

## The Development of Classical Arabic: The Case of Kaškaša, Kaskasa and Šanšana

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ملخص:

يبحث هذا المقال في كيفية نشوء أصوات العربية ويفترض المقال أن تلك النظام الصوتي نشأ من خلال عملية تقعيد تقوم على الانتخاب التي تسببت فيه المكانة الاجتماعية وي طرح المقال أيضا أن أصوات اللهجات العربية الحجازية كانت هي الأرقى اجتماعيا ولتلك انتخبت أصوات العربية بحلول القرن الرابع الهجري العاشر الميلادي يتتبع المقال وضع الكسكسة والكشكشة والشنشنة في كتب النحو ويتقصى تطورها ليبين انتقالها من أنماط مقبولة لأنماط أقل قبولا لتصل بحلول القرن الرابع لأنماط مئومة ثم يبين المقال أن تلك السمات اللهجية محل البحث كانت الأوسع انتشارا جغرافيا وأكثر استخداما من الناحية السكانية ولكن مع ذلك فقد جبت المكانة الاجتماعية الرفيعة التي تمتعت بها اللهجات الحجازية تلك المحددات النحوية النظرية التي تقتضي استعمال النمط الأوسع انتشارا بين المتكلمين

### Abstract

This article explores the manner by which Classical Arabic sounds emerged. It makes the claim that sounds came to be standardized through a process of selection based on prestige. It also claims that the sounds of the Hijaz region were considered prestigious and were therefore selected as Classical Arabic in the 4th/10th century. The article tracks the position of the kaškaša, kaskasa, šanšana in the grammatical literature and traces its development to show that they were moved from accepted variants to less acceptable to bad variants to the advantage of the Hijazi /k/ variant. The article then shows that the variants under study were more geographically and demographically widespread. But prestige of Hijaz region in the 4th/10th century was more powerful than the established grammatical rule of preferring the more common variant over the less common variant.

**Key words:** Kaškaša, Kaskasa, Šanšana, Classical Arabic, Standardization

# 1 Introduction

The history of Classical Arabic is unfortunately under the influence of the almost dogmatic belief that it was indeed a pre-Islamic variety. Efforts of scholars throughout the 20th century were therefore directed towards answering secondary questions, such as: the relative function/s of that variety, who spoke that variety and how variable that variety was. So provoking these questions may be (and they are, from my point of view), they are misleading. I will introduce here the same proposal that has been suggested before elsewhere, namely that Classical Arabic may in fact have emerged after the advent of Islam and as a result of an interaction of some sociolinguistic and demographic factors. Discussing these factors requires a detailed study of the period between the emergence of the Arab Muslim empire and the age of standardization. This article is, therefore, not spatially suited for this discussion in full, although it attempts to tackle it in part. But, to understand the work of these factors and their force, we have to start with the linguistic canvas in general, and with variation in particular. How medieval scholars of Arabic recorded and treated variation will shed light on not only the nature of Classical Arabic, but on its origins as well. And, this is what this article sets out to do.

In this rather preliminary discussion, I will use the three rarely studied phonetic phenomena of *kaškaša*, *kaskasa* and *šanšana* to illustrate the manner with which variability was recorded and treated and by which Classical Arabic emerged, particularly in so far as its sounds are concerned. I will propose here that the Classical Arabic phonological aspects emerged through a process of selection that may have started to take place in the 3rd/9th century. That said process was based on non-linguistic ideological preference. The selection of preferred variants, hence standardization, was from a pool of the aggregate of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic tribal dialect forms. I will also show that it was a selection process which favored, again for non-linguistic reasons, the sounds and pronunciation habits of the Hijaz region, symbolized in the medieval grammatical cannon by Qurayš, while degrading the sounds and pronunciation habits of the majority of the tribes in the Peninsula as a *luġa maḍmūma* ‘disfavored variant’. In this respect, the article at hand is a continuation of earlier research works on the socio-demographic role in some phonetic phenomena such as *’imāla*, morphological phenomena such as *taltala* and in some structural phenomena such as *mā al-ḥiġāziyya* in the evolution of Classical Arabic (see Al-Sharkawi, 2018, 2020a,b).

The above outlined process of selection and its motives are limited specifically to the domain of language sounds. The process of selecting and standardizing Classical Arabic morphemes and syntactic structures have indeed been different (See Al-Sharkawi (2020b, 2021) for illustration and detailed discussions). Although this article is not dedicated for that purpose, it is enough here to say that standardizing the Classical Arabic morphology and syntax was a process driven mainly by the availability of data (Al-Sharkawi, 2021).

It is very interesting that it seems, from the distribution of *kaškaša*, *kaskasa* and *šanšana*, that the aforementioned selection process happened despite a firmly established scholarly rule at the time, which I will discuss in section three below, in medieval Arabic scholarship in general and grammatical thinking in particular. *Kaškaša*, *kaskasa* and *šanšana* may have been the majority pronunciation habit on the Arabian Peninsula outside the Hijaz region, even with the acceptance of Qurayš symbolizing Hijaz at face value. In the case of variation, there was always a preference for the variant used by the majority. This preference for the well-known and majority use is made explicit by Ibn Muġāhid (aS-Sab‘a, p. 49-50) in the choice of one reading over another. The same majority argument is also used by Ibn Ġinnī (al-Muḥtasab, vol. I, p. 37) to support the viability of a certain variant of two manifestations of the same structure for use despite its theoretical error. In this article, we will see that the Hijazi status supersedes the argument of majority use and prevalence in the case of *kaškaša*, *kaskasa* and *šanšana*, as was the case in other phonetic phenomena *’imāla* and *taltala*. This contradiction will be elaborated further in the discussion section below.

The argument of this article is that the three aforementioned variants, like other Najdi phonetic variants, were not selected as Classical Arabic because they were not Hijazi sound variants, and despite their possible numerical majority status. This argument will be made in three sections, in addition to this introduction and the concluding remarks. In section one below, I will briefly introduce the phenomena under discussion and their status in traditional Arabic grammar. The purpose of this section is to show that medieval grammarians realized the functional distinction between the *kaškaša*, *kaskasa*, on the one hand, and *šanšana* on the other. The first two phenomena were phonetic-morphological with semantic implications, while the third phenomenon was purely phonological. A more detailed linguistic description is beyond the purpose of this article and is also available elsewhere (For more on the linguistic features of the phenomena from the perspective of medieval Arab grammarians, see Al-Azraqi (2007) and Owens (2013) for a descriptive and diachronic modern linguistic discussion).

In section two after that, I will introduce the demographic and geographical distribution of *kaškaša*, *kaskasa* and *šanšana* on the Arabian Peninsula during the period between the 2nd/8th and 4th/10th centuries. This section will also include a brief discussion of the position of the tribes manifesting the phenomenon. I hope to show that these tribes which realized the phenomenon were not only the most numerous in terms of populace, but also the most geographically widespread. The purpose of this section is to establish that the realization of *kaškaša*, *kaskasa* and *šanšana* is not technically a *šād* production. In section three, I will discuss the traditional linguistic concepts of *maḍmūm* and *šād*. In this discussion, I will show that the sociolinguistic factor prevailed over the purely linguistic factor in the selection and standardization of these sound variables. In the concluding remarks, I will connect the findings of this article to the previous studies on the selection of other sounds of Classical Arabic and propose a further line of research towards further understanding the creation process of this Arabic standard.

Before I go into the phenomenon under discussion, however, a quick remark and a caveat are in order here. Since the purpose of this article is not to study the development of *kaškaša*, *kaskasa* and *šanšana* diachronically, the description in section one below will be limited to the general topography of the phenomena and their manifestation in the relevant morphological classes in broad terms. Again, because this is not a diachronic study, both earlier and later medieval grammatical sources will be used to mine data equally, without much attention to their respective period. It is my conviction that later grammarians used data in earlier grammars in their reporting on the Peninsular dialects in the first two centuries of the Islamic era. For the same reason, I will not use data about the three phenomena in the modern dialects, except in passing. I will only refer to modern dialects in the context of showing the prevalence of the phenomena in the Peninsula.

In this article, the reader will not find a critical discussion of Zwettler (1978)'s and Al-Sharkawi (2010, 2021)'s arguments that Classical Arabic drew largely from the pool of *kunstsprache* in pre-Islamic poetry. These arguments, essential as they are to the understanding of the history of Classical Arabic and its development in general, focused almost exclusively on morphological and morpho-syntactic aspect of this language. Although the use of formulaic structures and patterns on the one hand and the resort to various dialects to build a database of formulae introduced as characteristic of the pre-Islamic poetic form by Zwettler, it is an analysis that lends itself more to non-sound features. This article, on the other hand, limits itself to understanding the behavior of the sounds of Arabic in the standardization process. It directs its sole focus towards understanding how the variant sounds came to be standardized in the absence of relevant guiding pre-Islamic database similar to the poetic canon for morphology and syntax. In addition, Zwettler (1978)'s understanding of the motivation for selection of features in pre-Islamic poetry was the rhyme, rhythm internal music necessity of the structural inventory. In other words, the motive was internal. Despite the fact that the emergence of Classical Arabic was interlaced with socio-political power struggle (See Ech-Charfi (2018, especially p. 62-68 ) for a description of some aspects of the above mentioned political strife), both Ech-Charfi

(2018) and Al-Sharkawi (2021) have shown that the processes of standardizing the morphology and syntax of Classical Arabic were not shaped by these struggles. The article at hand, on the other hand, proposes an external socio-linguistic motive for the selection of the phonological features of Classical Arabic and a process of standardization that was largely shaped by it.

## 2 Kaškaša, Kaskasa and Šanšana

The suffixal 2nd person singular object and possessive pronoun in Classical Arabic is –ka for the masculine and –ki for the feminine (For the suffix pronouns in Classical Arabic, see Fischer, 2006). Numbers 1 and 2 below are allomorphs of this morpheme, while 3 is an allophone of the /k/ phoneme regardless of its presence in a morpheme.

1. Kaškaša is described in medieval Arabic grammars as either the replacement of the –k- sound into an –š- sound in the 2nd person feminine singular suffix pronoun. Or, it is in some cases the addition of a –š- immediately after the –k-. It would sound like the affricate /č/ (aŠ-Šāhibī. P. 29-30). Kaškaša is clearly and specifically realized only with the feminine singular suffix pronouns (Lisān, k š š).

**Table 1: Kaškaša**

Classical form	Hijazi Form	Non-Hijazi Form
darsu-ki	darsu-ki	darsu-š darsu-kš

2. Kaskasa is another allomorph of the 2nd person feminine singular suffix pronoun. It is traditionally the addition of the –s- sound after the –k- of the said pronoun before the short high front vowel /i/ (aŠ-Šāhibī. p. 29). Again, according to medieval Arabic grammars, its manifestation is limited to the second person feminine singular suffix pronoun, and it is realized only in the pause position (Lisān, k s s) (For a detailed description of the two phenomena in 1 and 2, see Owens (2013, pp. 174–176))

**Table 2: Kaskasa**

Classical form	Hijazi Form	Non-Hijazi Form
darsu-ki	darsu-ki	darsu-ks

3. Šanšana is traditionally the replacement of the –k- with a –š- sound in final position before any short vowel (al-Muzhir, vol. I, p. 322). From the few available examples in medieval grammars, this phenomenon appears in both context and pause positions. It also seems to appear in non-final positions (see al-Iqtirāḥ, p. 84) and in diverse morphological environments <sup>1</sup>.

It seems that the three phenomena are realized, according to medieval grammar, only when the –k- comes in the second person singular suffix pronoun. The majority of the examples presented seem to indicate that both kaškaša and kaskasa appear more with second person feminine suffix pronouns than with second person masculine pronouns. Šanšana, on the other hand, seems to appear in both masculine and feminine second person suffix pronouns as well as in different contexts within the word. But, the three phenomena, according to medieval grammarians, theoretically do not appear in context, but in pause position. However, in many instances in the medieval grammatical cannon, there are

<sup>1</sup> A detailed but somewhat complex description of the phenomena in 1 and 2 is available in Sibawayhi's al-Kitāb (vol. IV, p. 199-200), although he does not call them by their names, which emerged only in the following century with later grammarians

examples of the phenomena in 1 and 2 above in all positions, pause and context (al-‘Ayn, vo. IV, p. 32 and Owens, 2013, p. 177).

Remaining with the medieval Arab grammarians’ presentation of the phenomena in question, it is worth our while here to look at the status of these phenomena. It is to be noticed that there was a change in perception and attitude towards the above phenomena between the end of the 2nd/8th and the 4th/10th centuries. It is a change that signals the creation of a hierarchical organization of variants and then an ultimate exclusion of some and the preference of others by the 4th/10 century. That change can be seen in the manner and detail of the presentation of the phenomena in grammatical works, which I will discuss in brief here.

It is important to note that the three above described phenomena were not adversely evaluated or given a sociolinguistic value in the medieval structural linguistic literature until the 4th/10th century, if they were mentioned in the first place. The situation in early lexical works is different. Early lexical writings did not mention except *kaškaša*. al-‘Ayn (where the phenomena were lexically due for mention, vo. IV, p. 30-32) mentions *kaškaša* in passing inside a *k-š-š* entry, where the sounds of the camel were presented. The other two phenomena did not receive even this cursory attention. By the same token, Ibn Fāris, to whom I ascribe the first scholarly negative attribute of the phenomena in question, (Maqāyīs al-Luġa 3:176 and 5:128) neglects to mention *šanšana* all together, but he mentions both *kaskasa* and *kaškaša*. But the reference in this case, as it was in al-‘Ayn, was both fleeting and pregnant with implications for the development of Arabic, which is besides our discussion here. It goes as follows:

Wa-’ammā al-kaskasa fa-kalima muwallada fī man yubdilu fī kalāmihi-l-kāf sīnan  
As for *kaskasa*, it is an innovated/foreign word [used by the one who] replaces the *kāf* in his speech with a *sīn*.

In an almost identical fashion, Ibn Fāris (Maqāyīs al-Luġa, vol. 5:128) brings up *kaškaša* as follows:

Wa-l-kaškaša kalima muwallada fī man yubdilu-l-kāfa fī kalāmihi šīnan  
As for *kaškaša*, it is an innovated/foreign word [used by the one who] replaces the *kāf* in his speech with a *šīn*.

From the perspective of language development, the change in reference between Maqāyīs al-Luġa and al-‘Ayn can be significant. Bearing in mind the wide spread use of the phenomenon in multiple sound environments in the modern eastern and central Arabian dialects (Al-Azraqi, 2007, pp. 555–557) and pending further research, the omission of the specific reference to the second person feminine singular suffix pronoun in Maqāyīs al-Luġa can be understood as an indication that the phenomena started to be used in different sound and morphological contexts within the word. This remark can also be an acceptable justification for the neglect of early grammar and reading works of the *šanšana* in the discussion of the feminine singular suffix pronouns, such as *Sībawayhi* and *Ibn Ğinnī*, who I will discuss below in this section. At the end of the 2nd/8th century the phenomena were restricted to fewer sound environments, and drew the grammarians’ attention only as variants of the second person suffixal pronouns.

When the three phenomena in question were given a negative light, it was first in the 3rd/9th century, and it was not in any structural or lexical linguistic description. It came rather in commonplace books, where anecdotal evidence can furnish us with the attitude of the period. The three phenomena were always used to identify particular tribal dialects as less *faṣīḥ* than the dialects of Hijaz in general and Qurayš in particular <sup>2</sup>, which seem to have started to become prestigious at that time. This attitude

<sup>2</sup>The reader is advised to keep in mind that the *faṣīḥ* status was given to other tribes and dialects in the context of describing morphological and syntactic features. In such cases the Hijazi dialects will be considered less *faṣīḥ*

can be illustrated by an anecdote al-Ġāḥiẓ tells us at length, where by the first Umayyad caliph was in a gathering. When he asked about the best dialect in Arabic, a man from the attendants rose to give an opinion, and told him that the best dialect was the one which was void of many features. The three phenomena listed above are among the ones this person listed (al-Bayān, vol. III, p. 212-213). Although al-Xalīl (al-ʿAyn, vol. IV, p. 29 and 32), Sībawayhi (al-Kitāb, vol. IV, p. 199-200) and Ibn Ġinnī, Sirr, vol. I, p. 206-207 and al-Xaṣāʾiṣ, vol. II, p. 11-12) discussed kaškaša and kaskasa at varying degrees of detail and length, they as grammarians did not attach an inferior epithet or qualifier to them. In fact, Sībawayhi (148/760-180/796) and Ibn Ġinnī (322/941-392/2002) seem to justify kaškaša and kaskasa when they explained the presumed conscious speakers' choice to use these variants to disambiguate the masculine from the feminine in the pause position after the disappearance of the short vowel at the end of the suffix pronouns in pause. al-Xalīl and Ibn Ġinnī merely describe them in a matter of fact fashion as variants some Arabs use.

A quick word about al-Xalīl is relevant here. al-ʿAyn does not mention two of the three phenomena as separate or even partial entries. Šanšana must be a Š-N entry (vol. II, p. 362), but it is not mentioned. By the same token, kaskasa must be a K-S entry (vol. IV, p. 29), but it is also not mentioned. Kaškaša is the only phenomenon mentioned in al-ʿAyn (vol. IV, p. 32). It is, however, not mentioned in an entry of its own, but rather in the same K-š-š entry, which is one of the sounds a camel produces and the hissing noise of the snake. Between the description of these two animal sounds comes the mere mention of Kaškaša and its typical 2nd person feminine examples. In addition, the short passing remark on Kaškaša being realized outside the Hijaz region reads as follows:

Wal-Kaškaša luġa li-Rabīʿa (And, Kaškaša is a variant of Rabīʿa's)

This short statement is void of any value or hierarchical evaluation. It is rather merely factual. The same neutral attitude, albeit with more description and demographic information, is introduced by Sībawayhi. In a chapter entitled Hādā būbu-l-kāf allatī hiya ʿālamatu-l-muḍmar, Sībawayhi (al-Kitāb, vol. IV, p. 199-200) focusses on the kāf as a part of the suffix pronoun. The impression a reader gets from reading this rather straight forward chapter is that the purpose of Sībawayhi was to introduce the perceptual gender ambiguity that may arise in pause positions with what his presentation put as the default second person suffix variant. Then, both the kaškaša and kaskasa respectively were introduced as two willful and intended moves with which some Arabs solved the said problem. It is my assumption that the functional difference between kaškaša and kaskasa on the one hand and šanšana on the other hand may have been the reason why Sībawayhi did not introduce the latter in this discussion. He was discussing a minute detail in the morphological issue of suffix pronouns and not a phonetic variant of one of the Arabic sounds.

After Sībawayhi describes the vowel distinction between the masculine and the feminine singular pronouns after the pronominal kāf, he moves to ascribing to nās kaṭīrūn 'a large group' from Tamīm and only nās 'people' from ʿAsad try to maintain the distinction between the feminine and masculine singular pronoun in the pause position where the final vowels are elided. In order to do so, they wanted to make the distinction even more clear by means of using a consonant rather than a vowel, like they did in the independent pronouns. The consonant they selected was one that is similar to the kāf in the place of articulation and also in voicing, both sounds being voiceless. Again (vol. IV, p.200), after he describes the kaskasa and the kaškaša, Sībawayhi reiterates that not fulfilling the two phenomena means the masculine in the pronoun.

It is noteworthy that Sībawayhi ascribes to the nās kaṭīrūn and nās from Tamīm and ʿAsad respectively a willful conscious decision in the creation and use of a variant to clarify gender ambiguity. This discrepancy in the qualification of the word nās 'people' is the closest statement we have from the end of the 2nd/8th century as to the spread of the phenomena under study. Despite the fact that it is a one-time small remark in passing, it suggests that central and eastern Najdi tribes used kaskasa and



the kaškaša more than northern Najdi tribes that were the buffer tribes between Tamīm and the region of the Hijaz. This is a remark that will find its support in the list of tribes that are said to have used the phenomena at the times of Sībawayhi, which we will see in the next section.

To my knowledge, the first instance in structural linguistic scholarship kaškaša and kaskasa are mentioned in a hierarchy of socio-linguistic worth was al-Xaṣā'is, (vol. II, p. 11-12), where they were the inferior variant. In the chapter entitled bābu-i-xtilāf-il-luġāt wa-kulluhā ḥuġġa, Ibn Ğinnī presents a general theoretical argument and uses some variant dialectal features for illustration. Kaškaša and kaskasa are among these variants. He, as a structural linguist, argues for the equal degree of soundness, from a theoretical grammatical point of view, of the different variants of any phenomenon. He states, however, that, if the two variants of the same phenomenon are close to one another in the spread of their use and the soundness of qiyās, it is not acceptable to ascribe soundness for one variant over others, because there the favored variant does not deserve the status. He goes on to state that all one can do is to select one variant for use. He then states (al-Xaṣā'is, vol. II, p. 10):

Fa-'ammā 'an taqilla 'iḥdāhumā ġiddan wa-taktura al-'uxrā ġiddan fa-'innaka ta'xuḍu bi-'awsa'ihā riwāyatan wa-'aqwāhā qiyāsan, 'alā tarāka lā taqūlu. . . . . wa-lā taqūlu karamtukiš wa-lā 'akramtukis. . . . . ?

But if one [variant] is much less widespread and the other is much more widespread, then you should adopt the wider in use and the stronger in analogy. Do not you see that you do not say. . . . . and do not say karamtukiš or 'akramtukis. . . . . ?

It is only in this text that we can see that kaškaša and kaskasa can indeed be considered inferior variants. But they still remain acceptable. What we do not see in this statement is the discarding of these variants as unusable or wrong. Since Qurayš did not use these variants, it was the better variety. Ibn Ğinnī (al-Xaṣā'is, vol. II, p. 11) states that Ta'lab declares that Qurayš was, therefore, higher on the hierarchy of faṣāḥa than the dialects that realize any of these variants. This verdict exists on Ta'lab's own tongue in (Maġālis, p. 100 and Xizāna, vol. IV, p. 495). However, Ibn Ğinnī then concludes (al-Xaṣā'is, vol. II, p. 12) that:

'illā 'anna 'insānan law 'ista'malahā lam yakun moxti'an li-kalāmi-l-'arab, walākinhu kāna yakūnu moxti'an li-'aġwaddi-l-luġatayn.

But if a person uses it [the inferior variant] he would not be mistaken in the ways of the Arabs. But he would be missing the best of the two variants.

According to this statement, Ibn Ğinnī does not deem the person who chooses to use the less prestigious form as erring in language use, but rather mistaken in the choice of the lesser acceptable form. However, the person remains within the realm of the faṣāḥa. His justification is:

Wa-kayfa taṣarafati-l-ḥālu fan-nāṭiqu 'alā qiyās luġatin min luġāti-l-'arabi muṣṭibun ġayru moxti', Wa-'in kān ġayru mā ġā'a bihi xayran minhu.

However the situation may be, the speaker according to one of the variants of the Arabs is correct and not mistaken. However, what variant he did not use is better than the one he used.

To Ibn Ğinnī in the 4th/10th century, therefore, the issue is that variants are all correct/acceptable, and theoretically of course, equally usable. But some of these variants are higher on the scale of the faṣāḥa than others, which is not a structural scale. Although Ibn Ğinnī does not hint to the implications of such a statement on the functional load of the variants in question, it is logical to assume that the one that is higher on the scale of faṣāḥa is expected to be favored in any process of selection, such as the one on which Classical Arabic was based.

The absence of šanšana from the discussions in al-Xalīl, Sībawayhi and Ibn Ğinnī is worthy of note

here. Despite the obvious phonetic and phonological connection between the three phenomena under discussion, these three authors and their affiliates did not mention šanšana most probably for reasons that differ from one scholar to another. The absence of reference is more expected from Sībawayhi and Ibn Ğinnī in their focus on morphological issues than it is from al-Xalīl and Ibn Fāris in lexical issues. The first two authors mentioned in passing kaskasa and kaškaša in their discussion of a morpho-syntactic issue, as merely phonetic variants of a morphological phenomenon. So, šanšana, having little or no morpho-syntactic implications, cannot be expected to be a part of the discussion. The absence of even a definition of šanšana from the lexical works of the last two authors is worthy of note, therefore. It is more so because during their quick references to kaskasa and kaškaša, both al-Xalīl and Ibn Fāris merely mentioned their sound behavior.

Interesting as this silence may be, evidence of absence is not helpful in making any generalization. It is not safe to assume that šanšana was not less prestigious in the 2nd and 3rd centuries of the Islamic era. There is simply no evidence for that claim. It is also not plausible, or safe, to assume that all three grammarians could not have had data collected from users of šanšana, who were speakers of Yemāni and Omani dialects. The three above mentioned authors lived and worked in North east Arabia. Šanšana, it is interesting, was not mentioned at all in this theoretical philosophical discussion of the scale of correctness and faṣāḥa by Ibn Ğinnī. It is, therefore, also not safe to make any assumption about it being inferior to the –k- variant. However, the illustrative but not exhaustive nature of mentioning kaskasa and kaškaša allows one to assume the possibility that the absence of šanšana was probably not purposeful.

Kaškaša, kaskasa and šanšana are qualified negatively for the first time in the medieval linguistic tradition when they were described as luġāt maḍmūma. They were first given this adverse epithet in the medieval Arabic grammatical cannon in aṢ-Ṣāhibī (P. 29), which gave more voice to folk and attitude perspectives than other contemporary and near contemporary grammarians did. In the case of 3 above, it was given the additional negative epithet later on as mustabša ‘a ‘frowned upon’ (al-’Iqtirāḥ, p. 84). Remarkably, the three phenomena were still not described as šād. They did not meet the criterion of the rarity of use to be qualified as šād. This remark will be elaborated on later in this article. However, Ibn Fāris (329/941-395/1004) was the first grammarian to designate these variants as maḍmūma in a chapter under the title of Bābu-l-luġāt al-maḍmūma, where he does not justify this designation. But rather, he lists all the variants he designated as such with a few examples for each, after he had described in an earlier chapter the manners of variation among the dialects. Putting this seemingly summary treatment in contrast with the earlier detailed discussion in al-Xaṣā’iṣ allows us to see that the 4th/10th century witnessed the dominance of non-linguistic and sociolinguistic factors over the hierarchical distribution of the variants and hence the choice of the standard variants.

It is also interesting that Ibn Fāris does not list the three above features and others of these luġāt maḍmūma among the legitimate dialectal features or acceptable variants. In Bābu-l-qawl fī ixtilāfi-luġāti-l-‘arab, Ibn Fāris (aṢ-Ṣāhibī, P. 25-28) lists the manners in which dialects differ acceptably from one another in linguistic terms. His discussion and grouping of acceptable variation is organized according to the levels of linguistic analysis. He starts with the phonetic, then moves to morphological, syntactic and semantic levels. The three above features do not appear on the list although the author included morpho-phonetic features such as taltala and ’imāla. In another chapter, Bābu-l-qawl fī ’afṣaḥi-l-‘arab (aṢ-Ṣāhibī, P. 28-29), Ibn Fāris states that the best dialect among the Arabs is that of Qurayš. Among many non-linguistic reasons he uses, one linguistic reason stands out. It is that this dialect did not exhibit any of the features listed in Bābu-l-luġāt al-maḍmūma. It is noteworthy that Qurayš is the only tribe mentioned in this chapter, exactly as it was in the anecdote narrated earlier from al-Bayān. Again, Qurayš may have been a symbol for the whole region of the Hijaz.



### 3 The Demographics of the phenomena

In this rather short section, I will show the geographical and tribal spread of the phenomena under study in this Article. The purpose is to point out to the reader that despite the wide geographical and tribal spread of these phenomena, they were not selected as the standard form, but were rather deemed not 'aḡwaddi-l-luḡatayn and then luḡāt maḍmūma as we saw above. There are many instances of discrepancy in the medieval literature about ascribing Kaškaša, kaskasa and šanšana to pre-Islamic and early-Islamic Peninsular tribes, the first two more than the third. I will try to disentangle some of the differences to show that in fact these phenomena were quite prevalent on the Peninsula in the period under discussion. Šanšana, on the other hand, was mentioned everywhere in the medieval grammatical cannon very briefly as a phenomenon of the Yemeni tribal dialects (al-Muzhir, vol. I, p. 322 and al-Iqtirāḥ, p. 84). A quick word of clarification about šanšana in Yemen is in order here before we move on to the geographical location of the other two phenomena. In the case of šanšana, the discrepancy is in the description of the geographical location and borders of Yemen, as a region. Some medieval geographers expand its borders more than others. The discrepancies are not in the ascription of the phenomenon a particular speech community.

I will start with šanšana because it is more straight forward in its geographical distribution. It was ascribed to Yemen in the medieval grammatical sources. Al-Bakrī (Mu'ḡam mā-i-sta'ḡam, vol. I, p. 16) gives the eastern borders of Yemen as starting down from the Yamāma region and ending shore line in Ḥadramaut. In the north, its borders extend to the outskirts of Mecca. Southern and western borders are the shorelines of both the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea, respectively. If the designation Yemen truly covered this space of the southern peninsula, and if that designation represented the use of the šanšana phenomenon, non- šanšana must have been probably limited to the area of Mecca and the northern Hijaz to the Levant (For a quick reference to the geography and demography of both regions of Hijaz and Yemen, see Al-Sharkawi, 2016, pp. 79, 81–82).

The issue of kaškaša and kaskasa is more complicated, on the other hand. Part of the complication comes from the nature of the medieval sources. The grammatical sources, including Sībawayhi, are characterized by generalization, especially in mentioning the tribal affiliation. Tamīm, for example, is a large tribal confederacy. When Sībawayhi stated that nās kaṭīrūn from Tamīm realized the phenomena under discussion, we do not know which clans and where in the territory under the control of the confederacy. In addition, the sources are also characterized by vagueness. In the same example, Sībawayhi states that only unqualified nās in 'Asad realize the phenomena under discussion. The difference in qualification is indicative of a differential spread of use between Tamīm and 'Asad. That difference, however, is vague. Along the same line, we will see later in this section that most of the Najdi tribes were given epithets of greatness and largess, which blur the differences in size and territorial position. However, until more accurate sources become available we will use the available anecdotal evidence with caution.

Later sources, such as Xizāna (vol. IV, p. 595), ascribe the two phenomena to larger Najdi and eastern Arabian tribal affiliations without going into details listing smaller ones. Kaškaša and kaskasa were ascribed in this case to Tamīm, which stands traditionally for the tribes of eastern Najd and the east coast of the Peninsula. Similarly, al-Muzhir (vol. I, p. 221) ascribes it to Rabī'a, another affiliation to the north and northwest of Tamīm. Both authors, and others like them, use larger tribal affiliations as symbols for the diversity of the area east of Hijaz. Earlier sources, in the 3rd/9th century, ascribe the phenomenon to Bakr (as-Sīrāfi, Šarḥ, vol. v, p. 468), 'Asad (aṣ-Šāhibī, p. 24), Hawāzin (Maḡālis, vol. I, p. 100, Lisān, k-s-s, and Xizāna, vol. IV, p. 595), and of course, Rabī'a (al-'ayn, p. 31). Although earlier and later sources do not mention the far eastern tribal affiliations of 'Abdu-l-Qays and the region of Oman, and judging by the spread of the phenomena in question in the modern dialects of Najd (Ingham, 1994, p. 14), of Kuwait (Holes, 2007, p. 609), Bahrain (Holes, 2006, p. 245) and Oman

(Etzard, 2008, p. 479 and Holes, 1989), one can safely assume their existence in the 3rd/9th centuries (For a short but sufficient summary of the distribution of the phenomena in the modern dialects of the Arabian Peninsula, see Owens (2013, pp. 177–179)).

It is important to note here that the tribes of these areas are mentioned here although they were not mentioned in the earlier traditional grammatical cannon. They were, however, alluded to by their larger tribal affiliations that realized the phenomena in question and were in constant contact with them. However, despite the fact that modern dialectal studies show the presence of the phenomena of *kaškaša* and *kaskasa* in northeast, north and northwest Arabia, I hesitate to present these areas and their tribes in the first three centuries of the Islamic era as participating in the phenomena. To the best of my research, I have not found in medieval Arabic grammatical sources any mentions of *kaškaša* and *kaskasa* in Taglib, Kalb, or the tribes to the west or northwest of the Nufūd. In addition, some of these areas were under the social and economic influence of the Hijazi tribes on the eve of Islam and continued to be after the emergence of the Umayyad dynasty. They are therefore excluded from the discussion until more reliable data can further enlighten the discussion.

The Hijaz region (delineated in red on map one below), symbolized by Qurayš, is both geographically less expanded and demographically smaller than the region of Najd and beyond. Hijazi speakers do not use the variants under study, and theirs was the variant selected as the standard form. Hijaz is defined in the medieval Arab geographical studies as the narrow space separating between the coastal plain of Tihāma on the Red Sea in the west and the Najd plateau in the east (al-Bakrī, Mu‘gam, vol. I, p. 11). It is also the territory between the Ġawr in the northwest and both the empty quarter in the southeast and the volcanic rocky territories in the northeast (Yāqūt, Mu‘gam, vol. III, p. 218). Therefore, geographically, the Hijaz region was much smaller than the Najdi region in medieval literature.

#### Map: Hijazi Variant



In addition to the narrowness of the Hijaz region, as shown in the map above, it seems that it was

less densely populated than the Najd region. The medieval Arabic literature- linguistic works and especially the genealogical writings- gives us clear testimonial indications that the Najd region was much more densely populated than the Hijaz region. In the absence of any statistics or even reliable estimates beyond anecdotes, these largely small remarks are the best we can use. The phenomena under study, therefore, must have been the more commonly used because they were used by the most well populated tribes in the largest territorial domains. 'Asad, for example, was a multi-clan tribe of diverse connections (Ġamhara, p. 11 and 190-196). Tamīm enjoyed the same diversity and multiplicity of population sources, where three large tributary sources founded it (Ġamhara, p. 207). It has been also described as 'akbar qawā'id-l-'arab 'the largest base of the Arabs' (Ġamhara, p. 207) and the tribe whose population crowded the land (al-Ya'qūbī, Tārīx, vol. I, p. 229). The tribes of Qays were also described in the literature of the first four centuries of the Islamic era as large in territorial footprint and very densely populated (Ġamhara, p. 479-483).

## 4 Discussion

After the introduction of the three phenomena under study in section one above, I argued that despite their variant status, they were not less acceptable by the end of the 2nd/8th century. They started to be so in the 4th/10th century. In the previous section, I explained that Kaškaša, kaskasa and šanšana were the variant used by a multitude of tribes who were most populous and geographically wide spread. In this section, I will discuss two points: I will first introduce the essential concept of šād in the medieval Arabic grammatical thinking in very general terms. I will then link this concept to the tribal and geographical distribution of the phenomena in the previous section. The purpose of this discussion is to show the role of social and tribal prestige in the selection of Classical Arabic forms, especially in so far as the sound phenomena are concerned. In other words, the variant that Qurayš used was technically the minority variant, but it was nonetheless the selected one for standardization, because socio-political prestige overrode the grammatical theoretical principle.

I will introduce the general/grammatical concept of šād because it is the objective principle that medieval scholars used to distinguish between what is more acceptable and what is less acceptable. A šād element in the period under study, from a lexical point of view, was defined in general terms as an individual or unique element in all contexts. Al-Xalīl states (al-'Ayn, vol. VI, p. 215):

Wa-kullu šay'in mutafarridin fa-huwa šād (And everything that is unique/individual is šād.)

By the same token, in Maqāyīs al-Luġa, (vol. III, p. 180) in the 4th/10th century, singularity, uniqueness and numerical minority are emphasized. There is no mention of a status of anomaly or irregularity in the definition. Likewise, Lisān (š-d-d) echoes al-Xalīl's general definition. However, it also adds to it a slightly different shade of the meaning. It introduces the concept of anomaly to it. However, composed in the 7th/13th century, the addition of anomaly to the meaning of the root must be taken as a later addition to the general denotation and connotation. It states:

Nadura 'ani-l-ġumhūr (Split from the group)

From a purely structural point of view, and remaining in the 4th/10th century, Ibn Ġinnī echoes the understanding of the scholars of his time, linguists and otherwise, when he (al-Xaṣā'is, vol. I, p. 99) describes the concept in a neutral tone as follows:

ġa'alū mā fāraqa 'alaihi bābahu wa-nfarada 'anhu dālika 'ilā ġairihi šād.  
they decided that whatever differed from its class and joined (behaved like) another šād.

This neutral and descriptive tone was not the exclusive mark of Ibn Ġinnī. It rather extended back as

far back as the times of Sībawayhi, who was probably the first grammarian to use the term to signify deviation in small numbers in a chapter entitled: *hāda bāb mā šaḍḍa min-l-muḍa‘af* (Kitāb, vol. IV, p. 421). In this chapter, Sībawayhi uses the same neutral tone without theorizing about the status of the geminated verb variants. Therefore, taking both Sībawayhi and Ibn Ğinnī as representatives of the grammatical tradition between the 2nd/8th and the 4th/10 century one can understand that the concept of *šāḍ* is a behavioral term without implications on its favorability. In other words, a *šāḍ* variant was an acceptable variant all the same.

Likewise, an element is considered a *šāḍ*, to Ibn AS-Sarrāḡ (a theoretical linguist), if it does not behave like the other members of its linguistic class, if it is used by a numerical minority group within the speech community or both. It is, however, less *šāḍ* when it is used by a majority, even if it behaves differently from the other members of its class. It is more *šāḍ* when it behaves in accordance with its class but used by a fewer members of the speech community (al-‘Uṣūl, vol. I, p. 57). There was in the 3rd/9th century a strong focus on the use of the majority as a measure of correctness. The element or the variant that was used by the majority was admissible for linguistic analysis and used for generalization (Al-‘Anbārī, al-‘Iḡrāb, p. 45 and Luma‘u-l-‘adilla, p. 81). Ibn Qutayba, in his manual for aspiring scribes ‘Adabu-l-Kātib (p. 600-612), recommends to junior colleagues the knowledge of what was in majority and what was in minority use. Indeed, he provides a full chapter on *šāḍ* under the title of *bāb šawāḍi-t-taṣrīf*. For, if there were choices to be made between variants, the one used by the majority comes first, and is preferred.

If you combine the al-Xaṣā’iṣ (vol. I, p. 99) statement with the two al-Xaṣā’iṣ (vol. II, p. 12 and p. 10) statements quoted in section one above about the usability of variants and the role of the numerical majority in the selection process, it is to be understood then that the Qurayš variant was estimated to be the default despite the strong possibility that it was the numerical and geographical minority. As we have seen above, the numerical majority use should be, contrary to the scholarly opinion of the day, the default variant. Since medieval scholars of the structures of Arabic such as Sībawayhi, Ibn Ğinnī and Ibn AS-Sarrāḡ in the period between the 2nd/8th and the 4th/10th centuries treated the phenomena under study as mere coexisting variants, and justified (in the case of Sībawayhi) this variation, and since the negative remarks came in non-structural discussions, one can safely venture a conclusion. The Qurayš variant, which was considered default only in the 4th/10th century, was selected for non-linguistic reasons. Judging by the sentiment expressed by Ibn Fāris in *aṣ-Šāhibī* in *bābu-l-qawli fī ‘afṣaḥi-l-‘arab* (p. 28) and *bābu-l-qawli fī-l-luḡāt maḍmūma* (29), Qurayš was favored for its privileged position as a place of political power and pilgrimage. The variants Qurayš used were, therefore, prestigious.

## 5 Conclusion

In this article, I discussed three of the *luḡāt maḍmūma*. *Kaškaša*, *kaskasa* and *šanšana*. They were shown to have become so described only in the 4th/10th century, in a non-structural discussion and in the absence of a similar verdict from medieval scholars of the structures of Arabic. the fate of these features may be known to us because they were part of scholarly discussions of morpho-syntactic features, and not because the grammarians scholars studied sound variation as a part of a larger study of the Arabic sounds. This is probably why the discussion of *šanšana* was less focused on than *kaškaša* and *kaskasa* until the 4th/10th century. Despite the fact that Sībawayhi dedicated a large section of his work to the discussion of sound phenomena, his was a tradition that later Arab grammarians did not follow strictly. However, the available scattered and few data seems to suggest that at least the sounds of Classical Arabic were selected according to socio-linguistic factors, namely prestige, which overrode grammatical principles. Qurayš, as the representative of the Hijaz region, had that prestige in the 4th/10th century, judging by *aṣ-Šāhibī*, and probably earlier, judging by the anecdote in *Ta‘lab’s*

Mağālīs. Prestige was probably so strong that it was able to override the established rules of the numerical majority and the šāḍ in Arabic grammar.

A point of caution about the available data is worth noting here. One aspect of the phenomena that was not dealt with in any length in this article was the differential qualification made by Sībawayhi, and mentioned in passing in section one above. Sībawayhi declares that nās kaṭīrūn and only nās from Tamīm and 'Asad respectively use the phenomena under consideration. If there is any value to this passing comment, it is that the further away from Qurayš and Hijaz in general towards the east, the more Kaškaša and kaskasa were used. This remark opens the door for questions about the available data. What was the status of Kaškaša and kaskasa in the buffer tribes such as Hawāzin, Kināna, Ṭayyi' and Huḍayl? Interesting as such a question may be to a student of the history of the Arabic dialects on the Arabian Peninsula after Islam, and as directly bearing on the topic of this article, namely the manner of the selection of the sounds of Classical Arabic, it will have to wait for a larger and better data.

Due to the aforementioned shortage of metalinguistic data on the spread of the phenomena under study, and sporadic nature of the linguistic data, it is my conviction that looking at a broad spectrum of data is advisable in order to obtain meaningful results. The study of several small phenomena like the ones focused on in this article allows us to produce generalizable results. Aligning study results from these phenomena, regardless how marginal or under-represented may they be, seems to me to be a useful strategy. Therefore, putting the current phenomena alongside other similarly obscure phenomena such as 'imāla and taltala (al-Sharkawi 2018 and 2020, respectively) helps us understand that the standardization of the sounds of Classical Arabic drew on a different source from the standardization of Classical Arabic morphology and syntax. While the general trend in the standardization of morphology and syntax drew on data from the Najdi dialects (See Ech-Charfi, 2018, especially p. 79 for a preliminary metalinguistic discussion of this claim. For a linguistic illustration of the standardization of Classical Arabic syntax, see Al-Sharkawi, 2020a). This article showed that the sounds of Classical Arabic drew from a Hijazi source and was probably a sociolinguistic process of selection.

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