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Arabic language in Zanzibar: past, present, and future

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ABSTRACT

The debate on the status and the role of Standard/Classical Arabic versus Dialectal Arabic in the Arab World has a long history. In parallel to this, voices calling for giving Dialectal Arabic the status of the official state language and cancelling Standard Arabic altogether are becoming louder. This debate is being fuelled by the rapidly developing theory of superdiversity which claims that, due to the rapid changes that happened to the world after 1991, and increasing globalization associated with worldwide migration, easy access throughout the world to internet and social networks, video hosting services and satellite television, societies all over the world have become extremely diverse linguistically. This theory also draws on language ideologies, the concept that suggests that the traditional idea of a "language" is an ideological artefact. Is this approach valid for understanding what is happening in the Arabic language? I will attempt to answer this question by examining the status of the Arabic language on the margins of the Arab world – in Zanzibar. For centuries, the Arabic language has been one of the key languages spoken in Zanzibar, but it has now been practically replaced by Swahili.

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1. Introduction

The debate on the status and the role of Standard/Classical Arabic versus Dialectal Arabic in the Arab World has a long history. In parallel to this, voices calling for giving Dialectal Arabic the status of the official state language and abandoning Standard Arabic altogether are becoming louder. These voices originate both in the Arab World and among the ranks of Western researchers. This debate is being fuelled by the rapidly developing theory of *superdiversity* which claims that, due to the rapid changes that happened to the world after 1991, and increasing globalization resulting in, among other factors, worldwide migration, easy access of all populations to internet and social networks, video hosting services, and satellite television, societies all over the world have become extremely diverse linguistically. Furthermore, the theory of *superdiversity* draws on the notion of *language ideologies*, the concept that suggests that

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there is no such thing as a distinct language and that the traditional idea of a "language" is nothing but an ideological artefact. Therefore, the concepts of native language and language competence should give way to the concepts of language repertoires and linguistic forms (Arnot, Blommaert& Rampton 2015). Is this approach valid and appropriate for the Arabic language or does the traditional dichotomy Standard versus Dialectal Arabic (Ferguson 1959) remain preferable? I will attempt to answer this question by examining the status of and perspectives on the Arabic language on the margins of the Arab world, i.e., in Zanzibar, a region that used to be a part of the Sultanate of Oman and now is a semi-autonomous part of Tanzania. For centuries, the Arabic language has been one of the key languages spoken in Zanzibar, but it has now been practically replaced by Swahili.

2. Zanzibar: the margins of the Arab world

Very little has been written on the history and status of the Arabic language in Zanzibar. During the last 150 years, only two publications have addressed this issue: the first one, published by C. Reinhardt in 1894 and titled *Ein arabischer Dialekt gesprochen in 'Omān und Zanzibar: nach praktischen Gesichtspunkten für das Seminar für orientalische Sprachen in Berlin*, discussed the Arabic spoken in Oman and Zanzibar. The second paper, *A Basic Vocabulary in Zanzibar Arabic*, was published in 1994 by A. Nakano. The lack of research during the twentieth century can be attributed to a chain of political, social, and economic upheavals that transformed Zanzibar. Two of the most crucial events were the gaining of Independence in 1963 and the Revolution of 1964, after which a great number of Zanzibaris of non-African descent, led at first by Arabs, started to leave the islands, often trying to save their lives. The lack of research on the status of Arabic in Zanzibar is especially surprising because there is a strong interest among Arabists regarding the status of the Arabic language on the periphery of the Arab world and especially regarding the question of the emergence of the so-called *contact languages* that are understood to be a stable fusion of Arabic and local languages (Versteegh 1993; Miller 2002). That being said, there have been several publications that discussed in rather general terms the history of Arabic presence in the region (Lodhi 1986, 1994a, 2005a, 2005b), In parallel to that, some research has been conducted on the role the Arabic language, together with other *oriental* (cursive is mine) languages, mostly Farsi, Indian, and Turkish, has had in the development of Swahili in both linguistic and cultural domains (Krumm 1940; Lodhi 2000a, 2000b).

At the same time, substantial research has been done during the last 30 years that has been predominantly linked to Arabic *pidgins, creoles*, as well as *koines* and *lingua franca;* this research was mostly focused on Arabic spoken in the Southern Sudan (Versteegh 1993; Miller 2002; Manfredi 2013),

Arabic in Nigeria (Owens 1993), and Arabic in Chad (Amadou 1982). The material, accumulated as the result of the above research, allowed researchers to identify certain trends, typical of pidginization/creolization/koinezation of Arabic in a traditionally non-Arabic speaking environment (Versteegh 1993; Miller 2002).

The situation of the Arabic language in Zanzibar, however, represents a problem of a different character. On one hand, active language, cultural, religious, and economic contacts between the archipelago of Zanzibar and the Arab world, especially Oman and Hadramawt, have persisted for many centuries. Moreover, since 1698, Zanzibar and its territories have officially been a part of the Sultanate of Oman and remained in the Sultanate until the 6 April 1861, when it became an independent Sultanate through British mediation. Although from 1890 to 1963 Zanzibar was a British Protectorate, the Arabic language (followed by English and Swahili) was the official language of the Sultanate of Zanzibar until 12 January 1964 (Lodhi 1986; Versteegh 1997).

The Arab population in Zanzibar before 1964 numbered about 54,000, which was a significant fraction 15%, of the total population of Zanzibar of about 360,000 (Lofchie 1965). Further, due to the geographical remoteness of Zanzibar from the rest of the Arab world and other factors, Arabic language did not become a mother tongue for the majority of Zanzibar's population. That said, it has markedly influenced the development of Swahili as both East African culture and language (Figure 1).

3. Zanzibari Arabs: migration to Zanzibar and years of exile

The presence of migrants from the Middle East, first of all, Arabs and Persians, then migrants from the Indian Peninsula, in the region has a very long history, which demonstrably extends back to the first century of the Islamic era, although information about Arabs in East Africa becomes consistent only in the fourteenth century, when Ibn Batuta visited the region. Until the arrival of the Portuguese at the very end of the fifteenth century, the Zanzibar archipelago was inhabited by a population of mixed African, Persian, Arab, Indian, and Indonesian descent (Lodhi 1994a, 1994b), with a number of city and village kingdoms ruled by kings and queens. The weakening of the Portuguese influence was, in part, caused by the growing rivalry of the Dutch and British; however, the main threat originated from Oman. After a series of military clashes that took place throughout the region under the guidance of Seif bin Sultan, the Imam of Oman, the Portuguese were forced to withdraw, facilitating Omani regional dominance including Zanzibar. The migration of Omanis to East Africa was, to a large degree, caused by internal problems of the Sultanate of Oman located in the Arabian Peninsula. After the Omani Sultanate of Zanzibar was founded in 1698, the role of Omanis acceded to

critical importance, and the general Arab presence in the region started to increase considerably. This state of things persisted from the eighteenth into the latter half of the nineteenth century (Bennett 1978), and, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Arab, i.e., Omani and Hadrami, influence in Zanzibar had peaked. While the Omanis gained considerable political influence and power, the Hadrami people, to a notable degree, became influential in religious affairs and commerce. During this stage, the expansion of the Arab presence in East Africa had a number of consequences, among the most important of which were the spread of Islam and of the Arabic language.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the British and German influence in the region started to grow. This coincided with gradual weakening of Omani rule. During the second half of the nineteenth century, both the British and Germans tried to establish full control over Zanzibar and Tanganyika; in 1890, Great Britain signed a treaty with Germany, under which it received Zanzibar, while Germany, among other territories, got control over the coastal area of modern Tanzania. Under British rule, Muslims (mostly Arabs) could no longer control the region politically and economically. Initially, however, they were valued by the colonizers for their administrative experience and literacy skills and, hence, hired for junior positions. With time, they were replaced by newly converted Christians (Lodhi 1994a).

Throughout the history of Zanzibar, there have been two general categories of Omanis in Zanzibar: the rich and well-established who came to Zanzibar several generations before, and the poor, called *manga*, who recently migrated to Zanzibar from inland Oman, ostensibly in search of a better life. After the revolution, about 17,000 Omanis evacuated Tanzania, but in the years following the revolution about 3700 of them actually returned to Oman, while the rest stayed in Dubai, Kuwait, Egypt, and elsewhere (Petterson 2002). By 1975, in Zanzibar alone, 10,000 Zanzibari Omanis returned to Muscat as a part of the program launched by Sultan Qaboos (Valeri 2007). The program existed only for a short time and about 5000 Omanis stayed in UAE because they were denied Omani residence (Valeri 2007).

Like the Omanis, the Hadrami Arabs have been trading along the East African coast and settling in its important cities, such as Mombasa, Kilwa, and Zanzibar since early times (Bennett 1978). During more recent times, there have been large waves of Hadrami emigration to Zanzibar due to famine and tribal wars, especially in 1917 and 1943–1944 (Walker 2008). During the second half of the nineteenth through the first half of the twentieth century, Islamic scholars of Hadrami origin became very important in Zanzibar: it was mostly the Hadramis who brought Shadhiliya, Qadiriya, and ʻAlawiya *tarīqas* to East Africa. Even more important was the fact that the Hadramis also stood behind the re-organization of both religious and secular education in Zanzibar (Bang 2007). As was the case with the Omani Arabs, Hadramis were divided into two groups: the wealthy ones, who were well

established, and the poor ones, called *shihiri*, that is, those who were coming to Zanzibar via the Hadrami port of Shihr, trying to escape from instability and poverty in their home country.

Zanzibar became independent from British rule in 1963. Soon after independence, the rise of the African nationalism movement, boosted to a large extent by the long-lasting Arab dominance in the state, led to a military coup, which took place on 12 January 1964 and resulted in ousting the last Sultan of Zanzibar and persecution of the ethnic Arab population. Soon after the military coup, Zanzibar merged with Tanganyika to form the new state: the United Republic of Tanzania. The surviving Omani Arabs were required to leave the country by the new pro-African government. Moreover, the Revolution of 1964 also adversely impacted the livelihood of the Hadrami Arabs, who started moving out of Zanzibar out of fear they would be forcibly removed by the newly independent government. Although anti-Arab hostility mostly targeted the Omanis who historically occupied the elite ranks in Zanzibari society, other immigrants, such as the Hadrami Arabs, Indians, and Persians, were also maltreated (Lobo 2000). During the late 1960s through the 1970s, many Hadramis from the east African coast, including Zanzibar, returned to Hadramawt or emigrated elsewhere (Walker 2008).

4. Swahili and Arabic: a long-term relationship

To have a better understanding of the role of Arabic language in East Africa, it is important to take into consideration the history of the Swahili language. Swahili (or Kiswahili) is a Bantu language spoken as a second or third language in Eastern and Central Africa by more than 150 million speakers, which makes it one of the most important languages spoken in Africa. What is even more important in this connection is that Swahili has been heavily influenced by Arabic in the course of hundreds of years. There is no clear picture of the percentage of Arabic borrowings in Swahili. However, according to different estimations, words of Arabic origin make up from 30% to 50% of the Swahili lexicon (Tucker 1946; Versteegh 1997). The variety of Swahili spoken in Zanzibar, known as *Kiunguja*, contains an even higher percentage of Arabic words thanks to the centuries-long contact of natives with Arabic language and culture. *Kiunguja* is regarded by the mainland Tanzanians, as well the rest of the Swahili-speaking world, as the Standard variety of Swahili. In fact, the story of the formation of Swahili as an independent language demonstrates yet another possible result of the assimilation of Arabic on the African continent and so it is no coincidence that Lodhi, one of the most reputable experts on Swahili, defines the Arabic language as the "Latin of Swahili" (Lodhi 2005b).

Other cases of assimilation of Arabic described by Miller (1987), Miller (2002)), Owens (1993), Amadou (1982), and Manfredi (2013) study Arabic *pidgins*, *creoles,* and l*ingua francas* that emerged relatively recently – only in the course of the last 200 years. The Arabic-based contact languages spoken in Southern Sudan, Chad, and Nigeria reveal the modifications that occurred in Arabic as a result of its contact with indigenous African languages. The above varieties, however, represent the cases where the Arabic language still succeeded in maintaining its linguistic characteristics to the degree that it still can be recognized and classified as Arabic. Certainly, due to their remoteness from the Arab world, such contact varieties of Arabic will differ dramatically from the other, "mainstream" ones. The case of Swahili is notably different. Despite the intensive linguistic, cultural, religious, and economic contacts between Arabs and the local population over at least several centuries, the role of the local, Bantu languages proved to be more important. This resulted in the formation of a new language that kept its Bantu structure but borrowed heavily from Arabic.

Throughout history, there have been numerous waves of Arab travellers coming to Zanzibar, settling there and intermarrying with local people. Intermarriages and Islam became rooted in the region and led to the growing importance of the Arabic language. Another aspect of the Arabic influence on the Swahili language, along with extensive lexical borrowings, was the adoption of the Arabic alphabet. There is evidence that the Arabic alphabet has been in use at least since the eleventh century (Zhukov 2004). Unfortunately, the early manuscripts in Swahili written in the Arabic alphabet did not survive to modern times, to a large degree thanks to the Portuguese invasion take over of the region during the sixteenth century. The earliest known Swahili epic poem *Hamziya* was written using Arabic script in 1652 (Knappert 1979). *Hamziya*, together with other literary artefacts from the region, supports the idea that the Arabic language and Arabic culture had a crucially important influence on the formation and development of Swahili literary traditions (Zhukov 2004).

Despite quite a few remarks made on the difficulty of using *Ajami*, or Arabic alphabet for writing in Swahili, it seems that the Arabic alphabet, although with some *Swahilization*, did work well for Swahili writers (Mugane 2015). The decline in use of *Ajami* script, which was widely used by those cultures of the African continent that adopted the Arabic alphabet, started with the era of European colonization, when colonizers forced the indigenous population to use Roman-based alphabets. For instance, the British missionary Edward Steere stated: "It seems highly undesirable in any way to perpetuate the Arabic character as the means of writing Swahili, the Roman alphabet being so much clearer and better" (cited from Omar and Frankl 1997).

Implementation of Swahili as a *lingua franca* in Eastern and Central Africa on one hand and dearabization of this language on the other hand were

among the key targets of the European colonizers. Officially, Arabic letters were banned for writing in Swahili in the 1930s. In the 1960s, however, most of the Swahili speakers in Zanzibar were still using the Arabic alphabet and were completely illiterate in terms of writing in Swahili using a Roman-based alphabet (Mugane 2015). Today, however, the Arabic alphabet is reserved mostly for religion and poetry (Vierke 2014).

Even during the time of the British protectorate, Arabic remained the language of the elite groups within Zanzibar; which points to the fact that these groups had confidence in the language and recognized its importance in their livelihood. Therefore, despite growing influence of the English language, which occurred during colonial times, new Arabic words were still being incorporated into Swahili (Ball 1971).

Figure 1. Traces of Arabic language in Zanzibar from colonial times: (1) fragment of wooden door from Arab house with Arabic text on it; (2) fragment of memory plate on mausoleum located in the old Yemeni quarter; (3) old warning sign on the electrical distribution pillar written in English, Arabic, Swahili, and Gujarati languages.

5. Arabic language in Zanzibar and its recent past: which Arabic?

5.1. *Koine Arabic*

Lodhi mentions that when Ibn Batuta arrived in East Africa and travelled along the coastline in 1332, Arabic was widely used as a literary language and language of commerce and remained the only language used in Muslim East Africa for diplomacy, administration, education, and liturgy until 1890 (Lodhi 1994b, 2005b). Similarly, Reinhardt notes, albeit in passing, that the Arabic language, or rather, its Omani variety, had been spoken in Zanzibar for centuries by the noble Omanis, the court, and at least two-thirds of non-noble local Arabs, while the vehicular language for everyday communication (*Verkehrssprache*) was Swahili. What kind of Arabic did the Zanzibari Arabs speak then? Could Omanis maintain the same, unchanged spoken Arabic for several hundreds of years?

If the Arabic language in Zanzibar has undergone a process of *koinezation*, it should have started some time after the Omanis established in Zanzibar and before the Revolution of 1964, or from the eighteenth and into the first half of the twentieth century. There is a list of pre-requisites, necessary for emergence of any variety of contact language, suggested by Miller: (1) linguistic heterogeneity, (2) typologically different languages, (3) condition of social upheaval, leading to quick mixing of populations (4) short time span (Miller 2002).

From the history of Zanzibar, we learn that all of the above pre-requisites were present during the above time period. Indeed, languages spoken in Zanzibar during that time frame were typologically different: Swahili and Arabic were widely spoken along with English and other African and Asian languages. At the same time, the peak of the slave trade coupled with a continuous stream of immigrants and European exploration of East and Central Africa ensured mixing of populations and revolts. In other words, the context of the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries was, at most times, perfect for a new contact language to emerge.

The language described by Reinhardt at the very end of the nineteenth century is practically identical to the Arabic spoken in some parts of Oman. It was the striking similarity of the language that allowed Reinhardt to unite both cases and describe them together, instead of running a comparison between them. On the level of lexicon, Reinhardt mentions several examples of borrowings from other languages but the list is not extensive. Nakano's description of Arabic collected some 80 years later practically reproduces the characteristics of Omani Arabic earlier described by Reinhardt. Does this mean that the Arabic spoken in Zanzibar did not experience any significant influence either from Hadrami Arabic or from other languages spoken in Zanzibar? Although we lack data on this subject, to some degree, this assumption could be true. Below are the reasons that justify the validity of this statement.

(1) While conducting his study, Reinhardt's view of Zanzibar was premised on the nineteenth century worldview. Zanzibar was then, albeit under British rule, a part of Oman, its elite was mostly comprised of Omani Arabs, which meant that Arabic spoken in Zanzibar should have definitely been the Omani variety; (2) the Hadrami Arabs did not mix well with the Omanis since in the course of centuries both Omanis and Hadramis tried to maintain their lineage (Valeri 2007, Walker 2008); and, finally, (3) Swahili, thanks to the very high percentage of words of Arabic origin – up to 50% – and constant influx of people (often slaves) from the mainland, worked very well as a handy vehicular language for most of the ethnic groups living in Zanzibar.

5.2. *Dialectal Arabic*

The variety of Arabic described by Reinhardt and Nakano bears the typical characteristics of Omani Arabic. Among markers that allow us to classify this variety as Omani Arabic are the following.[1]

5.3. *Morphology*

The variety of Arabic spoken in Zanzibar described by Reinhardt and Nakano by and large contains markers typical of Arabic spoken in Oman. Among those markers are: negation *hāʾa* – the Omani equivalent of the Arabic *lā* – "no"; the second fem. sing. possessive suffix is */š/;* and regular occurrence of feminine plural verbs, objectives and pronouns, frequent use of internal passive of verbs.

5.4. *Lexicon*

Reinhardt's description contains mostly words of Arabic origin, while that of Nakano is already heavily influenced by Swahili and English. Although body parts, according to the results of Nakano's questionnaire, are Arabic, clothing, and accessories, food items and many other words from the daily lexicon have been already replaced by Swahili or English words.

5.5. *Standard Arabic*

In parallel to that, there is evidence that Standard Arabic was highly valued by the population of Zanzibar even at the beginning of the British rule: when in the 1920s, the English language was introduced as the language of instruction, a number of rural schools in Zanzibar closed because parents wanted their children to be educated exclusively in Arabic and could not accept either English or Swahili (Lodhi 2005b).

Consequently, one might safely assume that there have been two distinct varieties of Arabic in Zanzibar: (1) Dialectal Arabic and (2) Standard Arabic. The

first variety was mostly spoken by the Omani and Hadrami Arabs (including those from Socotra, who had no formal modern schooling) and, to some degree, their descendants. Standard Arabic was used by both Swahili and Indian Muslim non-native speakers, who studied Arabic at the *madrasa* or school, and educated Arabs both for writing and for speaking. Apparently, there is no indication that there ever existed any variety of Arabic language, such as a contact language or separate dialect, other than these two.

Apparently, the events that followed after the Revolutions of 1964 had a tremendously serious impact on the role of Arabic in the region. Zanzibar was soon merged with Tanganyika and the Arabic language, as a result, has lost its status as a state language. Anti-Arab sentiments inspired by the African nationalists of Mainland origin, boosting among the Bantu population a negative attitude towards the Arabic language and anything related to Arabs, the exodus of Arab families, coupled with the policy of *Swahilization* and *Africanization* all had a serious impact on the dramatic downfall of the status of Arabic in Zanzibar. The only niche that the Arabic language managed to keep was religion – Islam.

6. Arabic in Zanzibar and its status today: which Arabic?

As of today, the reference literature typically does not list the Arabic language as one of the languages, spoken in Zanzibar or, more broadly, in Tanzania. For instance, *Encyclopedia Britannica* omits Arabic from the list of minority languages spoken in Tanzania but mentions Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu, and Konkani (Tanzania). In similar fashion, *Ethnologue* only mentions Omani Arabic and Standard Arabic as languages with no known native speakers and fails to include the Hadrami (Southern Yemeni) Arabic (Tanzania/languages). No systematic research on the Arabic language in Zanzibar has been done during the last 35 years.

Similarly, the reference literature does not offer a clear picture of the ethnic composition in modern Zanzibar: according to *Britannica* (https://www.britannica.com/place/Zanzibar-island-Tanzania), for instance, most of its inhabitants, including Arabs, are Swahili native speakers, while Arabic is spoken by "scholars and recent arrivals from Arabia". In parallel to this, it seems that the general policy of the Tanzanian authorities on both the local and state level is not to emphasize the ethnic identity of its people and to spare no effort to make sure that Zanzibaris, just like the rest of the Tanzanians, see themselves first of all as a part of the Tanzanian nation, whose native language is Swahili (see, for instance, Malipula 2014). The aggressive policy of Swahilization is coupled with the established opinions both in the reference and scholarly publications that, generally, boil down to the following: Arabic lost long ago its status of a prestigious language both in East Africa and in Zanzibar and has been overtaken by English. This partially reflects the reality: during the first few decades following

Independence and Revolution, some Swahili words of Arabic origin were replaced by their English loans or coinages (Versteegh 1997; Lodhi 1986). However, during the past two decades hundreds of new Arabic loans or bantu-Arabic compounds have been added to the modern Swahili lexicon.

Such a vision of the status of the Arabic language in Zanzibar, however, represents only one side of the coin. Meanwhile, the flip side narrates a different story. Indeed, since the revolution of 1964 the number of Arabic speakers has dramatically decreased. If at the beginning of the 1960s there were approximately 50,000 Arabs in Zanzibar, which made up about 16–20% of the population (Petterson 2002; Lofchie 1965), today the proportion is considerably smaller. Nevertheless, the importance of Arabic is still very noticeable on the island and is constantly becoming more noticeable. In fact, it is still spoken as a native language by several hundreds of Arabs of both Hadrami and Omani descent, is studied at schools and *madrasas,* and manifests itself in numerous ways in the daily life of Zanzibaris. Even on the wider geographical level, the role of Arabic seems to be of great importance: recently, there have been scholarly voices in favour of introducing a form of modified Arabic alphabet instead of the Roman one, since it conforms better the structure of the Swahili language (Omar and Frankl 1997). The question, however, remains: which variety of Arabic is used in Zanzibar today?

Below I describe the present status of **Dialectal Arabic** in Zanzibar based on the results of the fieldwork I conducted in Zanzibar in summer of 2015. The fieldwork included interviews I held with Zanzibari Arabs and was designed to detect the varieties of Arabic spoken by them. Among my interviewees were: two first-generation Hadrami immigrants, who came to Zanzibar before the Revolution and three Zanzibari Arabs, two of Hadrami and one of Omani descent. The interviews were held in Arabic, English, and Swahili. I also recorded dialogues in Arabic by my Hadrami and Omani interviewees with each other.[2]

6.1. *Hadrami Arabs*

My contacts with the Hadramis in Zanzibar became possible with the help of the Yemeni association of Zanzibar. It is through them I met and interviewed two natives of Hadramawt: (1) S., aged 75, native of Seiyun, and (2) Y., aged 79, native of Tarim. Both S. and Y. came to Zanzibar in 1950 by boat. Most of their life they worked in Zanzibar as restaurant chefs, a typical work domain for first-generation Hadramis. Y. never travelled to his home country again and does not maintain any contact with his Hadrami relatives. S. travelled to Yemen several times to visit his immediate family; he still keeps in touch with his Hadrami relatives.

6.2. *Results*

The speech of the first-generation Hadramis, S. and Y., contains characteristics typical of the Hadrami dialect of Arabic. On the level of phonetics, both informants use interdentals, voiceless uvular stop [q] is always pronounced as [g], diphthongs *aw/ay* are preserved.

On the morphological level: the prefix used for the future tense is *ba-*, the genitive exponent is always *ḥagg*, passive voice is used extensively. On the level of lexicon, the informant used mostly Arabic words with very scarce insertion of Swahili words.

6.3. *Zanzibari Arabs*

(1) A. (aged 49) is a third-generation Zanzibari Arab, whose grandfather came to Zanzibar from Shibam (Hadramawt) in 1920s. He is a fluent Arabic speaker, but at home he prefers to use Swahili. A.'s children learn Arabic in a local mosque; (2) Y. (aged 64) is, as he refers to himself, a native Zanzibari of Omani origin. He is also a fluent Arabic speaker and, just like A., indicates that at home, with his family members, he mostly speaks Swahili. His children live in Oman, where they are pursuing studies in Arabic; (3) M. (aged 70) is a third-generation Zanzibari of Omani origin. He is a fluent Arabic speaker who considers himself a Zanzibari, and whose native language is Swahili.

6.4. *Results*

A., Y., and M. speak the variety of Arabic language that closely reminds us of the one described by Reinhardt and Nakano, or Omani Arabic. None of them speaks Arabic with a non-native speaker accent: they correctly pronounce the pharyngeals, emphatics, and interdentals that are considered to be the "signature sounds" of the Arabic language. On the lexical level, especially while communicating with each other in Arabic, all three use a considerable proportion of Swahili words.

6.5. *Standard Arabic*

Despite the general anti-Arab attitude that spread in the post-Revolution Zanzibar that led to emigration not only of Omanis but also Hadrami Arabs, a considerable number of Arabs still chose to stay in Zanzibar. Most of the Arabs living in Zanzibar today belong to at least the second or third generation, and they consider Swahili their native tongue. There is a definite interest in the Arabic heritage, including interest in Arabic language, and they try to educate themselves and their children first of all with the help of *madrasas* or Quranic schools that teach their students at least

some basics of written Arabic skills. Needless to say, the variety of Arabic taught in Quranic schools and mosques is always Classical or Standard Arabic. The fact that there is a generally positive attitude towards learning Standard Arabic is well reflected in numbers: as of today there are about 2000 madrasas in Zanzibar (Issa 2015), which mostly function as pre-schools in the morning and Quranic schools in the afternoon for those who attend primary schools in the morning.

7. Does Arabic have a future in Zanzibar? Which Arabic?

Based on the current status of Arabic language in Zanzibar, it would be logical to assume that very soon, when the last "Arab" speakers of Arabic are gone, this language will only be used as the language of Islam. However, there have been a number of events during the last decade or so that allow me to suggest that this history of the Arabic language in Zanzibar has not ended yet. Below are some of the factors that make me envision that the status of Arabic in the region is going through some serious changes and there is a good possibility that this language will regain the popularity and importance it used to enjoy in the recent past.

(1) Restoration of diplomatic relations between Oman and Tanzania in 2005 has definitely contributed to developing a more positive attitude among the Zanzibari population towards Arabic culture and language. Restoration of diplomatic relations was followed by a series of recent related important events. Among these events are the re-commencement of direct flights Muscat-Zanzibar three times a week, and the signing of several agreements, including: (1) Agreement on Political Consultation; (2) Agreement on Promotion and reciprocal protection of Investment; (3) Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Higher Education between Oman and Zanzibar; (4) Agreement on Cooperation in Records and Archives; (5) Agreement establishing Joint Permanent Commission For Cooperation between Oman and Tanzania; (6) Agreement on Cooperation in Records and Archives between Oman and Zanzibar; and (7) Agreement on Establishment of Oman-Tanzania Joint Business Council between Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Tanzania Chambers of Commerce (http://www.tanzaniaembassyoman.com/pages/8). Since 2015 Oman together with China is now one of the principal investors in the 11 billion dollar project of developing the port of Bagamoyo located just 50 km from the Tanzanian capital (Kamndaya 2018). Recently, new development projects financed by Oman (and other Gulf States) have started in Zanzibar, the latest being the restoration of the iconic old palace the *Beyt al-ʕAjāʔib*, or "the House of wonders" in June 2018 (*ṣuwar*).

(2) Arabicization of the Zanzibari Omanis who emigrated after the Revolution of 1964. For the majority of Zanzibari Omanis, or, in a wider sense, the African Omanis, who were forced to leave the African continent and either go back to Oman or settle in one of the Gulf States, Swahili was their first language, while mastering Arabic was a challenge. This was valid, however, for first-generation immigrants. Today, the situation is quite different. One of the key strategies implemented by the young Sultan Qaboos after he had overthrown his father was to lay an emphasis on the *Arabness* of the state and making the mastery of Arabic language a pre-requisite (Valery 2007). Due to initial tensions between local Arabic-speaking Omanis and Swahili-speaking recent immigrants, it was only natural that the immigrants would make sure that their children will naturalize through the language (Valery 2007). Today, the second and third generations are Arabic speakers. At the same time, there is a strong feeling of nostalgia towards Zanzibar among not only the Omanis but also Arabs from the Gulf in general and Zanzibar is often referred to as "the Other al-Andalus." Thanks to this sentiment, today Zanzibar is one of the most popular destinations for tourists from the Gulf (Ghazal 2012). Today, thanks to the improvement in Tanzanian–Omani relations on the state level, the Zanzibari Omanis and their Arabic-speaking children and grandchildren frequent Zanzibar in large numbers: they come to spend Ramadan with their families or just on vacations. There are no open access data on annual numbers of Omani visitors to Zanzibar, but they are quite large: already in 2010, i.e., before Oman Air launched direct flights from Muscat to Zanzibar, the Omanis were actively travelling to Zanzibar at least to spend holidays there (Shaibany 2010).

At the same time, the Omanis who stayed after the Revolution in Zanzibar, in, probably, an intuitive attempt to maintain the spiritual connection with their relatives and *Arabness* as the essential component of being an Omani, are sending their children to Oman or other Persian Gulf countries to learn Arabic and get acquainted with the culture of their forefathers.

(1) General growth of interest in Arabic language, as the language of Islam and the language of the Holy Quran, is also typical in modern Zanzibar. The increase in islamization is by no means typical only of Zanzibar, this is a general global trend.
(2) Since mid-1970s, Arabic is the third language in primary schools in Zanzibar after Swahili and English.

There are several consequences of islamization in Zanzibar.

(1) Children of Zanzibari Omanis are increasingly being sent to religiously conservative Oman or other countries of the Persian Gulf to learn Arabic language or get a feel of "true" Islam.
(2) The local, Bantu population is also developing a more positive attitude towards Arabic language. For instance, today there are about 2000 *madrasas* in Zanzibar and they are gaining more and more popularity (Issa 2015). Two of the four universities in Zanzibar are Islamic, and the languages of instruction are English and Arabic. Similarly, madrasas and bookshops, as well as Islamic NGOs, are being financed by rich Arab individuals from the Gulf States and scholarships are being given to Zanzibari youths to study in Medina, Khartoum, etc. (Turner 2009).
(3) One of the recent initiatives at the state level consisted of several meetings held by the Omani, Tanzanian, and Zanzibari authorities from the school and higher education sector in 2014. These meetings were held to discuss possibilities of strengthening relationships between the two countries through education (Michuzi 2014). Although the Tanzanian government is only considering unifying the curricula of madrasas nationwide (Issa 2015), their proposals typically comprise a list of subjects, directly or indirectly linked to the Arabic language: grammar of the Quranic Arabic, *tajwīd* – or the art of reciting the Quran, *tawḥīd* – the concept of Oneness of God, and *fiqh* – the principles of Islamic law. At the same time, there is a visible growth of interest in attending evening classes on similar subjects organized by Zanzibari mosques and NGOs among adults.
(4) Growing active economic ties between East Africans and the Persian Gulf countries.

East African, including Tanzanian, workers can often be met in all Persian Gulf Countries. The recent trend, however, is to invite private Omani investors to the Tanzanian market. There have been quite a few calls from Tanzanian officials, inviting Omani businessmen to invest in a number of sectors of the economy (Lyimo 2016). This trend is growing to a large extent thanks to the Tanzanian government's newly implemented Integrated Industrial Development Strategy, which aims to industrialize the country by 2025 with the help of international investors (Development Partners Group).

Certainly, despite the reasons discussed above, the Arabic language does not have a chance of becoming a lingua franca for the Eastern and Central African populations for the following reason: Swahili is being used as a *lingua franca* for a considerably large number of Eastern and Central Africans. According to *Ethnologue* (https://www.ethnologue.com/language/swh), Swahili is a mother tongue only to about 16 million people, while the rest use it as *lingua franca*. Even in Tanzania, which is traditionally seen as the heart of the Swahili language and culture, most of its people "in addition to

Swahili … also speak the traditional language of their ethnic group" (https://www.britannica.com/place/Tanzania). Therefore, the niche of the *lingua franca* of the region has been long occupied by Swahili and it seems to be unlikely that in the foreseeable future, any other language will be able to replace it. In Eastern and Central Africa, the Arabic language is regarded by the Muslim population as definitely an attractive language. However, Muslims here generally do not constitute critically large numbers: according to CIA's *World Factbook*, for example, in Tanzania the Christian-to-Muslim ratio is 61.4% and 35.2% (https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tz.html). In this connection, it is interesting to mention that there are no official figures about religious affiliation in Tanzania as the national census does not include such data. Moreover, it is forbidden by law to register citizens' religious affiliation; however, Muslim organizations have, for some time, now demanded collection of such data in the national census claiming at least half the population of Tanzania is Muslim. Besides that, there have been other initiatives undertaken by NGOs, such as *Afrobarometer*, to independently collect demographic data; however, the scale of their research was too small to obtain reliable figures (Malipula 2014). The official government figures remain the same as those old ones used by the British colonial administrations: about one-third of Tanzanians are Muslims, one-third are Christians, and one-third are Tribal/Ethnic followers (Westerlund and Lodhi 1998).

The case of Zanzibar with its almost entirely Muslim population and the recent trend of re-strengthening ties with the Arab world seems to be different. Therefore, the importance of knowing the Arabic language and using it at least in two capacities: (1) as the language of trade and (2) as the language of religion, is becoming more evident. If the trend continues, the chances of there emerging in Zanzibar a new Arabic-based contact language in the near future are fairly high.

The current trend is that Standard Arabic co-exists with the Dialectal Arabic in a small minority group. Standard Arabic remains very attractive because of its connection with religion. After all, it is Standard Arabic that is being taught in madrasas, mosques, and colleges. At the same time, the increasing presence of Oman in Zanzibar is causing a rapid growth of interest among the local population towards Omani Arabic. There is no indication that the situation will change in the foreseeable future.

8. Conclusion

This study has treated the status of Arabic in Zanzibar and its future. It has revealed that in the past there have been three distinct varieties of Arabic language spoken in Zanzibar: Omani Arabic, Hadrami Arabic, and Standard Arabic. The data on the dialectal Arabic I collected in Zanzibar through interviews are, generally, in line with the conclusions drawn by Reinhardt (1894)

and Nakano (1994), who described the Omani variety of Arabic and defined as the Arabic of Zanzibar. By singling out Omani Arabic, both Reinhardt and Nakano indirectly demonstrated that Omani Arabic, Hadrami Arabic, and Standard Arabic did not mix together. This trend is also valid today: there are three distinct varieties of Arabic spoken in modern Zanzibar. In spite of the relative similarity of the Omani and Hadrami Arabic dialects, their speakers did not demonstrate a trend towards creating a sort of unified version that would combine traits from both the dialects. Instead, they mostly maintained characteristics typical of their native varieties of Arabic. Today, the Hadrami variety of Arabic has almost disappeared, while the Omani Arabic remains the spoken variety, although it is used by a very limited number of people. At the same time, Standard Arabic remains a popular, high status language. The local population, both native and non-native Arabic speakers, demonstrate a strong interest towards both Standard Arabic and the Omani variety of Arabic. There has been no trend in mixing/shifting the population's interest towards dialectal Arabic only.

The theory of superdiversity has been developed to adequately explain the migratory processes that take place in Western Europe, where high living standards, the very recent and not yet fully developed policy of multiculturalism, coupled with the "social" nature of most Western European states have been attracting migrants from all over the world at an increasingly fast pace. Although similar processes do take place in the Arab world, they are typical only of a small share of the Arab states – the Gulf states, while a great number of countries inside the Arab world, outside it, and on its margins continue to live by very different rules.

Notes

1. Phonetic markers are omitted due to the age and character of data (Reinhardt) and data limitation (Nakano).
2. The results of these interviews will be presented in detail at 13th Conference of the International Association of Arabic Dialectology (10–13 June 2019, Kutaisi).

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