribution or possession:

MQn ḥarmēt brek bēt ‘the woman (is) at home’; *yimō raḥmēt* ‘today it rains’<today rain>.

HHf ʿali ǧa ḍə-fūl ‘Ali is Ful’s brother’; *SQb b-ʿamḳ d-ḥadībə u-ḥáwleḳ, šeq* ‘between Hadibo and Hawlef, (there is) Sheq’

- Existential particles:

All the MSAL have the existential particle *šī* ‘there is’, that (in M, Hb, H, J) shares the same rules that any word in negative sentences: *šī la? ʾəl šī la?* ‘there is not’. S has a second existential particle *ino* and a peculiar negative existential particle *bíši* ‘there is not’:

MQn šī raḥmēt ‘there is rain’; *yillēləh ūrīt šī lá?* ‘tonight there is no moon’.

SQb bīśi rīho ‘there is no water’.

- Existential expressions:

They are formed by a locative or attributive preposition+suf.pr.: *b-* ‘in, at’, *l-* ‘to, for’ *š-* ‘with’: *MQn beh hādabbīt ṭar laḳəlīḳ d-ēyneh* ‘he has a fly in the corner of his eye’; *rsésikən bīsəm wuṣēx* ‘your ankle-rings are dirty’ <ankle-rings+Suf.Pr. Pl.2f. at+Suf.Pr. Pl. 3f. dirt>. *MJd šī ḥmo lá?* ‘I have no water’. *SQb šī ho hāri* ‘I have a canoe’ <with-me I canoe>

3.8 Other interesting syntactic phenomenon: Soqoṭri syntax

S is different from the other MSAL in the way possession is constructed: the pronoun referring to the possessor is either an independant pronoun, introduced by the relator *di-*, or a dependent pronoun introduced by the preposition *mə(n)*, the whole phrase precedes the possessed:

SQa di-het m^{her} ‘your belly’ <of-you belly>; *di-ḥan ma^{ma}ihən* ‘our forefathers’ <of-we forefathers>; *mə-s fēnə* ‘her face’ <from-her face>.

SHo me-š š^hem sa^d ‘his name is Sa'ad’ <from-him name S>.

When the possessed is in a construct phrase or in a prepositional phrase, *di/mə+Pr.* precedes the whole phrase:

SQa bīyəh di-hə di-bēbeh ‘the mother of my father’, *di-ḥan mən-xalf* ‘out of their place’ <of-us from place>. *SQb ez^omk di-eyeh b-ka^r* ‘I lived in his house’ <I-lived of-him in-house>.

SOURCES OF THE DATA

For the Mehri of the Yemen, Hobyot and Soqoṭri (but a few exceptions), the data was collected in the Yemen during fieldwork I did in the Mahra and the Island of Soqatra, within the framework of the *Mission Française d'Enquête Linguistique au Yémen*, between 1983 and 1991 with the contribution of A. Lonnet, and alone in 1994 and 1995. All the fieldwork had financial support of the *Ministère des Affaires Etrangères*, the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, The University of Paris 3, the *Centre Français d'Etudes Yéménites* in Sanaa and the University of Aden.

The examples in the Mehri of Oman, in Harsūsi and Jibbāli are from Johnstone's works, Baṭhari from Morris' and Johnstone's.

ABBREVIATIONS RELATED TO LANGUAGE NAMES AND PLACES

Language names are followed by the abbreviation of place names (for the data of my fieldwork) or by the reference to the author.

B Baṭhar - BM Baṭhari from the article of Morris - H Harsūsi (*HL Harsūsi Lexicon*, cf. Johnstone) - Hb Hobyot - *HHt* Hobyot from the village of Hedemet (north of Hawf) - *HHf* Hobyot from Hawf - *HJb* Hobyot from Jadib. - J Jibbāli - cJ central dialect of J - eJ eastern dialect of J - *JL Jibbāli Lexicon* (cf. Johnstone) - M Mehri - MO Mehri of Oman - MY Mehri of the Yemen - *MDt* Mehri from Damqawt - *MGa* al-Ghaydhah - *MHf* Hawf- *MJahn* from Jahn - *ML Mehri Lexicon* (cf. Johnstone) - *MQn* Qishn- *MQnB* Bedouin dialect in the area of Qishn - S Soqoṭri - *SAK* ^oAbd-al-Kūri - *SJms* Soqoṭri from Johnstone's manuscript notes (in my copy of *Lexique Soqoṭri*) - *SL* Soqoṭri from Leslau *Lexique Soqoṭri* - *SHo* Hadiboh - *SHr* Hagher's mountains - *SNd* Noged - *SQa* Qalansiyah - *SQaB* Bedouin dialect of the area of Qalansiyah - *SQb* Qadhub.

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