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# Metrical Problems of the Contemporary Bedouin *Qaṣīda* : A Linguistic Approach

## **Abstract**

In the controversial question about the appropriate metrical analysis of the contemporary Bedouin *qaṣīda*, the role of different types of syllable structure in different Bedouin dialects has thus far been overlooked. It nevertheless presents itself as a most fundamental issue associated with a further question about the implications of the spread of a poetic tradition over a linguistically heterogeneous area. Najd is recognized as the core area of the Bedouin *qaṣīda* poetry, and the Najdi-type dialects display a syllable structure closely akin to the type postulated for the quantitative metrical analysis. On the other hand, the different syllable structure of the dialects outside the core area has gradually undermined the metrical role of the stress. As a result, from the strictly synchronic point of view, stress may in some areas be defined as the basis of the metrical structure of Bedouin poetry.

**Key words:** Bedouin poetry — oral scansion — accentual metrics —  
quantitative metrics — Bedouin dialect groups — Nabaṭi poetry

EVER since Albert Socin presented a metrical analysis of his collection of 116 poems (1900–01), most of them originating in Najd (Burayda, °Unayza, al-Ḥasa), it has been commonly held that the metrics of the Najdi type of Bedouin *qaṣīda*<sup>1</sup> are based on syllable quantity. Socin establishes modern Najdi varieties of different classical meters, the majority of which (sixty-one poems) he defines as representing “the new *ṭawīl*.” Twelve poems are defined as varieties of the *ramal*, three of the *basīṭ*, seven or eight of the *hazaj*, nine of the *rajaz*, and the rest remain unidentified.<sup>2</sup>

In order to discern latent quantitative metrical patterns behind the surface representation, Socin resorts to insertion of short vowels not found in the declaimed forms of the poems. This might appear to be a biased theoretical reconstruction directed at creating the additional short syllables necessary for the application of the traditional metrical system. However, Socin’s analysis is not based upon theoretical considerations only, but is supported by G. A. WALLIN’s earlier observations regarding the optional insertion of metrically conditioned short vowels in both the declaimed and chanted versions of Bedouin poetry (1852, 193).<sup>3</sup> Socin does not formulate exact rules for the insertion of such extralinguistic, metrically conditioned short vowels, but it is clear from his transcriptions that they are added in order to divide overlong syllables (cvcc, cṽc) in positions other than at the very end of a hemistich into sequences of two syllables (cvc.cv or cṽ.cv), e.g., *la hoṣṣ[ə] lā yāgūt[ə] lā jawharin ʔolg | lā darr[ə] lā fērūz[ə] min °alligeh māg* (SOCIN 1900–01, 1: 5). Although Socin considered it possible to explain the metrically conditioned short final vowels as residues of the Old Arabic<sup>4</sup> *īrāb*,<sup>5</sup> he pointed out that the meters of the Najdi poems did not allow a consistent use of *īrāb*. Therefore he preferred to regard these short vowels as undefined residues from an earlier stage of linguistic development, occurring not only in poetry but sometimes in prose as well.<sup>6</sup>

Saad Abdullah SOWAYAN (1985) gives an inventory of fifty-one

quantitative metrical patterns of which all except one can, in spite of some divergences, be traced back to classical quantitative meters. In order to arrive at a systematic analysis, the following rules have to be observed:

- 1) Word boundaries are disregarded, and the hemistich is read as one unit of continuous utterance.
- 2) Anaptyctic vowels forming closed syllables are deleted, and the resulting overlong syllables are divided into sequences of two syllables (long+short).<sup>7</sup>
- 3) If procedure 2) results in a sequence of two short syllables, this sequence is reduced to one long syllable by dropping the vowel of the second syllable. This is in harmony with the prosody of the spoken language, which does not allow sequences of short syllables except in a few very restricted and phonetically conditioned cases.
- 4) Apart from the metrically conditioned short final vowels, all final vowels are analyzed as long, according to the phonemic structure of the dialect.
- 5) All overlong syllables, except the last syllables of hemistichs, are divided into two syllables (cvcc—>cvc.cv; cṽc—>cṽ.cv).<sup>8</sup>

The fifty metrical patterns, which according to Sawayan can be traced back to classical meters, display varieties of the *mutaqārib*, *mutadārik*, *hazaj*, *ramal*, *raǰaz*, *ṭawīl*, *madīd*, *basīṭ*, and *mujtatt*, as well as of two meters belonging to the *muxtaliḥ* circle but neglected in classical poetry, namely, the *muṣṭadd* and *muṣṭaṭīl* (SOWAYAN 1985, 160–62). It may be noticed that the meters identified by SOCIN (1900–01) are included in this inventory, but another and perhaps more interesting observation is the absence of the classical meters *wāfir*, *kāmil*, *muḍāric*, *muḡtaḍab*, *munsariḥ*, and *xafīf* from the inventory of contemporary Najdi Bedouin poetry. A feature shared by all of these meters except the last-mentioned is that they allow sequences of two short syllables, which, as stated above, only occur in spoken Najdi in a few restricted, phonetically conditioned positions. The reduction of the inventory of metrical patterns thus reflects a development in the syllable structure of the language from eastern dialects of Old Arabic to the modern dialect spoken in Najd.

The question about the metrical basis of contemporary Bedouin poetry is not settled, however. Clinton BAILEY (1991) comes to the conclusion that the metrical system of the poem analyzed by him is

not quantitative; pointing out that Sowayan's analysis of northern and central Arabian poetry is based upon written text and not upon oral scansion, he claims that the metrical system of all orally composed contemporary Bedouin poetry is actually accentual. He even extends his theory to include all orally composed Bedouin poetry from the past: "It seems unlikely to the present writer that an illiterate person can compose poetry according to quantitative meter, since this requires a knowledge of too many rules that can only be comprehended by seeing the written word on the page" (BAILEY 1991, 397). Consequently, he restores to life J. TKATSCH's theory (1928, 99–100) about the Greek origins of the quantitative metrics in Classical Arabic poetry.<sup>9</sup>

Bailey admits that "occasionally one finds a line that fits a quantitative syllabic meter," although "the poem to which it belongs as a whole does not." From this he draws the conclusion that a quantitative metrical analysis is not appropriate. He therefore prefers an analysis based on "stressed syllables in keeping with the natural stress of conversation" (BAILEY 1991, 397–98). Bailey's claim is not completely unexpected; as a matter of fact, the rhythmical declamation of Bedouin *qaṣīdas* often spontaneously suggests an accentual analysis.<sup>10</sup>

In extending his analysis to all orally composed Arabic poetry, Bailey overlooks the disparities in linguistic structure between different dialect areas and even between Old Arabic and the modern dialects. The relevance of the last-mentioned difference to our issue is too obvious to need discussion here, but the first matter, that of the influence of dialectal differences on the prosody of traditional Bedouin poetry in northern Arabia and its periphery, needs closer examination. In this specific case, the syllable structure of different Bedouin dialect groups presents itself as a most fundamental issue.

Jean CANTINEAU (1936–37, 114–16, 156–64) divides the Bedouin dialects of northern Arabia and its periphery into three major groups: the °Anazi (Group A) dialects, the Šammari (Group B) dialects, and the pre-°Anazi Syro-Mesopotamian (Group C) dialects. To these he adds Group Bc, consisting of Šammari dialects influenced by dialects of Group C. The tribes speaking Group A and Group B dialects are traditionally camel breeders, while the Group C speakers are sheep breeders. One of the features distinguishing these groups relates to the syllable structure, which is trochaic in Group A and Group B and atrochaic in Group C. In the trochaic dialects, overlong syllables (here defined as cvcc and cṽc; ccv and ccvc are excluded) do not occur as a rule in nonfinal position. Instead one finds trochaic syllable sequences (cvc.cv or cṽ.cv). Some instances provided by Cantineau may illustrate the difference: *nāgati* 'my she-camel', *nāgatēn* 'two

she-camels', *ǵalbatī* 'my she-dog' (trochaic) vs. *nāgtī*, *nāgtēn*, *ǵalabtī* (atrochaic). Additional examples of trochaic forms provided by Cantineau are: *xšūmana* 'our noses', *rūsana* 'our heads', *fwāhana* 'our mouths', *ʿummana* 'our mother', *ʿummahātana* 'our mothers', *xwānakām* 'your (pl.m.) brothers', *ʿaxtana* 'our sister', *yəǵərbūnakām* 'they hit you' (pl.m.). There are two exceptions to the rule: 1) in the nominal patterns *qātil-* and *qarātil-*, the short /i/ is elided in open unstressed syllables, and the resulting overlong syllable is retained, e.g., *šārbi* 'my moustache', *hawājbi* 'my eyebrows', *barātmak* 'your (sg.m.) lips', not \**šārabi* etc.; 2) overlong nonfinal syllables are allowed if the long vowel is followed by two identical consonants: *xwānna*, *fwāhhom*, *təǵərbūnni*; side by side with these forms, *xwānana* etc. also occur.<sup>11</sup>

The above-mentioned division of Bedouin dialects is most significant for the metrical structure of the Bedouin *qaşida*. It is scarcely mere chance that the dialects spoken in the traditional core area of north Arabian Bedouin poetry belong to the trochaic type. The syllable structure of these dialects is certainly not identical with that used in the quantitative analysis above, but it is closely akin to it, and, consequently, relatively easy to adjust to the needs of quantitative metrics. Although these dialects do allow overlong syllables in the final position, the relative number of such syllables is reduced by the optional use of *tanwīn*<sup>12</sup> in certain syntactic positions,<sup>13</sup> as in the following examples: *na<sup>c</sup>ām > na<sup>c</sup>āmin*, *ʿubēd > ʿubēdin*, *nōm > nōmin*, *šiddīǵ > šiddīǵin*, *ʿuyūn > ʿuyūnin*, *mišrifīn > mišrifīnin*, *mašdūdāt > mašdūdātīn*, *kill > killīn*, *garm > garmin*. These imply the syllabic reorganizations *cvc—>cṽ*. *cvc* and *cvcc—>cvc.cvc*. A considerable number of the remaining overlong syllables in final position are shortened when word boundaries are disregarded and the whole hemistich is read as one continuous utterance. If the next word begins with a vowel, the last consonant of the overlong syllable becomes the first consonant of the next syllable: *ḥarīb al-buwādi = ḥa.rī.bal.bu.wā.dī*, *kubb as-suwālīf = kub.bas.su.wā.lif*.

Here we come to a fundamental linguistic point completely overlooked thus far: the metrical role of different types of syllable structure in different Bedouin dialects. This is an issue that leads to a further question about the implications of the spread of a poetic tradition—including its metrics—over a linguistically heterogeneous area. The common features in form, style, motif, and imagery are striking enough to justify an assumption of the common origin of this poetry. As far as its indigenous home is concerned, SOWAYAN writes:

All renowned Nabaṭi poets come from Najd, and the diction of this poetry conforms to the colloquial speech of that region. People

outside Najd who are familiar with Nabaṭi poetry are people who originally came from that region, where this poetry is most popular and whence it diffused to the periphery. (1985, 1)

Even though the role played in Nabaṭi poetry by Najdi poets may be slightly exaggerated in this statement,<sup>14</sup> it is well founded to regard Najd as the core area of this tradition. To be sure, the common tradition is well established among the Bedouin tribes living in Mesopotamia and the Syrian desert as well as in the areas between the desert and the cultivated area, but, compared with Najd, these regions may be characterized as peripheral. The inhabitants of the core area speak mainly dialects of the trochaic type, Group A and Group B, while a majority of the tribes in the peripheral areas speak Group C dialects of the atrochaic type. On the other hand, the Bedouin of Sinai and the Negev also share the common poetic tradition, but are linguistically more distant than Group C speakers from the Group A and Group B dialects: although their dialects share many features with the north Arabian dialect type, in a number of respects they are distinct from it. Some of the traits distinguishing them from the north Arabian dialect group are akin to those of the sedentary dialects of the Greater Syrian area, while others are of a more general western type, displaying affinities with Ḥijāzi dialects as well as with Bedouin dialects spoken in Egypt, the Sudan, and North Africa. Typologically, the most prominent features distinguishing them from the north Arabian dialects are the absence of: 1) *tanwīn* and its residues, 2) affricated variants of /g/ and /k/, and 3) final /n/ in the imperfect, second person feminine singular, second person masculine plural, and third person masculine plural (PALVA 1991). Of these, feature 2) does not affect the prosody of poetry, whereas *tanwīn* and the long imperfect forms are freely used as conventional poetic features, not only as traditional stylistic devices but apparently for metrical reasons as well.

Starting from the assumption that the dialectal differences in syllable structure play a role in the metrical structure, it is interesting to examine how close the actual scansion of poetry in different areas comes to the quantitative metrical analysis. Poems published in unvoweled Arabic script cannot be used in this comparison—the analysis should be based upon the audition of oral performances or upon reliable transcriptions of recordings.<sup>15</sup> In this respect, poems collected by Sawayan from Šammari informants are among the most relevant texts. Some lines display a regular meter without any adjustments, as in

*w-ḥarīmihum yašdan širīx al-* But their women screeched [in

*maḥāḥīl*

wailing] like water wheels.

(SOWAYAN 1992, 639)

*arba<sup>c</sup> liyālin ma ligōh al-marāsīl*Four nights had elapsed before he  
was found by the search party.

(SOWAYAN 1992, 645)

These are unambiguous catalectic *ṭawīl* hemistichs ([v] x - / v - - - / v - - / v - -), the most frequent meter in contemporary Bedouin *qaşida*. But such regular lines are very few. Most lines must be metrically “reconstructed” in the way described above in order to follow regular quantitative metrical patterns:

*šallih Mfīzin šallt aḍ-ḍīb la-š-  
šāt*Mfīz snatched him as a wolf  
snatches a lamb,*w-rimāh l-alli mistiḡillih b-dēnih*He threw him down for those who  
thirsted for his blood in revenge.

(SOWAYAN 1992, 658)

To fit this pair of hemistichs to the regular catalectic *ṭawīl*, it must be analyzed metrically as follows:

*šal.lih|mə.fī.zin.šal|lə.taḍ.ḍī|bə.laš.šāt  
w.ri.mā|hə.lal.lī.mis|ti.ḡil.lih|bə.dē.nih*

It is worth noticing that after these adjustments of the surface representation only a very few hemistichs display any irregularities.

The poems published by Alois MUSIL (1928) are admittedly not transcriptions of recordings, but were written down from dictation. Nevertheless, they are rather reliable for our purposes inasmuch as they seem completely free of metrical speculations. They may thus serve here as another example of Bedouin poetry collected from a tribe whose dialect belongs to the trochaic type (Group A). The poems originate in different areas, but they were recited to Musil by Rwala tribesmen. Contacts of this kind are naturally factors of crucial importance in the spread of the common tradition over dialect boundaries. Thus, the poem published in honor of Muḥammad Ibn Rašīd<sup>16</sup> was composed by a black servant accompanying a trade caravan from Iraq to Ḥāyil. Its first lines read as follows:

1. *yā heyh yā-hal xāliyāt al-  
mezāhib*

Glory to you, O riders! with your  
bags empty,

- yā.hey|hə.yā.hal.xā|li.yā.tal|*  
*me.zā.hīb*  
 --|v----|v--|v--
- hejnen telāfa min ba<sup>c</sup>īd al-* On female riding-camels coming  
*maḡībeh* from far countries,  
*hej.nen|te.lā.fā.min|ba.<sup>c</sup>i.dal|*  
*ma.ḡī.beh*  
 --|v----|v--|v--
2. *šeyb al-ḡawāreb sāyijāt al-* With shoulder blades gray and  
*maḡāḡīb* breast girths shifting;  
*šey.bal|ḡa.wā.reb.sā|yi.jā.tal|*  
*ma.ḡā.ḡīb*  
 --|v----|v--|v--
- alfēn mašdūdāt kill šyen tejībeh* Of saddled ones two thousand are  
*al.fē|nə.maš.dū.dā|tə.kil.šin|* bringing us goods of all kinds.  
*te.jī.beh*  
 --|v----|v--|v--
3. *alli <sup>c</sup>aleyhen muštāhīn al-* Those who ride them are yearn-  
*ma<sup>c</sup>āzīb* ing for hosts,  
*al.lī|<sup>c</sup>a.ley.hen.muš|ta.hī.nal|*  
*ma.<sup>c</sup>ā.zīb*  
 --|v----|v--|v--
- šāmow l-rā<sup>c</sup>i musneden yirta<sup>c</sup>i* They look for him who leans  
*beh* against a cushion.  
*šā.mow|li.rā.<sup>c</sup>i.mus|ne.den.yir|*  
*ta.čī.beh*  
 --|v----|v--|v--

(MUSIL 1928, 306–307)

As is obvious from the analysis, the poem displays a relatively regular meter, a variety of the catalectic *ṭawīl*, the most frequently occurring meter both in Musil's book and in Socin's collection.<sup>17</sup> In a few cases the meter implies a deviation from Musil's transcription: in order to fit the quantitative meter, the second syllable in *muštāhīn* must be short, and instead of *kill šien*, *kilšin* should be read. The remaining ten pairs of hemistichs are regular enough to justify the above quantitative analysis.

Taking the syllable structure of the dialect into consideration, it is not surprising to find that the poems collected from northeast Arabia by Bruce Ingham also display rather regular metrical patterns. An



example:

<i>yabūk wallāh gāyt algalb wimmnāh</i>	O my son, by God, the ambition
<i>yā.bū kə.waʃ.ʃah.ġā yə.tal.gal </i>	and wish of my heart
<i>bə.wim.nāh</i>	
-- v--- v-- v--	
<i>tišīr sam<sup>c</sup>atkum ma<sup>c</sup> annās zēnah</i>	Is that your reputation will be
<i>ti.šī rə.sam.<sup>c</sup>at.kum ma.<sup>c</sup>an.nā </i>	good among the people.
<i>sə.zē.nah</i>	
v- v--- v-- v--	
<i>walla tara mā kān ḥayyin</i>	For whatever creature is alive in
<i>ibdinyāh</i>	his world . . .
<i>wal.lā ta.rā.mā.kā nə.ḥay.yin </i>	
<i>bə.dīn.yāh</i>	
-- v--- v-- v--	

(INGHAM 1982, 121, <sup>c</sup>Awāzim)

There are very few irregularities in the eighteen catalectic *ṭawīl* hemistichs of the poem. Another example is a very regular poem that can be regarded as a variety of the *ḥazaj*:

<i>ġizat <sup>c</sup>ēni wḥārabt arrġādi</i>	My eye remained awake and I
<i>ġi.zat.<sup>c</sup>ē.nī w.ḥā.rab.tar rə.ġā.dī</i>	avoided sleep,
v--- v--- v--	
<i>u malleit almajālis walġa<sup>c</sup>ādi</i>	Nor could I find comfort if I rose
<i>u.mal.ley.tal ma.jā.lis.wal </i>	from bed.
<i>ga.<sup>c</sup>ā.dī</i>	
v--- v--- v--	

(INGHAM 1982, 121–22, <sup>c</sup>Awāzim)

Among the dialects belonging to the atrochaic type, the relative frequency of short syllables is considerably lower than in the trochaic type. This also affects the scansion, in which the syllable quantities no longer seem to function as prosodically central elements; rather, the scansion leaves the impression that it is based on a number of accents. The poems recorded by this writer among the seminomadic Jordanian tribe al-<sup>c</sup>Ajārma (PALVA 1978) may illustrate this stage of development. Among the seven poems included in the collection, six are analyzed as varieties of the *ṭawīl*. There are several relatively regular lines following the acephalic and catalectic --|v---|v--|v-- pattern, but a noticeable share of the lines are irregular, often

including extra syllables that do not fit the quantitative meter. Some examples:

- C 10b *gowlāt maṭṭal əd-dərr l-alli* Words like pearls for those who  
*yəfhamūhen* understand them.  
*gow.lā.tə.məṭ.ləḍ.dərr.rə.lal.li.*  
*yəf.ha.mū.hen*  
 --v---v---v---
- C 14b *ḥəgūgak barg yəlmac w-* Your fair judgments flash like  
*əḏharūhen* lightning, giving light.  
*ḥə.gū.gak.bar.gə.yil.mac.wəḍ.*  
*ha.rū.hen*  
 v---v---v---
- E 48b *şəfren maḡātīren yəbren* *şəfr* and *maḡātīr* she-camels, black  
*ləhom sūd* camels going with them.  
*şəf.ren.ma.ḡā.tī.ren.yəb.ren.lə.*  
*hom.sūd*  
 --v-----v---
- G 27b *lən əxtalaṭ ʿajj ar-ramak* If someone started robbing [our  
*maṭl əl-ʿətāmi* camels], the pawing of the  
*lə.nəx.ta.laṭ.ʿaj.jar.ra.mak.maṭ.*  
*ləl.ʿə.tā.mī* horses would be like a dust  
 cloud.  
 v-v---v---v---
- G 30b *wəlla l-ʿazzām alli rabʿak* Or the ʿAzzām, who live around  
*ḥəzāmi* you like a girdle.  
*wəl.lal.ʿaz.zā.mal.lī.rab.ʿak.ḥə.*  
*zā.mī*  
 -----v---

(PALVA 1978)

On the other hand, a poem from Sinai, recorded and published by BAILEY and taken here as a random example, opens with a regular hemistich:

- ya rākbīn min fōg ḥīlin baʿd ḥīl* O Rider of a mount, barren year  
 after year.  
 (1991, 2.9.1, p. 103)

Analyzed according to the above principles, it is the acephalic and catalectic variety of the *ṭawīl*:

*yā.rā|kə.bin.min.fō|gə.hī.lin|ba.°ad.hīl*  
 -- / v --- / v --- / v ---

The only exception to the rules for quantitative analysis given above is *ba.°ad* instead of *ba.°dā*. As mentioned above, *tanwīn* does not occur in the dialects spoken in Sinai, but is used here as a purely poetic device. Although the first lines of the poem are rather regular, the whole poem is too irregular to be analyzed in the same manner. An example (line 8a):

<i>gūl la tikdīb °ala šabāh yā kiḏbak</i>	Say: don't lie to Šabāh; it's bad
<i>al-bēn</i>	luck, you will find,
[ <i>gū.lə. ] lā.tik.ḏib.°a.lā.ša.bā.hə.</i>	
<i>yā.kiḏ.ba.kal.bēn</i>	

which yields an irregular pattern: [-v] --- / v - v - / v - - / v - -.  
 Another example from the same poem (line 9b):

<i>hin xamis xamsāt mā hin iktār</i>	Merely five times five is no sum
<i>hin.xam.sə.xam.sā.tə.mā.hin.kə.</i>	to regret,
<i>ṭār</i>	

which is irregular, too: -- v -- v -- v --.

Since the quantitative analysis can only be applied to isolated hemistichs and not to whole poems, Bailey prefers an accentual analysis, of which the following is an example:

<i>jawnī    ṣYŪF    ū-HARramū</i>	Guests came my way but swore
<i>YĀKlu-š-ŠĀ</i>	that they would never eat my
	meat,
<i>ū-GĀL int ŠĀ °ir bass</i>	And chided me: a bard you are,
<i>itKAWḏib °al an-NĀS</i>	but tend to lie and cheat.
<i>ū-ŠIRT ataNADdar ū-kull</i>	So I set out to find a rhyme that
<i>ḤARF atahallĀ</i>	might be right for me,
<i>ū-GULT il nahīf al-JISM gūm</i>	And said to my slim-waisted mate:
<i>SAW wī lī KĀS</i>	Go ready me some tea.

In these lines, all hemistichs have four natural stresses, but the unstressed elements between them are very irregular, varying in length from one to four syllables, and even the position of the stressed syllables may vary rather freely. In several cases, syllables stressed in keeping with the natural rhythm of conversation are left without metrical

ictus in the scansion. Yet, BAILEY adds, "neither the poet nor his audience are annoyed by this lack of regularity or consistency so long as the number of stressed syllables is the same in all the lines and as long as the last accents in each hemistich remain constant throughout" (1991, 398).

Needless to say, this analysis is very convenient because it allows sequences of arbitrary length between the natural stresses. As is characteristic of the diachronic development of the metrical basis in different dialect areas, the first hemistich of the above example still reflects the traditional pattern and could very well be analyzed quantitatively as *jav.nī|ḍa.yū.fū.har|ra.mū.yā|kə.luš.sā* (acephalic, catalectic *ṭawīl*), whereas the subsequent hemistichs do not readily fit the quantitative analysis.

On the whole, the poems from Sinai and the Negev published by Bailey follow the atrochaic syllable structure of the local Bedouin dialects and do not display sporadic divergences from it in the direction of trochaic syllable patterns. The latter is the tendency in Jordan, as noted in several poems recorded there by this writer, e.g., *iṣṣūrana* VI 11a instead of the local atrochaic *iṣṣūrna*; *irṣāšana* VI 20b vs. *irṣāšana*; *fāṭari* VII 28b vs. *fātri*; *sāyaltahum* VII 35a vs. *sāyalthum*; and *xēlana* IX 25a vs. *xēlna* (PALVA 1992).

Even though such occasional trochaic syllable patterns could be looked upon as nothing but attempts to imitate the prosody of Nabati poetry of the Najdi type, they nevertheless give additional prominence to syllable quantity. This prosodic tendency cannot be discerned in the poems published by Bailey, not even in poem 4.18, an exchange of praises for rival sheikhs, composed at the turn of the century by a Bedouin of the Syrian tribe of the Rwala and a member of the Rašid clan. As both are speakers of trochaic dialects, the lines composed by them could be expected to display quantitative patterns, but when analyzed according to the rules described above, the lines turn out to be relatively regular varieties of catalectic *ṭawīl*:

- 1a. *ya rākb-illi mišīha xirwiʿ ad-    O Rider of one like a wolf in her*  
    ḍīb   pace.  
    = *yā.rā|ki.bal.lī.mas|yi.hā.xir|*  
    *wi.ʿad.ḍīb*

This suggests that the metrical basis of the lines was originally quantitative, but that the local Bedouin, who used to scan them accentually, assimilated their syllable structure to the patterns of their own vernacular speech. As a result, they probably scanned the above hemi-

stich as follows:

*ya rākBILli miŠĪha XIRwi<sup>c</sup> ad-DĪB,*

that is, roughly in keeping with the natural stress of conversation. Following the same principle of scansion, the poem would continue:<sup>18</sup>

<i>ḤAMra wa-la °UMri-l- iḤWAYyir gaḌĪ ba</i>	She's reddish, and calf never nursed of her grace.
<i>ḤAMra itSŪG akWĀḤḤa bal- °araGĪB</i>	When racing, her forelegs come near to her hocks.
<i>bitḤŪŠ bil-YIMna ū-TAXbaṭ jaNĪba</i>	As she raises her right legs the left pound the ground.
<i>ḤAMra wi-TUGsum min °ayYĀha-l-mašaLĪB</i>	The fat on her back makes the saddle beams tight,
<i>ḤAMra wi-TAWW ib- °ayYIGha maNĪba</i>	And her sharp canine teeth are already in sight.
<i>ya BĒT ibn ša<sup>c</sup>LĀN °IŠŠ al- ajaNĪB</i>	The tent of Sha <sup>c</sup> lān is a nest for the stranger,
<i>ya NI<sup>c</sup>IM bil-°ALiYa ū-MIN yiltiJĪba, etc.</i>	O luck of his wife and those fleeing from danger.

#### CONCLUSION

The relatively regular metrical patterns of the contemporary Bedouin *qaṣīda* in central and northern Arabia can be attributed to two main factors: the great vigor of the tradition on the one hand, and the comparatively insignificant linguistic difference between the poetic language and the vernacular dialect on the other. The linguistic trait most relevant to the metrics is syllable structure. In this respect the Bedouin dialects of the trochaic type have much in common with the traditional quantitative meter, as overlong syllables are not as a rule allowed in either except at the very end and the very beginning of the hemistich.

In the scansion the stress plays a prominent role in the north and central Arabian dialect area as well, and overlong syllables occur in all word-final positions. This involves a major change in the prosodic shape of the poem. In the area of trochaic dialects, this does not affect the quantitative meter as profoundly as outside this area. Thus, in the Syrian and Mesopotamian Bedouin dialects (Cantineau's Group C), overlong syllables often occur in all positions. As a result, the relative frequency of short syllables becomes far too low for the needs of quantitative metrics, where the rhythm is based mainly on the varia-

tion of long and short syllables. This development naturally strengthens the metrical role of the stress. Although the quantitative basis of the metrical structure can still be easily traced, the surface representation is often accentual. This development naturally also brings about metrical distortions when poems of Najdi origin are recited.

In Sinai and the Negev, the stress seems to play a predominant role in the scansion, and might, from the strictly synchronic point of view, be defined as the basis of the metrical structure in the local Bedouin poetry.

The contemporary north Arabian Bedouin poetry can justifiably be regarded as an organic continuation of the Old Arabic tradition of oral poetry, and it is difficult to imagine that their prosodic relationship could be accidental. The quantitative patterns in contemporary poetry that resemble the meters of Classical Arabic poetry must therefore be looked upon as its historical kernel. However, the changes in the phonetic structure of the vernacular language have gradually undermined the basis of the traditional quantitative system, which, though noticeably weakened, is still discernible. The metrical system as well as different stylistic conventions represent a long literary tradition, relatively—but not completely—independent from the vernacular speech. In the core area of north Arabian Bedouin poetry, the linguistic distance between the two language forms is not very long.

While Najd is the core area of the north Arabian tradition of Bedouin poetry, the Syro-Mesopotamian dialect area represents its periphery. This does not necessarily imply that the traditional poetry in this area is inferior to Najdi poetry, but there the structural distance between the vernacular dialect and the poetic language is longer, a fact that in the course of time has led to a decline of the quantitative metrical framework.

A comparison of the phonetic surface representation of Bedouin poetry in different areas suggests that the quantitative metrical structure in Sinai and the Negev has already reached the point of collapse. The tradition still preserves many basic elements, and, consequently, quantitative analysis can be applied to separate lines or a few consecutive lines, but as a rule not to a whole poem. Such a situation can be characterized as a stage of a gradual transition from quantitative to accentual metrics.

## NOTES

1. The traditional Arabic *qaşida* is a non-strophic poem consisting of monorhymed lines of two hemistichs. In contemporary Bedouin poetry, the rhyme patterns display more variation; in addition to monorhyme, the alternating pattern ABABAB is very popular.

2. SOCIN (1900–01, 3: 55–70).

3. In my material, too, several instances of this feature are found. For example:

PALVA (1992)

IX 29a *ʔarad jirwānā b-awwal xēlā rabʕo*  
*ʔa.rad.jir.wā|nā.baw.wal.xē|lā.rab.ʕoh*  
 v --- / v --- / v ---

IX 31a *ʕaḥatlo bizratin min ʕaffā xayyir*  
*ʕa.ḥat.loh.biz|rā.tin.min.ʕaf|fā.xay.yir*  
 v --- / v --- / v ---  
 (catalectic *hazaj*)

PALVA (1978) D 12 recited version:

*nār galbi nār jalla mattāliha b-howj ʕāz*

chanted version:

*nārā galbi nārā jalla mattāliha b-howjā ʕāz*

*nā.rā.gal.bi|nā.rā.jal.lā|mat.tā.li.hab|how.jā.ʕāz*

- v - - / - v - - / - v - - / - v - -

4. Old Arabic is used here as a term for both Classical Arabic and the spoken forms of Arabic representing the same type of linguistic structure, of which the most prominent feature is the *iʕrāb* system.

5. The *iʕrāb* is an Arabic term for Classical Arabic (and other Old Arabic) inflectional endings (morphemes or latter parts of morphemes), which disappeared from spoken dialects during the first two or three Islamic centuries.

6. SOCIN (1900–01, 3: 56).

7. In a few cases two alternative analyses are possible. Thus, depending on the meter of the specific poem, *ʕaggag tyābuh* can be analyzed either *ʕag.gag.ti.yā.buh* or *ʕag.ga.giṭ.yā.buh* (SOWAYAN 1985, 154).

8. Although SOWAYAN (1985, 152–60) puts the rules in a slightly different way, using linguistic terminology (metathesized vowel, restoration of elided vowel to its original position) that would appear to imply diachronic restorations, for all practical purposes the above rules agree with Sowayan's analysis techniques.

9. Also WESTPHAL (1892, 475ff.). Their theories are emphatically rejected by BLOCH (1946, 1–2) and WEIL (1958, 85–91), who underline the natural correspondence between linguistic and metrical structure. It is interesting to compare these theories with the hypothesis put forth by KURYLOWICZ (1972, 161–65), who considers it possible that the quantitative metrical system of Classical Arabic has gradually developed from an earlier accentual system.

10. Cf. PALGRAVE's description (1865, 2: 165), quoted by JARGY (1989, 176): "The Arabic scansion goes by accent, not by quantity . . . this class of poetry presents in form a strong resemblance to the ordinary English ballad, and, like it, is the popular style of the country."

11. Cantineau's phonetic transcriptions have here been simplified and harmonized.

12. In this context, the term *tanwīn* is used to denote the generalized indefinite

morpheme /-in/, which in certain contemporary Bedouin dialects as well as in Bedouin poetry can be suffixed to the same categories of nouns as in Classical Arabic, and, in addition, not only to all ancient diptotes but to sound masculine plural forms as well (*bētīn*, *ʿanḍāfīn*, *muslimīnīn*).

13. These positions are in: 1) an indefinite noun followed by an adjectival attribute, 2) an indefinite noun followed by a prepositional phrase, 3) an indefinite noun followed by a clause, 4) a participle governing an object, 5) a nominal predicate followed by a verbal clause or a prepositional phrase, and 6) a nominal predicate followed by a nominal clause. See CANTINEAU (1936–37, 102, 203–205), BLAU (1965, 167–212), PALVA (1980, 130–31; item 3) is missing due to a misprint).

14. There are, of course, people outside Najd who are familiar with Nabaṭī poetry—although they may not call it by this term—and who are not of Najdi origin. There are also renowned representatives of this poetic tradition outside Najd, for example Nimr Ibn ʿAdwān (1746–1822) from the Balqa in Jordan, whose songs still are known far and wide in northern Arabia and the Ḥijāz.

15. For this paper, about 120 poems included in SOCIN (1900–01), MUSIL (1908, 1928), MONTAGNE (1935), INGHAM (1982, 1986), BAILEY (1991), SOWAYAN (1992), and PALVA (1978, 1992) were analyzed. This modest amount of material naturally does not provide a sufficient basis for conclusive results.

16. The transcription of consonants is standardized here, while the vowels are given in conformity with Musil's transcription.

17. The adequacy of the analysis of the first foot of the hemistich as acephalic (–; every foot in the traditional meters must contain at least one short syllable) is shown by the fact that some hemistichs begin with the unshortened foot v – –. This type is very popular in Bedouin poetry, which in the beginning of the hemistich often leaves a metrical slot for the conjunction *w*.

18. Apart from marking prosodically stressed syllables by capital letters, Bailey's transcription has been followed.

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