The Standard Language Ideology of the Hebrew and Arabic Grammarians of the ʿAbbasid Period

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Cover image: A fragment of an unidentified dual-script (Hebrew and Arabic) grammatical-exegetical discussion from the Cairo Genizah (Cambridge University Library, T-S Ar. 31.26). Courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library. Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal.

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5. THE PURPOSE OF THE STANDARD LANGUAGE AND THE GRAMMARIANS' MISSION

In a way, the three features of similarity covered in the preceding chapter dealt with the definition, corpus, and sources of the standard canonical language. Beginning here, however, we turn to similarities in the (standard) language ideology of the Hebrew and Arabic grammarians related to the practical use of the language in society and the ultimate purposes of their work in and for their own time and culture.

1.0. Performative Language: خطبهم وأشعارهم

Even though the pool of exemplary speakers of pure Hebrew and Arabic was confined to ancient sources—or small segments of the contemporary population like the Tiberians or the Bedouin—this did not stop the grammarians' contemporaries from emulating the linguistic eloquence of these 'ancient' speakers in their own time. In fact, it seems that, in each tradition, the grammarians were at least ideologically concerned with providing instruction in how to contemporaneously perform in a formal and prescribed way with the appropriate register of the language.

1.1. Hebrew Grammarians

Even though the Hebrew grammarians were primarily occupied with describing the language of the Bible so that their audience

could read and understand it, there are hints that they were also concerned, at least to some degree, with real productive use of the standard language, albeit in performance contexts.

1.1.1. Saadia Gaon (882–942 CE)

In *Sefer Ha-Egron* (44–45; Harkavy 1891), for example, while lamenting the poor Hebrew abilities of the nation, Saadia (882–942 CE) points to several spheres of language use in which the people are lacking in proficiency:

> ואדֿא הם תכלמו כאן כתֿירא ממא ילפטֿון בה מלחונא ואדֿא הם שערו
> כאן אלמסתפיץֿ פי מא בינהם מן אלארכאן אלאואיל הו אלקליל
> ואלמתרוך הו אכתֿר: וכדֿלך פי אלקואפי חתי צאר אלכתאב נפסה ענדהם
> כאלגֿאמץֿ מן אלכלאם ואלגֿבי מן אלקול[48]

> When they speak (*takallamū*), much of what they utter is grammatically wrong (*malḥūn*). When they compose and recite poetry (*ša'arū*), that which spreads among them from the ancient foundations (i.e., the poetic rules) is little, and that which is abandoned [so that it is not governed by these rules] is more. And so it is in [their] rhymes, such that the book itself (i.e., the Bible) has become like something obscure to them with respect to [its] idiom (*kalām*) or [like] a collection of sayings [without any connection].

Although Saadia mentions various spheres of language use for the purpose of upbraiding the people, the contexts in which

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[48] ≋ وإذا هم تكلموا كان كثيرا مما يلفظون به ملحونا وإذا هم شعروا كان المستفيض في
ما بينهم من الأركان الأوائل هو القليل والمتروك هو أكثر. وكذلك في القوافي حتى صار الكتاب
نفسه عندهم كالغامض من الكلام والجبى من القول.

the people are said to fail in their attempt at (re)producing eloquent Hebrew actually reveal lively and dynamic linguistic activity. First, they are prone to err when they speak (ואדֹא הם תכלמו ≈ وإذا هم تكلموا). Presumably, this does not refer to everyday speech in the marketplace but to public orations (perhaps in liturgical contexts) and the like. Second, when they compose and recite poetry (ואדֹא הם שערו ≈ وإذا هم شعروا), they veer from the rules established by the ancient poets. Apparently, instead of replicating the language patterns of the 'ancients' (i.e., biblical authors and *payṭanim*), they produce a different sort of linguistic style not governed by such rules. Like speeches, the composition and recitation of Hebrew poetry was presumably a formal public (and possibly liturgical) activity. In any case, as a result of this lack of Hebrew proficiency, evidenced by the failure to produce proper Hebrew when delivering speeches or reciting poetry in formal contexts, the *kalām* of the Bible has become unintelligible to them.[49]

　　As we have already hinted at earlier, the particular spheres of language use that Saadia has in mind are modes of speaking that may be regarded as performance. While the fact that the people were productively using Hebrew to compose and recite poetry may not be a surprise—we touched on this earlier (see

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[49] Note, however, that Saadia refers to speaking Hebrew in the Hebrew introduction to *Sefer Ha-Egron* (Harkavy 1891, 52–57). This may reflect something of an ideology of wanting to restore Hebrew even as a common everyday language. Nevertheless, despite this ideological desire, the settings he is describing in this passage do not fit such a context.

chapter 4, §2.1.3)—the precise meaning of ואדא הם תכלמו (وإذا ≈)

(هم تكلموا) 'and when they speak...' might be more elusive. Since Hebrew was no longer an everyday vernacular in the Middle Ages (Sáenz-Badillos 2013), we must infer that 'speaking' here refers to some kind of public speech. This inference is perhaps made clearer by a passage in Ḥayyūj (see §1.1.2).

1.1.2. Judah ben David Ḥayyūj (945–1000 CE)

Indeed, insight into the nature of what such 'speaking' in Hebrew entailed at the time of the Hebrew grammarians may be hinted at in Ḥayyūj's (945–1000 CE) comments in the introduction to his book on the morphology of weak verbs, *Kitāb al-afʿāl ḏawāt ḥurūf al-līn* (Jastrow 1897, 1):

فقد خَفِيَ امرُها عن كثير من الناس لِلينها واعتلالها ودقّة معانيها وبُعد غورها

فلا يدرون كيف تتصرّف الافعال ذوات حُرُوف اللين وكثيرا ما يستعملونها فى

خُطَبِهِمْ واشعارهم على غَيْرِ ٱلصّواب

> And the matter of [the conjugation of weak verbs] has been hidden from many of the people with respect to their weakness, defectiveness, precise meanings, and the extent of their declivity, so that they do not know how weak verbs conjugate and they frequently use them (*yastaʿmilūnahā*) in their speeches (*fī ḫuṭabihim*) and their poems (*ašʿārihim*) in an incorrect manner (*ʿalā ghayr al-ṣawāb*).

In this passage Ḥayyūj is highlighting a linguistic problem. The people are not able to correctly conjugate weak verbs. As was the case with the passage in Saadia's *Sefer Ha-Egron*, there are two contexts in which this problem is prevalent: في خطبهم 'in

their speeches' and أشعارهم ... في 'in their poems'. The fact that
Ḥayyūj explicitly uses the term *ḫuṭab* 'speeches; orations' helps
clarify what Saadia meant by ואד�ّא הם תכלמו (≈ وإذا هم تكلموا) 'and
when they speak...'. Both grammarians are probably referring to
some sort of formal orations or public speeches. Such speeches
were probably of a religious and/or pedagogical nature and de-
livered within the context of the synagogue or educational insti-
tutions.[50]

We should reiterate here that everyday spoken language is
not necessarily what the Hebrew grammarians are addressing;
Hebrew had not been used that way for hundreds of years. Ra-
ther, they are trying to prepare the people to produce correct He-
brew specifically in performance settings. This is because, for the
Hebrew grammarians and their contemporaries, *lughat al-ʿib-
rāniyyīn* 'the language of the Hebrews' was immediately experi-
enced as a performance language in public recitation of the Bible,
liturgical poetry, religious speeches, etc. At the same time, how-
ever, there seems to have been an ideological undercurrent
among at least some grammarians who wanted to restore Hebrew
as an everyday spoken language. This seems to be evidenced to
some degree in Saadia's Hebrew introduction to *Sefer Ha-Egron*
(Harkavy 1891, 52–57) and in the works of the Karaite scholar

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[50] Medieval Hebrew was not a language used for everyday communica-
tion. Nevertheless, some Jewish communities had maintained Hebrew
in written and spoken forms, largely within the context of the syna-
gogue and educational institutions (Sáenz-Badillos 2013).

Benjamin al-Nahāwandī (9th c. CE).[51] Nevertheless, just because some advocated for using Hebrew as an everyday spoken language, does not mean that this practice was particularly common. While it is possible that the grammarians were rebuking mistakes among those trying to use Hebrew for everyday conversation, it is perhaps more plausible that their rebukes apply specifically to performative contexts.

1.2. Comparison with the Arabic Tradition

As we have already hinted at in preceding sections, the Arabic terms *kalām al-ʿarab* and *al-ʿarabiyya* refer to the corpus and particular register (or variety) of the standard language, respectively. It should additionally be noted that, though perhaps not universally in all the Arabic grammarians, there is a strong correlation between these terms and the performance register of Arabic as well. Since we have already dealt with this topic extensively as it applies to the term *kalām al-ʿarab* earlier (see chapter 4, §2.2), we will focus more on the term *al-ʿarabiyya* here.

According to Brustad (2016, 149–51), in the grammars of al-Khalīl (d. 786/791 CE) and Sībawayh (d. ca 796 CE), the feminine singular adjectival form *al-ʿarabiyya* is always used as a noun. As such, it contrasts with the *Qurʾānic* term *lisān ʿarabī* 'Arabic language' both in definiteness and in its use as a substantive. The *tāʾ marbūṭa* at the end of *al-ʿarabiyya* is probably best regarded as an abstract noun marker.[52] The term thus refers to the

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[51] Personal communication from Geoffrey Khan.

[52] This is more likely than the possibility that *al-ʿarabiyya* is a feminine adjective referring to an implied omitted noun like *lugha*—i.e., *al-lugha*

abstract language and/or language register reflected in the *kalām al-ʿarab* corpus. Specifically, then, it refers to an elevated performance register of Arabic.[53] This is consistent with the fact that the earliest grammarians were concerned primarily with the performed recitation of the *Qurʾān*.

It should be noted, however, that even at an early period, namely that of al-Khalīl and Sībawayh, *al-ʿarabiyya* was neither a monolith nor identical with the Arabic of the *Qurʾān*. In a comment about Ḥimyar, Ibn Sallām (d. 845/846 CE) notes that ما لسان حِمْيَرَ وأقاصِي اليَمَن بلساننا ولا عربيَّتُهم بعربيَّتنا 'the language of Ḥim-yar and the remotest parts of Yemen is not our language and their *ʿarabiyya* is not our *ʿarabiyya*' (*Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-šuʿarāʾ*; Ibrāhīm 2001, 1.29). As Brustad (2016, 149) points out, implicit in Ibn Sallām's statement is an acknowledgement that various communities had differences both in their specific corpus of the performance register and in the nature of the linguistic register used in the performance of such genres. Van Putten (2022, 47–98), similarly, highlights the linguistic diversity evidenced in what may be termed *al-ʿarabiyya*, even in the early grammarians like Sībawayh and al-Farrāʾ. Finally, we should also note that, even if we subscribe to the view that *al-ʿarabiyya* was not exclusively a performance register but could admit some colloquial dialectal

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al-ʿarabiyya—which still meant '(dialect) variant' in this early period (Brustad 2016, 149).

[53] As Brustad points out, there are several statements among the early Arabic grammarians that make a distinction between 'language' and *al-ʿarabiyya* or between 'grammar' and *al-ʿarabiyya* (Brustad 2016, 149).

forms, as claimed by Webb (see discussion in chapter 4, §2.2.1), the ʿarabiyya was at least strongly associated with or most clearly exemplified in 'texts' that were orally performed in formal contexts.

Although there are many sources within the Arabic grammatical tradition that highlight the performative nature (or associations) of al-ʿarabiyya, we focus below on just one in particular that exhibits similar phraseology to the Hebrew grammarians examined above as it relates to the association of the standard language with reciting poetry and delivering public orations.

1.2.1. al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (d. 786/791 CE)

Al-Khalīl (d. 786/791 CE), after noting in the opening of *Kitāb al-ʿayn* that the scope of his work includes *kalām al-ʿarab*, outlines his purposes in writing his dictionary. These may be generally summed up as helping the Arabs improve their familiarity with and competence in their linguistic heritage. What is noteworthy in his description of his goals for the Arabs who read his book, however, is how the particular genres of language use mentioned by al-Khalīl bear a striking resemblance to the spheres of language use mentioned by Saadia and Ḥayyūj in their lamenting the poor proficiency of the people in Hebrew (1.47; al-Makhzūmī and al-Sāmarrāʾī 1989):[54]

هذا ما أَلَّفه الخليل بن أحمد البصريّ—رحمة اللّٰه عليه. من حروف: ا، ب، ت، ث، مع ما تكمَّلَتْ به فكان مدار كلام العرب وألفاظهم. فلا يخرج منها

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[54] Brustad (2016, 150) cites this passage as evidence that al-Khalīl associated the ʿarabiyya with poetry, proverbs, and formal speeches.

عنه شيء. أَراد أن تَعرِفَ به العربُ في أشعارها وأمثالها ومخاطباتها فلا يشِذُّ
عنه شَيْء من ذلك

The following is what al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad the Baṣran—
mercy of God upon him—composed. Of the letters *alif*, *bāʾ*,
tāʾ, *ṯāʾ*, etc. And the scope of the work was *kalām al-ʿarab*
and their words (*alfāẓ*), of which nothing escaped him. His
purpose [in writing] was that by means of [his book] the
Arabs would become well acquainted with their poems
(*ašʿār*), their proverbs (*amṯāl*), and their formal speeches
(*muḫāṭabāt*), so that none of it would be beyond its scope.

There are two pieces of evidence in this passage that indi-
cate that al-Khalīl was concerned in *Kitāb al-ʿayn* with document-
ing the performance register of the language. First, the scope of
the work is explicitly defined as *kalām al-ʿarab* (see discussion in
chapter 4, §2.2.1). On this point, note that the contents of *Kitāb
al-ʿayn* are made up mostly of poetry and the *Qurʾān* (Brustad
2016, 150). Second, the reference to *ašʿār* 'poems', *amṯāl* 'prov-
erbs', and *muḫāṭabāt* 'formal speeches' clearly indicates that al-
Khalīl's grammar was occupied with performance settings and/or
genres that were orally performed. It is also significant that the
purpose of writing his grammar is so that *al-ʿarab* 'the Arabs'
would become well acquainted with the linguistic material com-
posed in the performance register. Presumably, this would help
better equip them to engage in this performance language culture
themselves.[55]

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[55] Note also the following statement in *Kitāb al-ʿayn* (8.41; al-Makhzūmī
and al-Sāmarrāʾī 1989), in which al-Khalīl argues that the word ندل
'filth' does not belong to the linguistic variety under discussion: النَّدْل

1.3. Analysis

In both the Hebrew and Arabic traditions, we see that the grammarians were not primarily concerned with everyday speech but with an elevated performance register of language. On this point, it is curious that the terms *ḫuṭab* 'speeches' (or *muḫāṭabāt* 'formal speeches') and *ašʿār* 'poems' are repeated in both traditions in close collocations with what is regarded as the standard language the grammarians are endeavouring to document.

From a sociolinguistic or linguistic-anthropological perspective, the rebuke of the people for their inability to speak proper Hebrew reinforces a key element of a standard language ideology, namely that of a pure canonical form of the language existing outside of the practices of native speakers (see chapter 3, §2.1.3). There are thus 'correct' and 'incorrect' forms of the language. Also implicit in such rebukes is the idea that there are contexts in which contemporaries are or should be engaged in this performance language culture. The grammarians thus confer a degree of social prestige on those who exhibit such capabilities. In this way, they engage in a form of 'maintenance' of the standard language (see chapter 3, §2.1.6). By prescribing certain forms of language as proper for performance settings, they also serve

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'*Al-nadl:* Filth of every kind. It الوَسَخُ من كُلِّ شيء من غير استعمال [في العربية] is not in use in *al-ʿarabiyya*' (see Brustad 2010). As Brustad (2010) points out, the continued presence of this word in Egyptian Arabic demonstrates that it was clearly in use in Arabic at the time of al-Ḫalīl. Nevertheless, he does not regard it as belonging to the *ʿarabiyya*.

the processes of valorisation and circulation (see chapter 3, §§2.2, 3.0).

2.0. Complaint Tradition: توجعت لنسيان الأمة اللغة

Although it was not the focus of the preceding section, one might notice from the statements of Saadia and Ḥayyūj that the Hebrew grammarians tended to view their work as an urgent response to a dire need. In their eyes, the people had neglected and forgotten Hebrew. In a standard language ideology, the idea of grief at the linguistic ineptitude of the masses is what has been termed the 'complaint tradition' (see chapter 3, §§2.1.4–2.1.5). This complaint tradition appears, in many cases, to be the catalyst for the documentation and codification of a standard language by means of grammatical works. Indeed, restoring 'proper' language use after 'corruption' of the language among the masses is often the motivation for writing a grammar. Such a phenomenon appears to be evidenced in both the Hebrew and Arabic grammarians.

2.1. Hebrew Grammarians

Among the Hebrew grammarians, it is not uncommon for the introduction to their works to include an explanation as to their motivation and purposes in writing. In numerous cases, it was the deterioration of the language among the people that drove them to compose their grammatical literature.

2.1.1. Saadia Gaon (882–942 CE)

When offering an explanation in *Sefer Ha-Galuy*[56] as to why he wrote his book on Hebrew poetry (i.e., *Sefer Ha-Egron*), Saadia cites his grief at the nation's forgetting of the Hebrew language (Malter 1913, 494–95, 499; Harkavy 1891, 156–57):

וכמא שרחת הדֹה אלגֹ׳ מעאני פי כתאב אלשער אלעבראני פתוֹגעת פיה
לנסיאן אלאמהֹ אללגֹה ובײנת פיה מנאפע אלנטֹאם ואלצֹמאת וכמא
שרחת כתֹירא מן דֹלך איצֹא פי אלײֹב אלגֹוֹז אלתי אלפתהא לתצחיח
אעראב לגֹה אלעבראניין פאדֹא קראת אלאמהֹ הדֹא אלכתאב ותעלמה
שבאבהא אנתפעת בההדֹה אלٰ׳ מנאפע תפצחת פי אללגֹה ונצֹאמהא
וצֹמאתהא וכאן פי דֹלך כֹ׳ ישעיהו ולבב נמהרים יבין לדעת ולשון עלגים
תמהר לדבר צחות[57]

> I likewise explained these three meanings in *The Book of Hebrew Poetry*. It was also in this book that I expressed my grief at the fact that the nation has forgotten the language. In this book I also made clear the benefits of order and connections [of sentences]. I similarly explained many of these ideas also in *The Twelve Parts*, which I composed for correcting the inflection (*i'rāb*) of the language of the Hebrews. And if the nation reads this book and its youth study it, they will be benefited by these ten benefits: they will become eloquent (*tafaṣṣaḥat*) in the language and its order

[56] For background on *Sefer Ha-Galuy*, see Malter (1913, 487–89; 1921, 269–71) and Harkavy (1891, 133–49).

[57] ≈ وكما شرحت هذه ال-٣ معاني في كتاب الشعر العبراني فتوجعت فيه لنسيان الأمة اللغة وبيّنت فيه منافع النظام والضمات وكما شرحت كثيرا من ذلك أيضا في ال-١٢ الجزء التي ألفتها لتصحيح إعراب لغة العبرانيين فإذا قرأت الأمة هذا الكتاب وتعلمه شبابها انتفعت بهذه ال-١٠ منافع تفصحت في اللغة ونظامها وضماتها وكان في ذلك كقول إشعياء ולבב נמהרים יבין לדעת ולשון עלגים תמהר לדבר צחות.

and its connection [of sentences], and by that [very thing]
will it come about like the saying of Isaiah (32.4), "and the
heart of the hasty will understand knowledge and the
tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak clear
[things]."

Saadia, making a reference to what he had already ex-
pressed in *Sefer Ha-Egron* (*The Book of Hebrew Poetry*), says that
he was pained at the fact that the community had forgotten the
Hebrew language. Accordingly, he composed both his book on
poetry and his work on Hebrew grammar to correct this problem.
Interestingly, he expresses his purposes as לתצחיח אעראב לגה
אלעבראניין (לتصحيح إعراب لغة العبرانيين ≈) 'for correcting the *iʿrāb* of
the language of the Hebrews'. The semantic range of the Arabic
term *iʿrāb* is varied. In the Arabic grammatical tradition, it often
refers to elements of proper declension or inflection (Lane 1863–
1893). Among other Hebrew grammarians writing in Judeo-Ara-
bic, it may refer specifically to the *niqqud* (i.e., vowel pointing;
Blau 2006). Given the content of Saadia's grammar book, a sim-
ilar meaning is also possible here. On the other hand, it could
also refer more broadly to correct, clear, or proper language use.
Indeed, later in the passage Saadia notes that those who learn
from his works will become *faṣīḥ* 'eloquent' in the language.[58]
This purpose is then associated with a prophetic verse from Isaiah
(32.4), which Saadia quotes in Biblical Hebrew—we will return
to the significance of this verse for Saadia's mission and language
ideology later. In the meantime, this passage gives rise to a few

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[58] For a detailed exposition of the term *faṣīḥ* in Saadia, see below.

questions: What was the nature of this *nisyān* 'forgetting' of He-
brew? Who exactly was *al-umma* 'the nation' who forgot the lan-
guage? What sort of competence in Hebrew was Saadia hoping
to restore to the community? What would be the appropriate
venue and context for its use?

A passage from the introduction to *Sefer Ha-Egron* (44–45;
Harkavy 1891), the latter part of which we have already treated
above (see §1.1.1), may help answer some of these questions (re-
peated portion from §1.1.1 in grey):

> וכמא ירון בני אסמאעיל אן בעץׄ כׁואצהם ראי קומא לא יפצחון אלכלאם
> אלערבי פגמה ד̇לך פוצׄע להם כלאמא מכׁתצרא פי כתאב יסתדלון בה
> עלי אלפציח: כד̇לך ראית כׁתׄירא מן בני אסראיל לא יבצרון מרסל פציח
> **לגתנא פכיף עויצה** ואד̇א הם תכלמו כאן כׁתׄירא ממא ילפטׄון בה מלחונא
> ואד̇א הם שערו כאן אלמסתפיץׄ פי מא בינהם מן אלארכאן אלאואיל הו
> אלקליל ואלמתרוך הו אכתׄר: וכד̇לך פי אלקואפי חתי צאר אלכתאב
> נפסה ענדהם כאלגׄאמץׄ מן אלכלאם ואלגׄבי מן אלקול[59]

And the Ishmaelites also recognise that one of their best
saw a people that could not speak the Arabic *kalām* elo-
quently (*lā yufṣiḥūn*) and this troubled him. So he laid out
for them a concise composition in a book, by which they
might be guided unto (linguistic) eloquence (*al-faṣīḥ*). In

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[59] ≈ وكما يرون بني إسماعيل أن بعض خواصهم رأى قوما لا يفصحون الكلام العربي فغمه
ذلك فوضع لهم كلاما مختصرا في كتاب يستدلون به على الفصيح. كذلك رأيت كثيرا من
بني إسرائيل لا يبصرون مرسل فصيح لغتنا فكيف عويصه وإذا هم تكلموا كان كثيرا مما
يلفظون به ملحونا وإذا هم شعروا كان المستفيض في ما بينهم من الأركان الأوائل هو القليل
والمتروك هو أكثر. وكذلك في القوافي حتى صار الكتاب نفسه عندهم كالغامض من الكلام
والجبى من القول.

> the same way, I have seen many of the Israelites not look-
> ing unto that which has been transmitted of the eloquence
> (*faṣīḥ*) of our language and that which is difficult in it.
> When they speak, much of what they utter is grammati-
> cally wrong. When they compose and recite poetry, that
> which spreads among them from the ancient foundations
> (i.e., the poetic rules) is little, and that which is abandoned
> [so that it is not governed by these rules] is more. And so
> it is in [their] rhymes, such that the book itself (i.e., the
> Bible) has become like something obscure to them with re-
> spect to [its] idiom or [like] a collection of sayings [with-
> out any connection].

The overall hypothesis of our book is that, while it has long
been understood that the Hebrew grammatical tradition inher-
ited many of its conventions from the Arabic grammatical tradi-
tion, the Hebrew grammarians may also have inherited a lan-
guage *ideology* from the Arabic grammarians. Although many of
the examples adduced in support of our theory require some spec-
ulation or inference, this is not at all the case here.

Indeed, this is a key passage to support our overall hypoth-
esis. In this text, Saadia does not reference this Arabic grammar-
ian for the sake of elucidating a point of grammar or comparing
morphology. Rather, the reference focuses on the attitude and
response of the Arabic grammarian in the face of a linguistic cri-
sis. According to Harkavy (1891, 44–45), בעץׄ כׄואצהם (≈ بعض

خواصهم) 'one of their best' may refer to Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn
Yaḥyā (d. 904 CE), also known as Thaʿlab. The fact that Saadia
compares this Arabic grammarian's situation with his own mis-
sion and context is of great interest. Saadia continues by more
specifically defining the nature of the linguistic crisis in his own

sphere. While he clearly acknowledges the fact that the Jewish community is producing and interacting with Hebrew regularly in different contexts, their competence is inadequate. They have neglected—and thus are not producing—the *mursal* 'that which has been passed down' of the *faṣīḥ* 'eloquence' of the language.

Accordingly, Saadia begins to list a number of ways in which the community is falling short of the *faṣīḥ* of the language. As we have already noted above (see §1.1.1), the contexts in which Saadia critiques the nation's use of language are all performative. Furnishing them with the necessary grammatical material to succeed in these performative areas, then, will become instrumental in helping them on the path to *al-faṣāḥa*, which was a central goal of Saadia's work.

Indeed, as in the Arabic grammarians, the term *faṣāḥa* is especially important in Saadia's language ideology. The precise meaning of this term, however, requires further explication. We may shed further light on how Saadia understood this term (within the context of his own language ideology) by addressing his use of it in the Arabic title of his grammar book.

Though Saadia's Hebrew grammar is commonly referred to as כתב אללגה (≈ كتب اللغة) 'The Books of the Language', he also calls it by the name כתאב פציח לגה אלעבראניין (≈ كتاب فصيح لغة العبرانيين) 'The Book of the *Faṣīḥ* of the Language of the Hebrews' (Skoss 1952a, 283, 290–91). As hinted at above, much of the significance of this latter title hangs on the interpretation of the word *faṣīḥ*. While Skoss's (1952a, 283, 291) translation of 'elegance' is typical, it may not capture the full sense of what this word would have meant for Saadia. Rather, the precise sense of

this word ought to be examined in light of Saadia's other writings and in light of writings from the same period. Such an analysis can even help further clarify Saadia's motivation and purposes in composing 'The Book of the *Faṣīḥ* of the Language of the Hebrews'.

A helpful clue may be found in Dunaš ben Labraṭ's (920–990 CE) references to Saadia's work. Writing in Hebrew, Dunaš does not call Saadia's work by its Arabic title, but rather refers to it in Hebrew by names such as ספר צחות לשון הקדש *sefer ṣaḥūṯ lšōn haq-qoḏeš* 'The Book of the *ṣaḥūṯ* of the Holy Language' and ספר צחות לשון העברי *sefer ṣaḥūṯ lšōn hɔ-ʿivrī* 'The Book of the *ṣaḥūṯ* of the Hebrew Language' (Schröter 1866, 26–27; Skoss 1952a, 283; 1952b, 75–76).[60] The word *ṣaḥūṯ* is a noun formed by adding the abstract nominal *-ūṯ* ending to the adjective *ṣaḥ*, which is a particularly rare word in Hebrew, being attested only four times in the entire Bible. In fact, of those four occurrences, it is only used once with reference to language or speaking. This single occurrence is found in Isaiah 32.4.

Fortunately, Saadia's Arabic translation of this verse from Isaiah has been preserved. The Hebrew text of Isaiah 32.4 reads וּלְבַב נִמְהָרִים יָבִין לָדָעַת וּלְשׁוֹן עִלְּגִים תְּמַהֵר לְדַבֵּר צָחוֹת: 'And the heart of the hasty will understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak *ṣɔḥōṯ*'. According to the traditional vocalisation, the Hebrew word *ṣɔḥōṯ* is the feminine plural form of the adjective *ṣaḥ*. Therefore, the meaning would be something along the lines of 'things that are *ṣaḥ*'. Saadia translates this verse

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[60] For the vocalisation of consonantal צחות *ṢḤWT* as *ṣaḥūṯ*, see Becker (2013).

וקלוב אלבלדין תפהם אלמערפה̇ ואלסן אלעג̇ם תסרע בכלאם as Arabic into
אלפצאאחה̇ (≈ וقلوب البلدين تفهم المعرفة وألسن العجم تسرع بكلام الفصاحة)
'and the hearts of the stupid will understand knowledge and the
tongues of foreigners will hasten to speak *al-faṣāḥa*' (Derenbourg
1896, 47). What is of particular note here is that Saadia translates
the Hebrew word *ṣōḥōṯ* as *al-faṣāḥa*.[61] This seems to indicate that
Isaiah 32.4 may be connected, at least conceptually, to the title
of Saadia's grammar.[62] Further, as we noted at the beginning of
this section, Saadia's comments in the introduction to *Sefer Ha-
Galuy* understand his grammatical work as a means by which this
prophetic verse (Isaiah 32.4) will come to fulfilment. Therefore,
it is clear that Saadia was not only aware of this verse from Isaiah,
but that it represented the very goal of his work. Accordingly, it
would not be over-stepping to suggest that Saadia may have had
this verse in mind when he referred to his work as *The Book of
the Faṣīḥ of the Language of the Hebrews*.[63]

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[61] Harkavy calls attention to the relationship between *ṣōḥōṯ* and *faṣāḥa*
in Saadia's work (Harkavy 1891, 32 n. 3, 32–35, 55 n. 5). He also com-
pares some of Saadia's terminology in the Arabic title of his grammar
to parallels among the Arabic grammarians (Harkavy 1891, 32 n. 3).

[62] The connection between *ṣaḥūṯ hal-lōšōn* 'the *ṣaḥūṯ* of the language',
Isaiah 32.4, and Saadia Gaon has already been pointed out in Kokin
(2013, 167–68). Kokin highlights the debate about whether there could
be any other standard for pure Hebrew than the biblical text itself.
According to Kokin, it is in such a context that medieval grammarians
were concerned with *ṣaḥūṯ hal-lōšōn* in the sense of 'purity of language'.
For Saadia, the term *ṣaḥūṯ* had a similar connotation regarding conform-
ity with biblical style.

[63] See the previous footnote.

We have thus placed the title of Saadia's grammar within the context of its purpose. We have not yet, however, defined precisely what the content of the words *ṣ*̄*ōḥ*̄*ōṯ* or *faṣāḥa* might have been for Saadia.[64] In a roughly contemporary Hebrew-Arabic dictionary, David ben Abraham al-Fāsī (10th c. CE) associates the word *ṣ*̄*ōḥ*̄*ōṯ* in Isaiah 32.4 with אלכלאם אלואצח (الكلام الواضح ≈) 'clear speech' (Skoss 1936–1945, II:505–06). Therefore, in light of Dunaš ben Labraṭ's references to Saadia's title and the fact that Saadia uses the word *faṣāḥa* to translate *ṣ*̄*ōḥ*̄*ōṯ*, the title of the book may be better rendered as '*The Book of the Clarity of the Language of the Hebrews*'.[65] It must be stressed, however, that any particular English gloss of *faṣāḥa* or *ṣ*̄*ōḥ*̄*ōṯ* in Saadia's works is limited in how much it can convey. The full semantic load carried by these terms can only be clarified by understanding their association with a particular linguistic register of Hebrew.

For this, we may turn to the example of *Sefer Ha-Galuy*. This work was written during Saadia's time in exile after being expelled from the Gaonate by the Exilarch, David ben Zakkai. The main purpose of *Sefer Ha-Galuy* was to vindicate himself in the conflict with David ben Zakkai and defend himself against his detractors. Though the work was first published in Hebrew, it was later supplemented by an Arabic version. It should be noted, however, that the Arabic version was not merely a translation;

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[64] According to Skoss (1952b, 76), the abstract nominal form *ṣaḥūṯ* refers to 'grammatical correctness of speech', but such a definition raises further questions.

[65] Note also how Malter (1913, 495) translates לְדַבֵּר צָחוֹת *ld̠abbēr ṣ*̄*ōḥ*̄*ōṯ* as 'to speak plainly'.

rather, it also included a lengthy introduction and explanatory notes of the original Hebrew, and was designed to respond to various accusations that had been made against some of the contents of the earlier Hebrew version (Malter 1921, 269–71). The main part of the book begins as follows (Malter 1921, 389; Harkavy 1891, 180–81):

דִּבְרֵי סֵפֶר הַגָּלוּי הַכָּמוּס רַאֲוָה וְחָסוּן מוּסָר אִמְרֵי צָחוֹת הֵם אוֹצָרוֹ[66]

> The words of *The Open Book*, which is stored-up with observational learning and treasure-laden with moral instruction. The sayings of *ṣāḥōṯ* are its treasure (chest).

This short description of the book's contents is telling. It mentions both observational learning and moral instruction as benefits to be derived from it (Malter 1921, 389). The last sentence, however, is curious. In the Arabic note, Saadia explicates אִמְרֵי צָחוֹת *’imrē ṣāḥōṯ* 'sayings of *ṣāḥōṯ*' as אלכלאם אלפציח (الكلام ≈) الفصيح) 'eloquent speech' (Harkavy 1891, 181). Moreover, while Malter (1921, 389) understands אוֹצָרוֹ *’ōṣārō* as 'its treasure', both the Hebrew term and its explication in the Arabic note as כֹזנה (≈ خزنه) may point more towards the idea of a 'storehouse'.[67] Therefore, while we should not disregard the fact that Saadia regards the sayings of *ṣāḥōṯ* as a sort of treasure in themselves, he may be

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[66] *divrē sefɛr hag-gālūy hak-kāmūs ra’avā v-ḥāsūn mūsār ’imrē ṣāḥōṯ hēm ’ōṣārō.*

[67] See also Saadia's translation of אוֹצְרֹתָי *’ōṣrōṯāy* as כֹזאיני (≈ خزائني) 'my vaults; my treasuries' in Deut. 32.34 as support for the translation of 'storehouse'. For Saadia's translation of Deut. 32.34, see Bodenheimer (1856, 67).

saying that they are actually a kind of storehouse—or treasure
'chest'—in which the learning and moral instruction is brought
to the reader. That is, the 'sayings of ṣōḥōṯ' would not merely be
referring to a particular section or an occasional proverb found
in the book, but rather to the style of language used consistently
throughout the entirety of the work. The linguistic style itself is
the means by which the learning and moral instruction is com-
municated. On this point, it is worth noting that the moralistic
dimension of proper or correct speech is part of the concept of a
standard language ideology. Utilising a special cultural posses-
sion (i.e., the standard language) for performance in the public
sphere should require professional capabilities, including moral
authority. Linguistic competence and morality thus go hand-in-
hand in this case.

What, then, is the type of language used by Saadia in *Sefer
Ha-Galuy*? Beyond any doubt, it is marked by a relentless attempt
to imitate and reproduce the Hebrew characteristic of the Bible
(Malter 1913, 488; Malter 1921, 269).[68] In the mind of Saadia,
then, the words *ṣōḥōṯ* and *al-faṣāḥa* were to be applied primarily
to the Hebrew language and style characteristic of the Bible.[69]
Moreover, Saadia notes that he wrote the book עבר[א]ניא מפסקא
in Hebrew,' (עברانيا مفسقا فواسيفا مسمنا مطعما ≈) פואסיקא מסמנא מטעמא
versed with verses, pointed (with vowels), and accented (with

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[68] See the beginning of the main Hebrew section in Harkavy (1891, 180–
81); Schechter (1903, 4–7).

[69] In *Sefer Ha-Egron* (his book on Hebrew poetry), however, Saadia does
not have a problem with citing extra-biblical 'ancient' poets as examples
of good Hebrew poetry (see chapter 4, §2.1.3).

ṭeʿamim)' (Malter 1913, 490, 496). In other words, Saadia did not only imitate the biblical style of language, but he formatted his book exactly like the biblical text (Malter 1913, 488; Malter 1921, 269). This sort of orthographic and codicological presentation thus serves to guide the process of enregisterment (see chapter 3, §2.2) with respect to Saadia's own compositions as exemplary models of pure and correct Hebrew. In other words, the 'biblical' traits of the physical artefact of the text itself would thus encourage readers to enregister the linguistic signs used by Saadia to an idealised 'biblical' register. In sum, it is the style of Hebrew exemplified in Saadia's poetic compositions in *Sefer Ha-Galuy* that is to serve as an exemplar for the nation to imitate in its quest to achieve Hebrew eloquence.

That Saadia regarded his poetic Hebrew compositions in *Sefer Ha-Galuy* in this way is further confirmed by another passage from the book, in which he outlines his plans to restore *al-faṣāḥa* to the people (Malter 1913, 493–94, 498–99; Harkavy 1891, 156–57):

> ואלתֿאני תעלים אלאמהֿ תאליף אלכלאם וגבסה אדֿ גֿעלת הדֿא כאלסראגֿ
> יחדֿון חדוה ויתנבהון בה עלי נטֿאם כֿטאבהם ומעאניהם: ואלתֿאלתֿ
> תעלימהא אלצֿמאת אדֿ כאן כל כלאם לא תכמל מערפתה אלא בצֿמאת
> מגֿמעהֿ פי אלקול בעץֿ אלי בעץֿ חתי תצחֿ בדֿלך אלמעאני ואלא פסדת
> ותגֿיירת[70]

> The second [part] is teaching the nation how to compose *kalām* and its obscurity. Therefore, I have made this [book]

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as a lamp, the example of which they should imitate (*yaḥḏūn ḥaḏwahu*), and by which they should have brought to their attention [the proper] ordering of their discourse and meanings. The third [part] is teaching them the connections [of sentences], since the sense of every speech (*kalām*) would not be complete, except by connections [of sentences] that are combined with one another in the saying so that the meanings become clear by that [very thing]. Otherwise, it is corrupted and changed.

It is clear from the first passage of *Sefer Ha-Galuy* examined in this section that Saadia hoped to help the nation become *faṣīḥ* through reading and studying his grammar book. This passage, however, confirms what we have just now argued about his less explicit (and complementary) method of instructing the community. He says that he has made the book כאלסראג̇ יחדון חדוה (≈ كالسراج يحذون حذوه) 'as a lamp, the example of which they should imitate'. The community can become *faṣīḥ* not only by learning grammar in a systematic way through *Kitāb faṣīḥ lughat al-ʿibrāniyyīn*, but also by imitating the Hebrew style of Saadia himself in *Sefer Ha-Galuy*.[71] This, of course, is consistent with the fact that Saadia wrote the entire book in biblical style.

Whether writing a grammar book containing systematic instruction in Biblical Hebrew (e.g., *Kitāb faṣīḥ lughat al-ʿibrāniyyīn*) or composing poetry as a literary exemplar to be imitated (e.g., *Sefer Ha-Galuy*), then, Saadia frames his work as a response to נסיאן אלאמה אללגה (≈ نسيان الأُمة اللغة) 'the nation forgetting the language'. From an ideological perspective, all such work of Saadia

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[71] According to Malter (1921, 269), one purpose of *Sefer Ha-Galuy* was that "it serve as a model of elegant Hebrew style."

was motivated by the disappointment he experienced at seeing just how much the *faṣīḥ* of the language (i.e., biblical style) had been neglected among the nation. This 'complaint tradition' (see chapter 3, §§2.1.4–2.1.5) thus became the catalyst for his mission to restore *al-faṣāḥa* to the nation through his grammar book and other writings.

2.1.2. Judah ben David Ḥayyūj (945–1000 CE)

While we have treated the theme of a 'complaint tradition' in Saadia's works most extensively, we also find evidence of this same phenomenon among other Hebrew grammarians. The passage from the introduction to Ḥayyūj's (945–1000 CE) work on weak verbal morphology—though already treated above in part (see §1.1.2) due to its relevance for the performance contexts of Hebrew usage—is also relevant here. We thus address it now in its fuller context, breaking it into parts (*Kitāb al-afʿāl ḏawāt ḥurūf al-līn*, 1; Jastrow 1897):

قال يحيى بن داود غَرَضِى فى هذا الكتاب الإبانةُ عن حروف اللين والمدّ
العبرانيّة التنبيهُ على أنحائها وتصاريفِها فقد خَفِىَ امرُها عن كثير من الناس
لِينها واعتلالها ودقّة معانيها وبُعد غورها فلا يدرون كيف تتصرّف الافعال
ذوات حُرُوف اللين وكثيرا ما يستعملونها فى خُطَبِهمْ واشعارهم على غَيْرِ
ٱلصّواب

> Yaḥyā ibn Dāwūd (i.e., Ḥayyūj) said, "My purpose (*gharaḍī*) in [writing] this book is to clarify the Hebrew weak and elongated letters (i.e., semivowels) and to call attention to their various forms and conjugations. The matter of [the conjugation of weak verbs] has been hidden from many of the people with respect to their weakness, defectiveness,

precise meanings, and the extent of their declivity, so that
they do not know how weak verbs conjugate and they fre-
quently use them (*yastaʿmilūnahā*) in their speeches (*fī
ḫuṭabihim*) and their poems (*ašʿārihim*) in an incorrect man-
ner (*ʿalā ghayr al-ṣawāb*)."

Ḥayyūj begins this section by explicitly stating that his pur-
pose in writing his book was to clarify weak verbal morphology
in response to the fact that people regularly misconjugate weak
verbs in their speeches and poems. As was the case with Saadia,
the impetus for writing a grammatical work was witnessing the
corruption or neglect of pure and correct Hebrew among the
masses. The grammatical treatise is thus meant to help the people
recover the *faṣāḥa* of Hebrew, namely that which is consistent
with biblical style and norms. He then goes on to cite some ex-
amples of such misconjugations in roughly contemporary compo-
sitions (*Kitāb al-afʿāl ḏawāt ḥurūf al-līn*, 1–2; Jastrow 1897):

ويسلكون بها غَيْرَ سبيل الحَقّ كمن قال فى بعض كلامه הן נמצא האדם
נודע טרם הבראו ומקודש טרם צְרֹותוֹ اشتقّ צְרֹותוֹ بزعمه من יְצַר יָצַרְתִּי
ولم يَشْعُرْ بانّ مثل هذا المصدر لا يكون إلا من الافعال التى لامُها حرف لين
كما سنبيّن وقال ايضا مה لבני פרחה לְעוּד بنזم وحח أَخَذَ לְעוּד بظنّه من
וְעָדִית עֵדي תַּעְדֶּה כליה עֵדָה-נא גאון וגבה ولם يأْبه انّ مثله لا يكون إلّا من
فعل عينُه حرف لين كما سيتّضح ذلك مما أَسْتَأْنِفُ شَرْحَهُ

And they use [weak verbs] in an improper way, like some-
one who said in one of his sayings (*kalām*), "Behold, the
man was found—known—before he was created, and sanc-
tified before he was formed (*ṣrōṭō*)," in which he derived
'his forming (*ṣrōṭō*)' by asserting that it was (the infinitive)
of 'he formed (*yōṣar*), I formed (*yōṣartī*)', yet was not aware
that such an infinitive does not inflect as if it were from a

root whose third consonant is weak, as we will clarify [later]. [The same one] also said, "Why should the children of the buds adorn themselves (*lɔ̄ʿūḏ*) with brooches and earrings?" taking 'to adorn (*lɔ̄ʿūḏ*)' as if it is from "and you shall adorn yourself with an ornament (*v-ʿɔ̄ḏīṯ ʿɛḏī*)" (Ezek. 23.40), "she shall put on (*taʿḏɛ*) her ornaments" (Isa. 61.10), and "adorn yourself (*ʿaḏē*) with majesty and exaltation!" (Job 40.10). But he was not sensitive to the fact that such verbs are not based on roots with a weak second radical, as will become clear from my upcoming exposition of the topic.

In the first example, Ḥayyūj criticises the form צְרוֹתוֹ *ṣrōṯō* 'his forming' as an improper formation of the infinitive of יְצֹר *yɔ̄ṣar* as if it were a III-y root instead of a I-y root. Presumably, though unattested in the Bible, the proper infinitive would be something like יְצֹר *yṣōr*. In the second example, Ḥayyūj critiques the form לְעוּד *lɔ̄ʿūḏ* as an improper formation of the infinitive of עָדָה *ʿɔ̄ḏɔ̄* as if it were a II-w root instead of a III-y root. Presumably, though also absent from the Bible, the 'correct' form would be something like לַעֲדוֹת *laʿaḏōṯ*. Both examples identified as mistakes by Ḥayyūj are from the *Maḥberet* of the tenth-century Andalusian philologist and poet Menaḥem ben Saruq (ca 920–ca 970 CE), who also happened to be Ḥayyūj's teacher (Yahalom and Katsumata 2014, 104). Without quoting any authors specifically, Ḥayyūj then goes on to cite many examples of misconjugation of weak roots.

It is significant to note, however, that such examples based on analogy actually have a long history in Hebrew, even within the Bible itself. Note how an analogy comparable to יְצֹר *yṣōr* → צְרוֹת *ṣrōṯ* is also found in the biblical example סְפוֹת *sfōṯ* (from the

root *y-s-p*) 'adding' (Isa. 30.1). Similarly, an analogy comparable to עֵדוֹת *'aḏōṯ* → עוֹד *'ūḏ* is attested in the biblical form לָבוּז: *lōvūz* (from the root *b-z-y*) 'to be despised' (Prov. 12.8). In light of such comparable analogies, Ḥayyūj's insistence that the forms used by Menaḥem ben Saruq are 'incorrect' reflects the codification of a 'standard' language with more regularity even than the Bible itself, even though what is 'correct' is presented as that which is consistent with the Bible. Moreover, it also ignores the fact that such forms could develop naturally or even artfully in a living and dynamic performance language, just as many comparable analogies occur in the *piyyuṭim* (Rand 2014, 158–59). Ḥayyūj may thus be correcting linguistic norms that developed naturally in a performance context and attempting to bring them more into conformity with a general systematised and regularised paradigm of 'Biblical Hebrew' morphology.

Ḥayyūj goes on to lament the state of the language if such misconjugations are allowed. When the speaker can conjugate weak verbs كيف ما اراد 'however he wants'—presumably with some analogical basis—then the following occurs (*Kitāb al-afʿāl ḏawāt ḥurūf al-līn*, 2–3; Jastrow 1897):

فتنهدم حينئذ أبنية اللغة وَتُخْرَبُ حدودُها وتنهدّ اسوارها لأنّ الفعل الذى فاؤه حرف لين يرجِع فعلا عينه او لامه حرف لين وكذلك... ولمّا رايت هذا التغيير الواقع فى حروف اللين خاصّة وضعت فيها بتأييد الله وعونه هذا الكتاب الذى بيّنت فيه انحائَها وتصاريفها

The structures of the language are thus demolished, its borders are laid waste, and its walls are collapsed, since a verb whose first root consonant is weak becomes a verb whose

> second or third root consonant is weak, etc.... When I ob-
> served such interchanges happening particularly with the
> weak consonants, I composed this book about it—with the
> help and support of God—in which I clarified their various
> forms and conjugations.

As the passage continues, Ḥayyūj waxes poetic in his description
of just how much destruction has befallen the language as a result
of such a cavalier treatment of weak verbs among orators and
poets. This constitutes an example of the 'complaint tradition' *par
excellence.* And, once again, in response to the corruption of the
language by the masses, Ḥayyūj decides to compose this book to
clarify the proper conjugation of such forms. As already noted
above, however, Ḥayyūj 'clarifying' the correct conjugation of
such forms is actually Ḥayyūj himself attempting to institution-
alise what he believes *should be* the 'standard' form of the lan-
guage based on his own language ideology of what constitutes
pure Hebrew.

He goes on to explain his methods in determining what con-
stitutes a proper form to include in the book. By gathering all
attested weak verbal forms in the Bible, he is able either to es-
tablish a 'correct' form based on attestation or to reconstruct it
based on *qiyās* 'systematic analogy' to attested forms. The result
of this scouring and extension of biblical data Ḥayyūj explains as
follows (*Kitāb al-afʿāl ḏawāt ḥurūf al-līn*, 3; Jastrow 1897):

<div dir="rtl">

ليكون ذلك أَتَمَّ فى ما قصدت بيانه وأَبْلَغَ فى ما نويت من الانتفاع بالكتاب

إنْ شاء الله وما حضرنى فى حكاية ذلك ووصفِه شىء من اللفظ الجيّد

الفصيح ونظام الكلام اَلْمُتْقَنِ

</div>

> ...so that this will be the most comprehensive [version] of
> what I set out to clarify and the most eloquent (*ablagh*) of
> what I intended in terms of deriving benefit from the book
> (*al-kitāb*), if God wills it. And what has prepared me to
> make an account and description of this is something of
> good eloquent (*faṣīḥ*) diction and perfect order of speech
> (*kalām*)...

According to Ḥayyūj, his book will comprehensively provide the
reader with everything necessary to use weak verbs correctly and
eloquently. As the passage continues, he goes on to describe the
result of giving heed to his work, namely replicating the elo-
quence of the 'ancient Hebrews', which passage we have already
quoted and discussed earlier in this volume (see chapter 4,
§2.1.1). It should also be noted that Ḥayyūj feels the need to es-
tablish his own credentials. He is equipped to determine the cor-
rect forms of weak verbs because he himself has already achieved
something of eloquence with respect to correct Hebrew. By first
critiquing the Hebrew of others and subsequently setting himself
up as an authority fit to determine proper forms, he both furthers
the complaint tradition and (implicitly) encourages his readers to
enregister the form of Hebrew he is codifying as *faṣīḥ*.

2.1.3. David ben Abraham al-Fāsī (10th c. CE)

David ben Abraham al-Fāsī (10th c. CE) also seems to view the
composition of his lexicon against the backdrop of the deteriora-
tion of Hebrew among the masses. When discussing his methods
and motivations for writing his lexicon, he writes the following
(Skoss 1936–1945, I:1):

פראית אסיר סירה מן תקדמני פי דֿלך ואקצד קצדהם ומאכֿדֿהם כֿאצה
פי מעני אלתרתיב ואלנסק ואן כֿאלפת אלעבארה פי בעץֿ מא חכוה פלא
צֿרֿ אדֿ לם תזאל אלעלמא מכֿתלפין מן חית קד פאתתנא לגתנא ונחן גיר
מסתעמלין אלפאטֿהא פאנדרסת חיניד ובעדת אגראצֿהא ואסתגרקת
מעאניהא[72]

I saw fit to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone
before me in this and to pursue their purpose and method,
especially with respect to the meaning of arrangement and
order. And if the expression differs among some of those
who have reported it, then [it must be said] that there is
no harm if scholars remain divided with respect to how our
language has come down to us, especially when we our-
selves are unable to use its words, since otherwise it would
be wiped out (*indarasat*), its usages would become remote
(*baʿudat*), and its meanings would be buried (*istaghraqat*).

Al-Fāsī appears to exhibit somewhat more humility in his
attitude towards the language and its grammar than Saadia or
Ḥayyūj. He acknowledges, first of all, that he is following in the
footsteps of previous grammarians and lexicographers. There are
thus cases where various scholars exhibit disagreement with re-
spect to a particular Hebrew word. Nevertheless, rather than
abandon the work or set himself up as the sole authority on a
particular matter, he allows for variance of opinion—a common

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[72] ≈ فرأيت أسير سيرة من تقدمني في ذلك وأقصد قصدهم ومأخذهم خاصة في معنى
الترتيب والنسق وإن خالفت العبارة في بعض ما حكوه فلا ضرّ إذ لم تزال العلماء مختلفين
من حيث قد فاتتنا لغتنا ونحن غير مستعملين ألفاظها فاندرست حينئذ وبعدت أغراضها
واستغرقت معانيها.

feature of Karaite thought during this period—since the most im-
portant thing is to provide resources for keeping knowledge of
Hebrew alive in the community.

What al-Fāsī is essentially saying here is that even though
there may not be a consensus among scholars regarding certain
words, the need to restore proper Hebrew is so dire—the people
(including himself) are not really using the language at this
point—that it is far more important to address the urgent need
and to supply the people with some kind of guidance than to have
the language be lost. Without at least making some attempt to
restore Hebrew proficiency, the language would be wiped out
(אנדרסת ≈ اندرست), its usages would become remote (בעדת ≈
בעדת), and its meanings would be buried (אסתגרקת ≈ استغرقت).

On this point, it is significant that he does not 'other' the
community who has neglected the language in the way that Saa-
dia and Ḥayyūj do. Rather, he includes himself in those neglect-
ing the language by noting that scholarly caution is irrelevant
and unnecessary ונחן גיר מסתעמלין אלפאטׄהא (≈ ونحن غير مستعملين
ألفاظها) 'while *we ourselves* are unable to use its words'. Indeed, as
Milroy points out, the 'complaint tradition' is not limited to those
whose voices are considered authoritative on language. It is also
often found among language users who regard themselves as part
of the community neglecting the language (see chapter 3, §§2.1.4–
2.1.5). This likely shows just how far such an ideology has pene-
trated into the community, which serves to further solidify the
canonicity of the 'standard' language outside of everyday speech
and colloquial language.

Al-Fāsī's more modest posture towards his own linguistic proficiency can also be seen in his apologetic for his authorship of his lexicon (Skoss 1936–1945, I:1–2):

פנבתדי במא אועדנא בה מן תאליף הדֿא אלכתאב ודכר כל מא תצֿמנתה
מעאניה ואחותה אבואבה מן לגֿה אלעבראניֿה ושרח גואמצֿהא ואיצֿאח
גפלאתהא חסב אלטאקֿה ואלגֿהד מע מא אני ענד רוחי אקל מחל [פי
אלרפ]קֿה ואנזל דרגֿה מן אן אתקדם עלי תרגֿמֿה אללגֿה ואןֿ תקדמי עלי
דלך פממא דעת אלצֿרורֿה אלי מתֿלי לא ען קוֹה אגֿדהא פוק אהל זמאני
בל מעתרף אנא בנקצי ומֹקרֿ בצֿעף עלמי ואני לאחוֹגֿ אלי אלתעלים מן אן
אעלם גירי ולכן מן וגֿה אלסיאסֿה אן ירסם אל[קא]ר חסב מא קד עלמה
ליכון מוגֿודא ללקאצֿד אלנֿטֿר פיה[73]

We shall begin with what we have promised with respect to composing this book, mentioning whatever of its meanings and chapters comprise it with respect to the Hebrew language, interpreting its riddles, and clarifying its neglected areas according to the energy and effort [that lie within me]. [And this I will do], even though I strongly feel that I deserve the lowest place among the company (of grammarians, lexicographers, etc.) and am of too low of a rank to be worthy of taking up the task of interpreting and explaining the language. That someone like me should even take up this task is merely due to the fact that necessity (*al-ḍarūra*) requires it; it is not at all due to any

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[73] ≈ فنبتدئ بما أوعدنا به من تأليف هذا الكتاب وذكر كل ما تضمنته معانيه وأحوَته أبوابه
من لغة العبرانية وشرح غوامضها وإيضاح غفلاتها حسب الطاقة والجهد مع ما أني عند روحي
أقل محل في الرفقة وأنزل درجة من أن أتقدم على ترجمة اللغة وأنّ تقدمي على ذلك فمما
دعت الضرورة إلى مثلي لا عن قوة أجدها فوق أهل زماني بل معترف أنا بنقصي ومُقرّ بضعف
علمي وأني لأحوَج إلى التعليم من أن أعلّم غيري ولكن من وجه السياسة أن يرسم القارئ(؟)
حسب ما قد علمه ليكون موجودا للقاصد النظر فيه.

strength I find in myself above my contemporaries (*ahl zamānī*). Rather, I readily acknowledge my own lack and accept the weakness of my own knowledge and that I am in greater need of instruction than of teaching someone else. Nevertheless, for reasons of expediency, the reader/writer/artist(?) should sketch according to what he already knows so that it will be present for the one who wants to look at it.

Even though this passage is clearly written within the framework of a 'complaint tradition', its tone starkly contrasts with that of Saadia and Ḥayyūj. Al-Fāsī is careful to point out to his readers that even he is not among the most exemplary of language users. Ironically, however, it is this modesty that more prominently reinforces the standard language ideology and the conviction that the canonical form of the language has been neglected among the masses. If even a prominent lexicographer like al-Fāsī does not know the language sufficiently, then surely the state of Hebrew knowledge among the community is in dire straits. The fact that al-Fāsī, unworthy in his own eyes, nevertheless endeavours to compose his lexicon underscores just how powerfully the need was felt. The way in which he frames this need, in turn, serves to elevate the value of Hebrew proficiency among the community.

2.2. Comparison with the Arabic Tradition

The idea that pure and correct language had been neglected or corrupted among the masses, as comports with the 'complaint tradition', is also quite prevalent among the Arabic grammarians. Moreover, as Brustad (2016, 154) has demonstrated, from an ideological perspective, some of the Arabic grammarians frame the

emergence of grammar as a response to this deterioration of the language among the masses.

2.2.1. Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī (d. 845/846 CE)

Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī (d. 845/846 CE), for example, when discussing the history of the Arabic language and the Baṣran grammarians in his book about poets (*Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-šuʿarāʾ*; Ibrāhīm 2001, 1.29), writes the following about Abū al-Aswad al-Duʾalī (d. 688/689 CE):[74]

وكان لأهل البصرة في العربيّة قدْمة بالنَّحْو وبلُغات العرب والغريب عناية وكان أوَّلَ من أسَّس العربيّة وفتَح بابَها وأنْهَج سبيلها ووضع قياسها أبو الأسْوَدِ الدُؤَليُّ وهو ظالم بن عمرو بن سفيان بن جندل وكان رجل أهل البصرة وكان علويَّ الرّأيْ... وإنّما قال ذاك حين اضطرب كلامُ العرب فغلبتْ السليقية فكان سراةُ الناس يَلْحَنون فوضع بابَ الفاعلِ والمفعولِ والمضافِ وحروفِ الجرّ والرَّفْعِ والنَّصْبِ والجَزْمِ

The Baṣrans have chronological preeminence in the *ʿarabiyya* with respect to grammar (*naḥw*), the dialects of the Arabs (*lughāt al-ʿarab*), and less-attended-to rare forms (*al-gharīb ʿināyat-an*). The first one who founded (*assasa*) the *ʿarabiyya*, pioneered its treatment as a subject (*fataḥa bābaha*), traced its path (*anhaja sabīlahā*), and codified its rules (*waḍaʿa qiyāsahā*) was Abū al-Aswad al-Duʾalī, that is Ẓālim ibn ʿAmr ibn Sufyān ibn Jandal. Now he was a Baṣran man of superior intelligence.... [Al-Duʾalī did all

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[74] Portions of this passage are mentioned in Brustad (2016, 154).

this][75] when the speech of the Arabs (*kalām al-ʿarab*) be-
came disturbed (*iḍṭaraba*) and native speech (*al-salīqiyya*)
took over. The leaders of the people were committing
grammatical errors, so he composed a chapter on the
'agent' (*al-fāʿil*), the 'patient' (*al-mafʿūl*), the bound form in
an *iḍāfa* construction (*al-muḍāf*), prepositions (*ḥurūf al-
jarr*), the nominative (*al-rafʿ*), the accusative (*al-naṣb*), and
the shortened prefix conjugation (*al-jazm*).

In this passage, Ibn Sallām credits Abū al-Aswad al-Duʾalī
(d. 688/689 CE) with founding the Arabic grammatical tradition,
at least with respect to its written codification. What is most sig-
nificant from an ideological perspective, however, is that the
"emergence of grammar" came about when اضطرب كلام العرب 'the
speech of the Arabs became disturbed' (Brustad 2016, 154). As a
result of this disturbance in the transmission of the *ʿarabiyya*—
quite plausibly the elevated performance register of the Arabic
language—and its corpus, غلبت السليقية 'native speech took over'.[76]

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[75] Lit.: 'And this he said…'. Although the syntax is odd here, it is more
clear in the formulation of al-Zubaydī (d. 989 CE) in his *Ṭabaqāt al-
naḥwiyyīn wa-l-lughawiyyīn* (Ibrāhīm 1973, 21): وهو أول من أسس العربية،
ونهج سبُلَها، ووضع قياسها؛ وذلك حين اضطرب كلام العرب 'and [al-Duʾalī] was
the first who founded the *ʿarabiyya*, traced its paths, and codified its
rules, and this when *kalām al-ʿarab* became disturbed'.

[76] Further support for the idea that the *ʿarabiyya* and its corpus had to
be transmitted faithfully is found in a passage in al-Fārābī (d. 950 CE)
in which he discusses الذين نقلوا اللغة 'those who transmitted the language'
and الذي نقل اللغة واللسان العربي 'those who transmitted the language, that
is the Arabic language' (see §3.2.2).

The term *salīqiyya* has a number of nuances with respect to speech. Its connotations include not only that which is natural dialectally but also that which is free from elements acquired through learning, perhaps such as certain aspects of *iʿrāb* (Lane 1863–1893). This brought about a situation in which كان سراة الناس يلحنون 'the leaders of the people were committing grammatical errors' (Brustad 2016, 154). Consistent with the 'complaint tradition', then, the initial codification of grammar is ideologically framed as a response to the prevalence of linguistic errors among the masses. It is worth noting, however, that the disturbance of *kalām al-ʿarab* is blamed specifically on the people's preoccupation with the wars of conquest later in Ibn Sallām's work (Ibrāhīm 2001, 1.34; Brustad 2016, 154).

2.2.2. al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868/869 CE)

The complaint tradition is also quite clearly exemplified in al-Jāḥiẓ's (d. 868/869 CE) *Al-bayān wa-l-tabyīn*. After recounting the fact that some have gotten used to خطأ 'error' and كلام العلوج 'coarse speech' in Arabic, he writes the following (1.162; Haroun 1998):

> فمن زعم أنَّ البلاغةَ أن يكون السامعُ يفهمُ معنى القائلِ، جعل الفصاحةَ واللُّكنة، والخطأ والصّوابَ، والإغلاق والإبانة، والملحونَ والمُعْرب، كله سواءً، وكلَّه بياناً

> So he who claims that eloquence (*al-balāgha*) is [merely] about the hearer being able to understand the meaning of the speaker has thus regarded eloquence (*al-faṣāḥa*) as equivalent to improper speech (*al-lukna*), error (*al-ḫaṭaʾ*)

as equivalent to correctness (*al-ṣawāb*), obscurity as equivalent to clarity, ungrammaticality (*al-malḥūn*) as equivalent to proper speech (*al-muʿrab*), and all of it alike as elegant expression (*bayān*).

This comment occurs within the context of a longer passage in which al-Jāḥiẓ cites a number of grammatical errors made by the people. This particular instantiation of the complaint tradition is also part of a larger discourse in al-Jāḥiẓ that endeavours to elevate the Arabic spoken in Arabia, and especially that of the period of Muhammad. However, despite his complaints about the error-ridden speech of the people, because al-Jāḥiẓ presents the locus of pure Arabic among the Bedouin of the desert, especially those of the past, his readers are left without any direct access to those who could improve their ineloquence. As a result, they have to trust al-Jāḥiẓ to instruct them, since he has put in the work to acquire competence in proper Arabic speech (Webb 2016, 299–301). Naturally, this ties into the 'fieldwork *topos*' examined earlier (see chapter 4, §3.2.3).

2.2.3. *Laḥn al-ʿāmma* Genre

Also relevant here as a particular instantiation of the complaint tradition is the genre known as *laḥn al-ʿāmma* 'solecisms (i.e., grammatical errors) of the lower classes', which came about as standard language ideology became more embedded in the culture. In fact, Brustad (2017, 50) argues that the complaint tradition had become so entrenched in Arabic that it may be regarded as a 'complaint genre'.

The *laḥn al-ʿāmma* genre generally consists of an opposition between what *al-ʿāmma* say as opposed to what *should* be said,

with the former often being introduced by phrases like تقول 'you say...' or يقولون 'they say...' and the latter being introduced by phrases like والصواب 'whereas the norm/correct form is...'. In other cases, the correct form is introduced by تقول 'you *shall* say...', whereas the incorrect form is introduced by لا تقول 'you *shall not* say...' (Pellat 2012). In still other cases, the incorrect form might also be introduced by لا يقال '*shall not* be said...'.

Note the following example contrasting two ways of expressing the patient of an action—prepositional phrases vs object suffixes on a verb—in the work *Kitāb mā talḥan fīhi al-ʿāmma/al-ʿawāmm* (Abdel-Tawāb 1982, 102–03), attributed to al-Kisāʾī (d. 804/805 CE), though some dispute this attribution (see Pellat 2012):

وتقول : شكرتُ لك، ونصحتُ لك. ولا يقال : شكرتُك ونصحتُك. وقد نصح
فلان لفلان، وشكر له. هذا كلام العرب. قال الله تعالى : «اشْكُرْ لِى وَلِوَالِدَيْك»

> You shall say, 'I thanked you (*šakartu laka*)' and 'I counselled you (*naṣaḥtu laka*)', but [the following] shall not be said: 'I thanked you (*šakartuka*)' or 'I counselled you (*naṣaḥtuka*)'. And 'so-and-so counselled so-and-so (*naṣaha li-fulān*)' and 'thanked him (*šakara lahu*)'. This is *kalām al-ʿarab*. God the Exalted One said, "Be thankful to me (*uškur lī*) and to your parents" (Luqman [31.14]).

Presumably, those portions introduced by لا يقال '*shall not* be said...' are based on expressions current among the speech of *al-ʿāmma/al-ʿawāmm*, whoever they might have been, whereas those portions introduced by تقول 'you *shall* say...' reflect the prescriptions of the grammarians, which are described as being consistent with *kalām al-ʿarab*. As a whole, then, the *laḥn al-ʿāmma* genre points to a belief that the proper form of the language has

been neglected among the masses, who thus require instruction from linguistic authorities to recover it.

It may be that the *laḥn al-ʿāmma* genre was meant to help speakers correct the sorts of mistakes that they would make in oral performances. This may be indicated by the categories of *laḥn* treated by Ibn al-Sikkīt (d. 857/858 CE) in his *Iṣlāḥ al-manṭiq* 'Benefitting Pronunciation', where he treats semantic oppositions between homographic patterns like *faʿl* vs *fiʿl* (= فعل), *fiʿl* vs *fuʿl* (= فعل), etc. These are the sorts of errors one might make if they only learned such words through reading or if there was regional variation in the nominal patterns of such words (Brustad 2010).

2.3. Analysis

In both the Hebrew and Arabic grammatical traditions, the composition of grammatical works—or its initial emergence as a discipline—is ideologically cast as a response to the deterioration of proper language use among the masses. In particular, witnessing grammatical mistakes by those engaging in the (performance) language—or complete neglect of it—is often what motivates the grammarian to compose his grammatical work. Ḥayyūj, for example, states that those delivering speeches and composing poetry misconjugate weak verbs. Saadia laments the nation's *nisyān* 'forgetting' of the language. Al-Fāsī acknowledges that proper Hebrew has been neglected to such an extent that the community (including himself) no longer even uses its words. He himself falls short of linguistic proficiency. In the Arabic tradition, this is paralleled by Ibn Sallām's report that *kalām al-ʿarab* became disturbed and neglected during the Islamic conquests. As a result,

even the leaders of the people were making grammatical mistakes. We might also note that the nature and content of Ḥayyūj's treatise, namely pointing out morphological 'errors' and providing the 'correct' forms, is reminiscent of the sorts of لا تقول 'you *shall not* say...' vs تقول 'you *shall* say...' oppositions found in the *laḥn al-ʿāmma* genre of the Arabic tradition. The identification of speech errors is also found in al-Jāḥiẓ's *Al-bayān wa-l-tabyīn*.

   In all of these cases, then, it becomes the hope of the grammarian that providing the people with grammatical resources will encourage a 'return' to linguistic proficiency in the pure language. In both Saadia and Ḥayyūj, it is believed that attending to their works will lead their readers to become *faṣīḥ* in the language like their biblical ancestors. Al-Fāsī, more modestly, is just trying to prevent the language from being wiped out entirely. Abū al-Aswad al-Duʾalī very practically begins with an exposition of various grammatical features (e.g., 'agent', 'patient', case system), presumably to encourage proper usage.

   These trends in both traditions continue multiple themes of a standard language ideology, especially that of the 'complaint tradition' (see chapter 3, §§2.1.4–2.1.5). Critiquing the community for linguistic mistakes also upholds the belief that there are 'correct' and 'incorrect' forms of the language apart from any reference to mutual intelligibility or functionality (see chapter 3, §2.1.3). This is especially clear in Ḥayyūj's critique of 'misconjugating' weak verbs in speeches and poems. Moreover, the fact that grief at the community's linguistic failures is often expressed in relation to their 'forgetting' or 'losing' the language, which was better known in earlier times, also serves to underscore the idea

that the language is a cultural possession (see chapter 3, §2.1.1), even if the people have not treated it with the value it deserves. Finally, that the complaint tradition served as the catalyst for the composition of grammatical treatises also feeds into other elements of a standard language ideology. In particular, composing a grammar institutionalises and/or serves to maintain the standard canonical language (see chapter 3, §2.1.6). Depending on how the work of grammar is presented in relation to various cultural values—especially with respect to its author and its codicological format—it may also encourage readers to enregister the linguistic features described therein to a particular variety or register (chapter 3, §2.2).

3.0. Blaming Foreign Languages: تَنَبَّطَتْ قراءتهم

With all the 'complaining' of the grammarians about the linguistic deficiencies of the masses—and how they 'forgot' the language—one of their contemporaries might wonder why this happened in the first place. If this was not always the case, what caused the Hebrew linguistic abilities of the masses to decline so precipitously? At least at some point in the history of both grammatical traditions, the influx of foreigners and/or foreign languages are blamed for the decline of proficiency in the standard language among the people. What is particularly interesting in each tradition, however, is how grammarians of different times and/or cultural contexts hold different views on this matter. In some cases, certain societal changes that took place over time might have given rise to such a negative attitude towards foreigners and/or foreign languages. In other cases, different cultural

settings might have led to differing views among contemporaries. In any event, a negative attitude towards foreign languages does not appear to have been a universally held ideology throughout the histories of each tradition. Nevertheless, when it is found, the parallels between its instantiation in the Hebrew and Arabic grammatical traditions are striking.

3.1. Hebrew Grammarians

Blaming foreign languages, especially Aramaic and Arabic, for the decline of proper Hebrew among the people is a common theme among Hebrew grammarians like Saadia and al-Qirqisānī. Other grammarians like Ibn Qurayš, however, have a much more positive view of foreign languages like Aramaic and Arabic and their value for understanding Biblical Hebrew.

3.1.1. Saadia Gaon (882–942 CE)

As we noted in the preceding section (see §2.1.1), Saadia believed that if *al-umma* 'the nation' and its youth would read and study his grammar book, they would become *faṣīḥ* in the Hebrew language; thus, the prophetic verse from Isaiah (32.4) would be fulfilled. The Hebrew text of Isaiah 32.4 reads וּלְבַב נִמְהָרִים יָבִין לָדָעַת וּלְשׁוֹן עִלְּגִים תְּמַהֵר לְדַבֵּר צָחוֹת: 'And the heart of the hasty will understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak *ṣōḥōṯ*'. Although we called attention earlier to the significance of this verse for Saadia's language ideology—especially as it relates to *ṣōḥōṯ* and *faṣāḥa*—we left Saadia's particularly inter-

esting translation choice for the Hebrew word עִלְּגִים *ʿillḡīm* 'stam-
merers' in his *Tafsīr* without further comment; his full translation
of the verse reads as follows (Derenbourg 1896, 47):

וקלוב אלבלדין תפהם אלמערפה̈ ואלסן אלעג̇ם תסרע בכלאם
אלפצאחה̈[77]

> And the hearts of the stupid will understand knowledge
> and the tongues of **foreigners (ʿajam)** will hasten to speak
> *al-faṣāḥa*.

In the Hebrew, the flow of the text is such that those who are to
speak *ṣōḥōṯ* are the very ones who would never be expected to
speak *ṣōḥōṯ*, namely 'stammerers'. This characteristic reversal of
norms is a recurring theme in the prophecies of Isaiah 32. In Saa-
dia's *Tafsīr*, however, the Hebrew word עִלְּגִים *ʿillḡīm* is not ren-
dered as 'stammerers' but rather as אלעג̇ם (العجم ≈) 'foreigners'.
Had Saadia wanted to indicate 'stammerers' more transparently,
he might have used a lexeme like ألكن 'stammerer'.[78] Interest-
ingly, this interpretation is not unique to Saadia, but precisely
what al-Fāsī has in his dictionary entry for עלגים *ʿLGYM* (Skoss
1936–1945, II:399).[79] Both Saadia and al-Fāsī, then, see in this

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[77] ≈ وقلوب البلدين تفهم المعرفة وألسن العجم تسرع بكلام الفصاحة.

[78] Note that, due to his Persian background, Sībawayh himself was
called ألكن 'a stammerer' by ʾAbū Mūsā al-Ḥāmiḍ (d. 918 CE) and أعجم
لا يفصح 'a non-Arab who does not [speak Arabic] eloquently' by al-Farrāʾ
(d. 822/823 CE; Marogy 2010a, 6–7).

[79] It is possible, however, that this interpretation might be influenced
by Isa. 28.11, to which al-Fāsī compares this verse.

verse from Isaiah a contrast between *al-ʿajam* 'foreigners' and those who can speak *faṣāḥa*.

It is worth mentioning here that earlier translation traditions were all consistent in translating the word עלגים *ʿLGYM* as something along the lines of 'stammerers'.[80] Therefore, it seems that Saadia may be reading into this verse something of the wider ideological world that he is a part of in which foreigners, rather than mere 'stammerers', are considered the opposite of one who speaks *faṣāḥa*. Saadia's translation in his *Tafsīr* thus provides us with an example of how language ideology does not just affect the way one understands an abstract concept of language itself, but also how one understands meaning within a language.

The fact that Saadia makes such a strong connection between this prophetic verse (Isa. 32.4) and the outcome of his mission—alongside his poignant translation of *ʿillġīm* as 'foreigners'—ought to raise a number of questions for us. If Saadia's goal was that the *ʿillġīm* 'stammerers' or *ʿajam* 'foreigners' would speak *faṣāḥa*, who were they? Based on the passage from *Sefer Ha-Galuy* in which he connects his mission to this verse (see §2.1.1), it seems that Saadia regarded the Jewish *umma* itself as the *ʿillġīm* who, after studying his grammatical works, would fulfil the prophecy and speak the *faṣāḥa* of the language they had formerly 'forgotten'. If this is the case, how did the nation as a whole lose proficiency in a language they once knew? Moreover, does Saa-

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[80] The Greek LXX has αἱ γλῶσσαι αἱ ψελλίζουσαι 'the stuttering tongues', the Latin Vulgate has *lingua balborum* 'the tongue of stammerers', and the Syriac Peshitta has ܠܥܙܐ ܕܠܛܝܐ 'the tongue of stutterers'.

dia's translation of Isaiah 32.4 in his *Tafsīr* imply that he associated the ineloquent Jewish nation itself with *al-ʿajam* 'foreigners'?

　We may find greater insight into the answers to these questions from the portion of the Arabic introduction to *Sefer Ha-Galuy* immediately preceding the passage (see §2.1.1) in which Saadia references this verse from Isaiah (Harkavy 1891, 154–57; Malter 1913, 493, 498):

> ואמא אלתל[א]ת אבואב אלעאמה פהי שאמלה לגמיע אלכתאב אלאול
> מנהא תעלים אלאמה פציח כלאם אלעבראני לאני ראיתה[א] מד̇ גלבת
> עליהא אללגה אלערביה ואלנבטיה בל אלדני מנהמא אנסוהא לגתהא
> אלפציחה וכלאמהא אלבדיע[81]

> With respect to the three general parts, they comprise the entire book. The first of them is teaching the nation the *faṣīḥ* of the Hebrew idiom (*kalām al-ʿibrānī*), since I perceived it (i.e., the nation) [in such a state] that ever since the Arabic and Nabatean languages, particularly the inferior of the two, had prevailed over it (i.e., the nation), they caused [the nation] to forget their clear language (*lughatahā al-faṣīḥa*) and their wonderful idiom (*kalāmahā al-badīʿ*).

Although we read earlier that Saadia was grieved at the nation's 'forgetting' the language (see §2.1.1), we were left wondering why or how Saadia believed such 'forgetting' came about in the first place. In this passage Saadia makes clear that the forgetting was not merely due to time or neglect but actually caused

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[81] ≈ وأما الثلاث أبواب العامة فهي شاملة لجميع الكتاب الأول منها تعليم الأمة فصيح العبراني لأني رأيتها مذ غلبت عليها اللغة العربية والنبطية بل الدني منهما أنسوها لغتها الفصيحة وكلامها البديع.

by the predominance of foreign languages. According to Saadia, it was Arabic and Aramaic[82] that אנסוהא (≈ أنسوها) '*caused* [the nation] to forget'. From an ideological perspective, blaming foreign languages for the deterioration of the standard language among the people is one way of bolstering group identity and its association with the standard language (see chapter 3, §2.1.2).

On this point, it is worth noting that, even though the people have forgotten their language and are not proficient in it, Saadia can still refer to it as לגתהא אלפציחהֹ (≈ لغتها الفصيحة) '*their* eloquent language' and כלאמהא אלבדיע (≈ كلامها البديع) '*their* wonderful idiom'. Note also how the term כלאם אלעבראני (≈ كلام العبراني) is reminiscent of the term used in the Arabic grammatical tradition to refer to the corpus of the standard (performance) language (see chapter 4, §2.2). All this points strongly to the idea that Biblical Hebrew is a wonderful cultural possession of the people (see chapter 3, §§2.1.1–2.1.3), even if the influx of foreign languages, such as Arabic and Aramaic, has made them forget it.

This assertion about the influence of foreign languages, however, also raises questions about Saadia's view of the linguistic history of Hebrew. We have already established that a phrase like *lugha faṣīḥa* is not just referring to Hebrew in general, but specifically to the Hebrew characteristic of the Bible. Therefore, we may ask a few important questions: If the Jewish community had already forgotten Biblical Hebrew in Saadia's day, what sort

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[82] Malter (1921, 271) argues that 'Nabatean' is referring to Aramaic here. Nabatean referring to Aramaic in Saadia's writings is also acknowledged by Maman (2004, 178).

of competence did he imagine that they had before Arabic and Aramaic caused them to lose it? Further, how widespread had this competence been among the people? Finally, how far back in time do we have to go to find a Jewish nation that exemplified such competence?

While not all of these questions may be answered completely, the beginning of Saadia's *Sefer Ha-Egron* provides a partial answer. As we noted earlier (chapter 4, §1.1.1), after the Arabic introduction, the Hebrew of *Sefer Ha-Egron* begins with a short poetic account of the history of Hebrew from creation. Though the world began with just one holy language, the earth was subsequently split, and each people came to have their own language, with Hebrew belonging to the sons of ʻEber. Saadia continues by explaining that when the people came out of Egypt, God addressed them with דִּבְרֵי צָחוֹת *divrē ṣōḥōṯ* 'eloquent/clear words', which became an inheritance for them throughout their generations. Indeed, Hebrew was the language of their kings as they commanded tasks, the language of the priests and the Levites as they sang songs in the temple, the language of the prophets as they expressed their visions, and the language of the princes as they spoke wisdom.[83]

This golden age of speaking *ṣōḥōṯ* was brought to an end, however, when the Temple was destroyed and the people were exiled to Babylon. It is at this point in Saadia's narrative history

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[83] For Saadia's poetic recounting of the history of Hebrew at the beginning of *Sefer Ha-Egron*, see Harkavy (1891, 52–55).

that we begin to find answers to our questions concerning Saadia's belief about how and when foreign languages brought about the 'forgetting' of Hebrew (Harkavy 1891, 54–55):

בִּשְׁנַת מֵאָה וְאַחַת שָׁנָה לְחַרְבוֹת עִיר־אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַחִלּוֹנוּ לְטוֹשׁ לְשׁוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּלְסַפֵּר בִּלְשׁוֹנוֹת עַמֵּי נֵכַר־הָאָרֶץ שָׁלוֹשׁ שָׁנִים לִפְנֵי מְלֹךְ־מֶלֶךְ לִבְנֵי יָוָן: בִּימֵי נְחַמְיָהוּ הַפֶּחָה וְכָל־מֵתָיו רָאֹה רָאָנוּ מְדַבְּרִים אַשְׁדּוֹדִית וַיִּחַר לוֹ וַיִּגְעַר בָּעָם וַיָּרֶב בֶּם:[84]

In the one hundred and first year after the destruction of the city of our God, we began to abandon the Holy Language and to converse in the languages of the foreign peoples of the land, three years before a king of the Greeks reigned. In the days of Nehemiah the governor and all his men, he plainly beheld us speaking in Ashdodite! He became angry, rebuked the people, and contended with them.

Saadia, of course, is alluding to a particular passage in the biblical book of Nehemiah, in which Nehemiah sees that the people have married foreign wives and rebukes them for it (13.23–25a):

גַּם | בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם רָאִיתִי אֶת־הַיְּהוּדִים הֹשִׁיבוּ נָשִׁים אשדודיות (ק׳ אַשְׁדֳּדִיּוֹת) עמוניות (ק׳ עַמֳּנִיּוֹת) מוֹאֲבִיּוֹת: וּבְנֵיהֶם חֲצִי מְדַבֵּר אַשְׁדּוֹדִית וְאֵינָם מַכִּירִים לְדַבֵּר יְהוּדִית וְכִלְשׁוֹן עַם וָעָם: וָאָרִיב עִמָּם וָאֲקַלְלֵם

Also in those days I saw the Jews who had taken Ashdodite, Ammonite, and Moabite women as wives to live with them. As for their children, half of them speak Ashdodite and do not know how to speak Judahite! And the same

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[84] *bi-šnaṯ mēʾɔ v-ʾaḥaṯ šɔnɔ l-ḥarvōṯ ʿīr ʾɛlōhēnū haḥīlōnū liṭṭɔš lšɔn haq-qodɛš u-lsappēr bi-lšɔnōṯ ʿammē nēḵar hɔ-ʾɔrɛṣ šɔlōš šɔnīm lifnē mlɔḵ mɛlɛḵ li-vnē yɔvɔn. b-īmē nḥamyɔhū hap-pɛḥɔ v-ḵɔl mēṯɔv rɔ̇ʾō rɔ̇ʾɔnū mḏabbrīm ʾašdōḏīṯ vayyiḥar bɔ-ʿɔm vayyɔ̇rɛv bɔm.*

goes for the languages of the other peoples [with whom they had intermarried]. So I confronted them and cursed them.

Nehemiah, of course, is dealing with the repatriation of Babylonian Jews back to the Holy Land more than a century after the original exile. After multiple generations in Babylon, the Jewish community there would have learned Aramaic. When they were repatriated to the land of their ancestors over the course of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, their Hebrew ability would have been diminished. In addition to this, some of the Jews—whether those who remained in the Land or the recent repatriates—had intermarried with neighbouring foreign peoples. As a result of such intermarriage with foreigners, Nehemiah perceives that their children were speaking in foreign languages and could no longer understand Hebrew.

For Saadia, then, the Hebrew Bible itself bears witness to the beginning of the deterioration of *kalām al-ʿibrānī*. It began already in Nehemiah's time due to intermarrying with foreigners who did not speak Hebrew. Echoing the rebuke of Nehemiah almost fourteen hundred years later, Saadia blames foreign languages for making the people forget their clear language and wonderful idiom. In Saadia's day, however, he could not blame Ashdodite, Ammonite, or Moabite for the demise of Hebrew. Rather, he lays the charge at the feet of Arabic and Aramaic, which were the native languages of his contemporaries.[85]

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[85] Aramaic might also be mentioned because it was the vernacular of many Jews before the Islamic conquests brought Arabic to the region.

It may be this sort of ideological casting of himself as a 'second Nehemiah' that leads him to associate the community with *al-ʿajam* 'foreigners' in his use of Isaiah 32.4. It is not a literal appellation, but rather a rebuke for being more knowledgeable in foreign tongues than in Hebrew. In the same mould as the biblical account of Nehemiah, Saadia is pained at the encroachment of foreign tongues and the forgetting of Hebrew. Nevertheless, he does not see a bleak future ahead but believes he will be successful in restoring the *faṣīḥ* of Hebrew to the people, even if they have been more like foreigners in their speech ever since the time of Nehemiah. Longing to restore a linguistic competence to the Jewish nation—a competence which has not been around for more than a millennium—Saadia thus comes to the Jewish community of his time with a prophetic word, אלסן אלעגׄם תסרע בכלאם אלפצׄאאחה (ألسن العجم تسرع بكلام الفصاحة ≈) 'the tongues of foreigners will hasten to speak eloquence'.

3.1.2. Jacob al-Qirqisānī (first half of 10th c. CE)

A similar ideology regarding foreign languages may also be reflected in a passage from the Karaite scholar al-Qirqisānī's (first half of 10th c. CE) *Kitāb al-anwār wa-l-marāqib* (II.16.2; Nemoy 1939–1945), in which he addresses the issue of whether or not God may be worshipped by different *maḏāhib* 'trends'. He is responding to those who say that اذا جاز أن يتعبد بقراءتين مختلفتين جاز أن يتعبد بمذهبين مختلفين 'if it is permissible for [God] to be worshipped by two reading traditions, it is permissible for him to be worshipped by two trends'.

Rather than affirm that multiple Biblical Hebrew reading traditions are legitimate, he takes the stance that only one reading tradition—the Tiberian reading tradition, localised in Palestine and referred to as قراءة الشأمي 'the Palestinian/Levantine reading'—is correct and permissible for true worship (Khan 1990). In his effort to 'delegitimise' other non-Tiberian reading traditions, he writes the following (II.17.6; Nemoy 1939–1945):

الاُمَّة لمّا طَالَ مَقَامُهَا بالعراق وما وَرَاهَا من مُدُن الجالية تَنَبَّطَتْ قراءتُهُم اذ

كُنَّا نَرَى قراءةَ أهل العراق قريبةً من لغة النبط وكذا أهلُ كل نهايةٍ فإنّا نجد

قراءتَهُم تُقَارب اللغة التى نَشَؤُا فيها مثل أهل الحِجَاز واليَمَن فانهم لا يُقيمون

ﭪ بل يجعلون مَقَامَهَا ﭪ والعلّة فى ذلك نُشُؤُهُم بين العَرَب وآعتيادُهم لِلُغَتِهِم

اذ ليس فى لغة العرب ﭪ... وكذلك أهل إصْفَهَان فانك تجد قراءتَهُم كَأَنَّهَا

ليست بالعبرانيّ وذلك ايضا لأعتيادهم للسان الفَارِسِيّ الذى هو أغْلَظُ أَلْسُن

الفُرْس وَأَشَدُّهَا فضاضةً وكذلك ايضا صار الرُّوم لا يُقيمون القَامِصَة لانها

ليست فى لغة الرُّوميّ... وكثير من يهود العراق الذى نَشَؤُا بين النبط يجعلون

مَقَامَ קדוש קדִיש...

When the nation's stay in Iraq and the cities of the Diaspora community beyond it became long, their reading tradition became 'Nabateanised' (*tanabbaṭat*). For we see that the reading tradition of the people of Iraq was similar to the language of the Nabateans, and so it was with the people of every remote region, so that we find their reading tradition resembling the language in whose environment they grew up. This is the case with the people of the Ḥijāz and Yemen, in that they cannot pronounce *vē* and instead make it like *bē*. The reason for this is the fact that they have grown up among the Arabs and have grown accustomed to their language, since there is no *vē* in the language of the Arabs... and so it is with the people of Iṣfahān,

such that you find their reading tradition as if it is not He-
brew. This also is due to the fact that they have grown ac-
customed to the Persian language, which is the most error-
ridden language of the Persians and the most severely frag-
mented. So also the Byzantines have come to no longer
pronounce the *qameṣ* because it is not in the Byzantine lan-
guage... and many of the Jews of Iraq who grew up among
the Nabateans make *qɔ̄ḏōš* into *qɔ̄ḏēš*...

Much of the philology in this passage is not so different
from the findings of modern scholars regarding the various read-
ing traditions of Biblical Hebrew in the Middle Ages. Indeed, the
phonological inventory of a particular reading tradition generally
comes to resemble that of the vernacular (Morag 1958). In this
way, al-Qirqisānī's philological analysis is relatively sound, in-
cluding the examples he proffers, such as /v/ shifting to [b] due
to the absence of [v] in Arabic.[86]

What is noteworthy here, however, is the standard lan-
guage ideology underlying the comparison. The reading tradition
of أهل الشأم 'the Palestinians' is the measuring stick against which
all other traditions are compared. Where there is divergence, it
is the other traditions that are blamed for admitting vernacular
influence—not the 'Palestinian' one. Surely changes could not
have come about in 'the Land'. Rather, they are the result of the
influence of foreign languages like Aramaic, Arabic, Persian, or
Greek on the reading traditions of Diaspora communities. This

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[86] Note that some modern Yemenite reading traditions of Biblical He-
brew realise *bet rafa* as [b]. In Aden, for example, the word שֶׁבַע *ševaʿ*
'seven' is pronounced as [ˈʃabaʕ] (Ya'akov 2015, 25).

ideological preference for the reading tradition of أهل الشأم ‘the Palestinians’ (i.e., the Tiberian vocalisation) is based at least in part on their geographical presence in ‘the Land’ (Khan 1990, 65–66).

Al-Qirqisānī’s preferential treatment of ‘the Land’ is made quite clear in his discussion regarding the logical impossibility that God could have spoken to the sons of Israel in two different traditions (II.17.5; Nemoy 1939–1945):

وهو انه لا يخلو ان يكون خاطبهم بذلك بِلُغَة الشأميّ او بلُغَة العراقيّ فَأَيُّهُمَا كان فهى واحدةٌ لا محالة ولا يجوز ان يقال انه خاطبهم بلُغَة العراق لان ذلك يُوجب ان يكون بنو إسرائيل وهم فى الأرض قد غَيَّرُوا القراءة وبدّلوها وذلك مُحَال اذ كانت الناقلة للقراءة من أهل الشأم على هذا نقلوها وكذلك الرُّوم وأهل المَغْرِب الذى هم جاليةُ البيت الثانى قراءتُهُم هى الشأميّ فان قالوا فان كان هذا فيجب ان يكون أهل العراق قد غيّروا وبدّلوا

So God would have had to have spoken to them thus, whether in the language of the Palestinians or in the language of the Iraqis. Whichever of the two it was would thus undoubtedly be the only [correct tradition]. It cannot be said, however, that [God] spoke to them in the language of Iraq since this would imply that the Israelites, while [remaining] in the Land, changed the reading tradition and altered it. Such would be impossible, since the transmission of the reading was done by the Palestinians (i.e., Tiberians) and this is the way they passed it down. This is also the case with the Byzantines and the Moroccans, who are [the descendants of] the exiles of [the period of the destruction of] the Second Temple, whose reading is the Palestinian one. With this being the case, it is therefore the Iraqis who must have changed and altered [the reading].

For al-Qirqisānī, there is just one correct form of the language, which must be tied to the tradents who remained in the Land. The fact that the Land of Israel confers authority, at least in part, to the reading tradition of its inhabitants may reflect something of the tendency for standard language ideologies to associate the 'single uniform language' with group identity (see chapter 3, §2.1.2). While all other reading traditions were corrupted to some extent by the influence of foreign languages, the 'Palestinian' tradition associated with the Land was faithfully transmitted so as to preserve the pure and correct Hebrew.

We should note here, however, that al-Qirqisānī's own philological analysis is biased due to his language ideology. While he is not wrong about the influence of vernacular speech on various reading traditions, he seems to think that no such influence was exerted on the Tiberian tradition. Nevertheless, there are a number of phonological elements of Tiberian that are likely the result of language contact. Note how the shift of original *waw* = /w/ → *vav* = /v/ in an ancestor of Tiberian is itself probably a contact-induced change based on proximity to Greek and Aramaic (Khan and Kantor 2022).

3.1.3. Yehudah ibn Qurayš (ca late 9th/10th c. CE)

Before concluding this section, however, it is worth noting that, even though both Saadia and al-Qirqisānī blame inferior Hebrew on the prevalence of foreign languages, this thought is not echoed across the Hebrew grammatical tradition. Yehudah ibn Qurayš (ca late 9th/10th c. CE), for example, an Algerian lexicographer and one of the earliest comparative Semitic philologists, exhibits

a much more favourable view of Arabic and Aramaic in his letter to the Jews in Fās.

Rather than tell the people that Arabic and Aramaic are responsible for the decline of Hebrew, he actually upbraids them for neglecting the Aramaic *Targum* (i.e., translation) of the Bible. According to Ibn Qurayš, the Jews' ancestors, the ancients—he uses the phrase אבאוכם ...אואילכם (≈ آباؤكم ...أوائلكم) 'your people of former times... your fathers'—were not ignorant of its benefit and did not neglect its study. He goes on to say that Aramaic and Arabic are actually necessary to understand Biblical Hebrew. In most marked contrast to al-Qirqisānī, he even goes so far as to call attention to the fact that the language of the Bible itself has Aramaic and Arabic words mixed in with it (Becker 1984, 116–17):

> גמיע לשון קדש אלחאצל פי אלמקרא קד אנתתֿרת פיה אלפאט סריאניה
> ואכתלטת בה לגה ערביה ותשדֿרת פיה חרוף עגמיה וברבריה ולא סימא אלערביה
> כֿאצה פאן פיהא כתיר מן גֿריב אלפאטֿהא וגֿדנאה עבראניא מחצֿא חתי לא יכון
> בין אלעבראני ואלערבי פי דֿלך מן אלאכתלאף אלא מא בין אבתדֿאל אלצֿאד
> ואלצֿאד ואלגימל ואלגֿים ואלטת ואלטֿא ואלעין ואלעֿין ואלחֿא ואלבֿא ואלזֿאי
> ואלדֿאל...[87]

> All 'the Holy Language' which occurs in the Bible has Aramaic words scattered within it, Arabic language mixed in

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[87] ≈ لغة به واختلطت سريانية ألفاظ فيه انتثرت قد المقرأ الحاصل في קדש לשון جميع عربية وتشذرت فيه حروف عجمية وبربرية ولا سيما العربية خاصة فإن فيها كثير من غريب ألفاظها وجدناه عبرانيا محضا حتى لا يكون بين العبراني والعربي في ذلك من الاختلاف إلا ما بين ابتدال ال-צֿאד والضاد وال-גימל والجيم وال-טת والظاء وال-עין والغين وال-חֿא والخاء وال-זֿאי والذال.

with it, and foreign and Berber forms dispersed within it. This is especially the case with Arabic in particular, for we have found that many of its obscure words are actually pure Hebrew, so that there is not really a difference in such cases between Hebrew and Arabic, provided that you substitute *ṣād* with *ḍād*, *gimel* with *jīm*, *ṭet* with *ẓāʾ*, *ʿayin* with *ghayn*, *ḥāʾ with ḫāʾ*, and *zay* with *ḏāl*...

While al-Qirqisānī focuses on a pure Biblical Hebrew reading tradition, which is negatively influenced by the phonology of foreign languages, Yehudah ibn Qurayš focuses on the benefits that comparative language study can have in unlocking some of the obscure lexicon of the Hebrew Bible. Even if their respective ideologies are not necessarily contradictory—one focuses on the phonology of a reading tradition and the other on comparative lexical work—their vastly different stance towards foreign languages is apparent.

Yehudah ibn Qurayš's more positive view towards foreign languages may be due to the fact that, in his cultural context, Aramaic still enjoyed a relatively significant level of prestige, which it eventually relinquished to Arabic as the latter became more predominant.[88] Even though Aramaic was no longer spoken as an everyday vernacular, scholars like Ibn Qurayš might have viewed Aramaic as a 'cultural possession' similar to Hebrew due to its long historical association with Jewish liturgy and various religious literature. This itself would constitute a significant facet of the grammarians' language ideology.

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[88] For more on the context of Ibn Qurayš, see Becker (1984); Maman (2010); Sasson (2016).

That apparent Aramaic and Arabic loanwords presented some tension for the language ideology of the Hebrew grammarians has been acknowledged by Maman (2004, 21–32). According to Maman (2004, 28), the idea of loanwords from Aramaic and Arabic in Biblical Hebrew is somewhat hazy among the grammarians. In many cases, the Hebrew grammarians appear to walk a fine line between mere השוואה *hašvɔ̄ʾɔ̄* 'comparison' and outright גזרון *gizzɔ̄rōn* 'etymology' (i.e., derivation).

3.2. Comparison with the Arabic Tradition

The phenomenon of blaming the decline of the nation's language ability on the predominance of foreign languages is quite apparent in the Arabic grammatical tradition as well.

3.2.1. al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868/869 CE)

In the continuation of the passage from al-Jāḥiẓ's (d. 868/869 CE) *Al-bayān wa-l-tabyīn* examined in our section on the complaint tradition (§2.2.2), al-Jāḥiẓ specifically blames the decline of the language among the people on the influence of foreigners. When explaining how those with improper speech can sometimes only be understood by others who have been around corrupt speech, he writes the following (1.162; Haroun 1998):

وكيف يكون ذلك كلُّه بياناً، ولولا طولُ مخالطة السامع للعجَم وسماعِهِ
للفاسد من الكلام، لما عَرفَه. ونحن لم نَفهم عنه إلا للنَّقص الذى فينا. وأهلُ
هذه اللُّغةِ وأربابُ هذا البيانِ لا يستدلُّون على معانى هؤلاء بكلامهم كما لا
يعرفون رَطانة الرُّوميّ والصَّقلبى، وإن كان هذا الاسم إنّما يستحقُّونه بأنَّا نَفهم
عنهم كثيراً من حوائجهم. فنحن قد نَفهم بحَمْحَمة الفَرَس كثيراً من حاجاته،

ونفهم بضُغاء السِّنَّور كثيراً من إراداته. وكذلك الكلبُ، والحمار، والصبيُّ
الرّضيع. وإنّما عنى العتّابى إفهامَكَ العربَ حاجتَك على مَجارى كلام العربِ
الفُصَحاء

> But how can all of this be elegant expression (*bayān*)? If
> not for the hearer having spent a long time intermingling
> with foreigners (*al-ʿajam*) and listening to those who are
> corrupt in speech, he would not have known it. As for us,
> we would not have understood what was said except by
> reason of our own deficiency. Experts in this language and
> masters of this elegant expression (*bayān*), on the other
> hand, are unable to infer the meanings of these people in
> their speech, just as they do not understand the gibberish
> of the Byzantine and the 'Slav'. And if they only deserve
> this moniker [of being called 'eloquent'] because we un-
> derstand many of their needs from what they say, then we
> might also [mention the fact that] we can understand
> many of the horse's needs from its neighing, many of the
> cat's wants from its meowing, and thus also the dog, the
> donkey, and the breast-feeding child, [but we would not
> call them eloquent]. What al-ʿAttābī means [with respect
> to his earlier statement that making someone understand
> your need constitutes eloquence] is your ability to make
> the Arabs understand your need according to the manner
> of speech of the eloquent Arabs (*kalām al-ʿarab al-fuṣaḥāʾ*).

In the beginning portion of this passage quoted earlier (§2.2.2),
al-Jāḥiẓ makes the point that eloquent speech is not just about
being understood. He continues to drive this point home here
with a rather extreme analogy, by which he compares the speech
of one who has intermingled with foreigners to the sounds that
animals or infants make. Even if one can understand what they
want from their utterances, this does not mean that their speech

is in any way proper or eloquent. Moreover, those with the purest of speech might not be able to understand them. Communicating with the Arabs is not just about conveying one's needs but doing so in such a way that comports with مجاري كلام العرب الفصحاء 'the manner of speech of the eloquent Arabs', for the most eloquent might only understand the needs of one who speaks eloquently.

Particularly noteworthy here is the fact that ...طول مخالطة للعجم 'a long time intermingling with foreigners' is specifically blamed for the corruption of one's speech. Moreover, the speech of foreigners is referred to as رطانة 'gibberish'. These sentiments appear to be tied up with al-Jāḥiẓ's conception that the Bedouin of the desert—especially those of the distant past—are the locale of pure Arabic. Intermingling with foreigners (or non-pure-Arabic speakers) in urban environments is thus the principal cause of linguistic error (Webb 2016, 299–300).

3.2.2. Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950 CE)

Though not strictly a grammarian, the Islamic philosopher Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950 CE), when discussing the reliability of linguistic data supplied by various sources (i.e., tribes) for grammatical work—namely those not contaminated by *laḥn*—writes the following (text in Qāsim 1976, 56–57; Fajāl 1989, 91–92; analysis and translation in consultation with Suleiman 1999, 22–23; 2003, 51–55; 2011, 6–8; Webb 2016, 311–12):

> فإنه لم يُؤْخَذْ لا مِنْ لَخْم، ولا من جُذام؛ فإنهم كانوا مجاورين لأهل مصر،
> والقِبْطِ، ولا من قُضَاعَة، ولا من غَسَّان، ولا من إياد؛ فإنهم كانوا مجاورين
> لأهل الشام، وأكثرُهم نصارىٰ يقرؤون في صلاتهم بغير العربية، ولا مِنْ تغْلِب

والنَّمِر، فإنهم كانوا بالجزيرة مجاورين لليونانية، ولا من بَكْر؛ لأنهم كانوا
مجاورين للنَبَط والفرس، ولا من عبد القيس؛ لأنهم كانوا سُكان البَحْرَيْنِ،
مخالطين للهند والفرس، ولا مِنْ أَزْد عمان؛ لمخالطتهم للهِنْد والفُرس، ولا
مِنْ أهلِ اليمن أصلًا؛ لمخالطتهم للهند والحبشة، ولولادة الحبشة فيهم،
ولا مِنْ بني حَنيفة وسكان اليمامة، ولا مِنْ ثَقِيف وسكان الطائف؛
لمخالطتهم تجَّار الأمم المقيمين عندهم، ولا مِنْ حاضرة الحجاز؛ لأن
الذين نَقَلُوا اللغة صادفوهم حين ابتدأوا ينقلون لغةَ العرب قد خالطوا غيرَهم
من الأمم، وفسدتْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ. والذي نَقَلَ اللغةَ واللسانَ العربيَّ عن هؤلاء،
وأَثْبَتَهَا في كتاب، وصَيَّرَهَا عِلْمَاً وصناعةً، هم أهلُ الكوفة والبصرةِ فقط، مِنْ
بين أمصار العرب[89]

[Linguistic data] were not taken from Laḫm or Juḏām, be-
cause they neighboured the people of Egypt and the Copts,
nor from Quḍāʿa, Ghassān, or Iyāḍ, because they neigh-
boured the people of Syria, most of whom were Christians
who would recite their prayers in languages other than Ar-
abic, nor from Taghlib and Namir, because they were in
the Peninsula neighbouring Greek, nor from Bakr, because
they neighboured the Nabateans and the Persians, nor
from ʿAbd al-Qays, because they were inhabitants of Bah-
rain and thus intermingled with the Indians and the Per-
sians, nor from Azd of ʿUmān due to their intermingling
with the Indians and the Persians, nor at all from the peo-
ple of Yemen due to their intermingling with the Indians
and the Ethiopians, and because the Ethiopians were born
amongst them, nor from Banū Ḥanīfa or the inhabitants of
Yamāma, nor from Thaqīf or the inhabitants of Ṭāʾif due
to their intermingling with the merchants of the nations

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[89] For a slightly different version of this text, see al-Mawlā et al. (1998,
212).

> who resided among them, nor from the towns of the Ḥijāz,
> because the tradents of the language, when they first began
> to transmit the language of the Arabs (*lughat al-ʿarab*), en-
> countered those who had mixed with those of foreign na-
> tions (*ghayrahum min al-umam*), their languages thus being
> corrupted. Those who transmitted the language (*al-lugha*),
> that is the Arabic language (*al-lisān al-ʿarabī*), from these
> [earlier tradents], codified it, and made it into a branch of
> knowledge (*ʿilm*) and an industry (*ṣināʿa*), are the Kūfans
> and the Baṣrans alone, from among the cities of the Arabs.

This passage seems to reflect a belief that language contact with
foreign influences is the primary cause of *laḥn* in the tribal vari-
eties of Arabic among different speech communities. Those with-
out significant contact with non-Arabic languages were regarded
as the most free from *laḥn*. This negative attitude towards lan-
guage contact also reinforces the value of the Bedouin, who were
isolated from the influence of foreign languages out in the desert
(Suleiman 1999, 22–23; 2003, 51–55; 2011, 6–8). We should also
note here just how similarly this passage reads to that of al-
Qirqisānī, a contemporary of al-Fārābī, in his discussion of the
corruption of Biblical Hebrew reading traditions among commu-
nities outside of Israel (§3.1.2). This similarity is especially strik-
ing in the fact that both of these authors specifically name the
relevant contact languages negatively influencing the language
variety (or reading tradition) of each tribe (or speech commu-
nity).

3.2.3. Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Lughawī (d. 962 CE)

In the previous section on the 'complaint tradition' (see §2.2.1),
we recounted Ibn Sallām's narrative about Abū al-Aswad al-

Duʾalī composing the first grammar of *al-ʿarabiyya* as a result of *kalām al-ʿarab* becoming disturbed due to a preoccupation with the Islamic conquests. Brustad (2016, 154) points out, however, that this story changes somewhat when it is recounted almost a century later in the Arabic grammarian Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Lughawī's (d. 962 CE) *Marātib al-naḥwiyyīn* (Ibrāhīm 1974/2009, 19):

واعلمْ أنّ أولَ ما اختلَّ من كلام العرب فأحوجَ إلى التعلّم الإعرابُ، لأن اللّحْن ظهر في كلام الموالي والمتعربين من عهد النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم؛ فقد روينا أن رجلاً لحن بحضرته فقال: «أرشدوا أخاكم. فقد ضلّ»

And know that the first [element] of *kalām al-ʿarab* that became defective and was thus in greatest need of instruction was *iʿrāb* (i.e., inflectional endings), since grammatical error had appeared in the *kalām* of the *mawālī* and those who had integrated into Arab culture during the time of the prophet, peace of God upon him. And we have reported that when a man committed a grammatical error in his presence, [Muhammad] said, "Guide your brother, for he has erred."

Like Ibn Sallām, Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Lughawī seems to be concerned with the fact that *kalām al-ʿarab* became 'defective'. While both grammarians agree on this point, Brustad (2016, 154) points out that they give different explanations as to why it became defective. While Ibn Sallām cites the advent of Islam and the Islamic conquests as the reason for *kalām al-ʿarab* becoming defective (see §2.2.1), Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Lughawī blames it on the influx of foreign languages. Note that the two groups he blames for the corruption of the language, *al-mawālī* and *al-mutaʿarribūn*, are characteristically 'non-Arab' populations. It is also significant to

note that the feature most characteristically associated with *kalām al-ʿarab*—or at least the lack thereof with its deterioration—is *iʿrāb*.

3.2.4. al-Zubaydī (d. 989 CE)

A similar shift of blame from a preoccupation with the Islamic conquests to an influx of foreigners is also found in al-Zubaydī's (d. 989 CE) account of this story (*Ṭabaqāt al-naḥwiyyīn wa-l-lughawiyyīn*; Ibrāhīm 1973, 22):

> قال : أولُ من وضع العربية أبو الأسود الدؤليّ، جاء إلى زياد بالبصرة، فقال :
> إنى أرى العرب قد خالطت هذه الأعاجم، وتغيّرت ألسنتُهم، أفتأذن لى أن
> أضع للعرب كلاماً يقيمون به كلامهم؟ قال : لا، فجاء رجل إلى زياد، فقال :
> أصلح اللّه الأمير! توفى أبانا وترك بنون. فقال زياد : تُوفى أبانا وترك بنون! ادع
> لى أبا الأسود. فقال : ضع للناس الذى كنت نهيتُك أن تضع لهم

['Āṣim ibn Abī al-Najūd] said: "The first one who codified the *ʿarabiyya* was Abū al-Aswad al-Duʾalī. He came to Ziyād in Baṣra and said, 'For I see that the Arabs have intermingled with these foreigners/non-Arabic speakers (*al-aʿājim*) and their languages have changed. So will you permit me to codify for the Arabs a *kalām* upon which they will base their *kalām*?' He said, 'No.' Then a man came to Ziyād and said, 'May God keep well the governor! Our father (*abānā.ACC*) has died and left behind children (*banūn. NOM*).' Ziyād said, 'Our father (*abānā.ACC*) has died and left behind children (*banūn.NOM*)!? Call for me Abū al-Aswad.' So [after he came, Ziyād] said [to him], 'Compose/codify for the people [the book] that you had intended to compose/codify for them.'"

Once again, we see that in a tenth-century source—in contrast to Ibn Sallām's ninth-century account—intermingling with non-Arabs and foreign languages are blamed for the deterioration of *al-ʿarabiyya*, rather than preoccupation with the Islamic conquests. This may indicate that the ideology that saw foreign languages as responsible for the deterioration of pure Arabic developed over time in the Arabic grammatical tradition.

Also worth noticing here is the specific type of grammatical error exemplified in this fanciful story that al-Zubaydī recounts to make his point. After the governor initially fails to see the need for al-Duʾalī's grammar project, he immediately reverses course when a man comes before him and confuses the nominative and accusative case multiple times in just a four-word announcement of his father's death. This may tie in with the idea that *iʿrāb* and the case inflectional system were regarded as the most characteristic features of *al-ʿarabiyya*.

3.2.5. al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (d. 786/791 CE)

Nevertheless, even if the ideology that *al-ʿarabiyya* became defective due to the influx of non-Arabs and foreign languages was a later development in the tradition, the seeds for the association of foreigners and ineloquence seem to have been around earlier. Note, for example, the explanation that al-Khalīl (d. 786/791 CE) provides for the word *ʿajam* in his dictionary *Kitāb al-ʿayn* (1.237; al-Makhzūmī and al-Sāmarrāʾī 1989):

العَجَمُ: ضِدُّ العَرَب. ورجلٌ أعجميّ : ليس بعربيّ وقوم عجم وعرب والأعجم:
الذي لا يُفْصِحُ

Al-ʿajam: the opposite of Arabs (ʿarab). And an *aʿjamī* man:
not an Arab (ʿarabī). And a group (i.e., plural): ʿajam and
Arabs (ʿarab). And *al-aʿjam*: one who does not speak elo-
quently (lā yufṣiḥu).

We should first of all note that there may be some morpho-
semantic differences between the terms *ʿajam* and *aʿjam*. Note,
for example, that in the later lexicographer al-Azharī's (d. 980
CE) *Tahḏīb al-lugha* we find a distinction between ethnic *ʿajamī*
(i.e., 'foreigner') and linguistic *aʿjamī* ('one of improper speech').
According to Webb (2016, 180–81), however, this reflects a later
conceptualistion concomitant with a shift in thought from seeing
ʿarab as a primarily linguistic term to a primarily ethnic term. In
fact, in the context here, both *ʿajam* and *aʿjamī* are set up as the
opposite of *ʿarab*. This would seem to point to at least some con-
trast between *al-ʿajam* 'non-Arabic speakers → foreigners' and *al-
faṣāḥa* 'eloquence' in the Arabic grammatical tradition. At the
same time, however, we do not want to flatten diachronic devel-
opment within the Arabic lexical tradition. If at an early period,
like that of al-Khalīl, the term *ʿarab* referred merely to a linguistic
community—i.e., speakers of (pure) Arabic—rather than an eth-
nic one (Webb 2016, 178–79), then the opposition with *ʿajam* is
not as ethnically charged. This lexical entry would only be con-
trasting speakers of pure Arabic with those who do not speak
clearly.

It is only when reading lexical entries like this through the
lens of the later grammarians, during whose time *ʿarab* was

clearly an ethnic term (Webb 2016, 178), that this opposition has such strong ethnic connotations. Nevertheless, reading earlier grammatical texts—or interacting with earlier grammatical and cultural traditions—through the lens of later grammarians is perhaps precisely how the ideology we are considering developed in the first place. If the terms *ʿarab* and *ʿajam* were originally more linguistically based, then re-reading such lexical entries in later centuries, after these terms had become more ethnically connoted, would indeed have resulted in a contrast between *al-ʿajam* 'foreigners' and *al-faṣāḥa* 'eloquence'. If such is the case, it is not hard to imagine how this single example could represent a microcosm of a wider societal shift.

3.3. Analysis

As we demonstrated in the preceding section, in both the Hebrew and Arabic grammatical traditions, the emergence of grammar is couched within the context of the complaint tradition (see §2.0). It is witnessing the linguistic ineptitude of the masses that moves the grammarians to compose their grammatical works.

Over time, however, this complaint tradition regarding the deterioration of 'pure' language among the masses takes on other aspects. In particular, foreign languages and/or the influx of foreigners are blamed for the neglect of the standard language. In the case of Saadia, deterioration of pure Hebrew is the result of the prevalence of Aramaic and Arabic. For him, this problem goes as far back as the time of Nehemiah, in whose mould he casts himself as one passionate for the purity of the language coming

to restore eloquence to the nation. Al-Qirqisānī similarly delegit-
imises non-'Palestinian' (i.e., non-Tiberian) reading traditions
due to their being influenced by the vernacular languages of their
tradents, naming specific examples of negative language contact.
In the Arabic tradition, Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Lughawī sees grammar
emerging after linguistic error began to appear in the speech of
non-Arabs, namely the *mawālī* and those who had integrated into
Arab culture. Al-Zubaydī likewise recounts how the language
changed as a result of intermingling with foreigners; this prompted
al-Duʾalī to first codify the grammar of the language. Others, like
al-Jāḥiẓ and al-Fārābī, blame the corruption of pure Arabic on
language contact with foreigners. The passage cited from al-
Fārābī, in particular, exhibits striking similarity with that of al-
Qirqisānī, his contemporary, in that various contact languages,
which he specifically and extensively lists, are decried for their
negative influence.

From a linguistic ideological perspective, a negative atti-
tude towards foreign languages and their influence can serve to
buttress associations between the standard canonical language
and group identity (see chapter 3, §2.1.2). This may even be re-
flected in the dictionary entries of al-Fāsī in the Hebrew gram-
matical tradition and al-Khalīl in the Arabic grammatical tradi-
tion, who appear to cast foreigners as the opposite of eloquent
users of the language.

For some of the grammarians, historicisation also becomes
a major component of this attitude towards foreign languages. As
we noted above, standard language cultures often regard only the
canonical form as having a substantial, continuous, pure, and

thus authoritative history. Variant forms of the language must thus be regarded as substandard degenerate forms. In many cases, foreign language influence is seen as a major contributing factor to such degeneracy (see chapter 3, §2.1.2). This ideological framework appears to cohere with al-Qirqisānī's perception of reading traditions that developed outside of Palestine and al-Fārābī's perception of Arabic varieties that developed outside of an isolated (from foreign influence) context. In Saadia, historicisation goes even further, so that it is not only the standard language that is given a long and ancient history, but the negative influence of foreign languages as well. In this way, he even historicises the conflict with foreign languages itself and thus also his role as restorer in the face of such a linguistic crisis.

It is curious, however, that blaming foreign languages for the deterioration of the standard language is not evidenced at all times and in all places in each of the traditions. In the earliest sources of the Arabic tradition, such as Ibn Sallām (d. 845/846 CE), foreign languages are not necessarily blamed for the deterioration of the standard language. On the other hand, in later ninth- and tenth-century sources, such as al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868/869 CE), al-Fārābī (d. 950 CE), Abū al-Ṭayyib (d. 962 CE), and al-Zubaydī (d. 989 CE), the lack of eloquence of the people is blamed on the influence of foreign languages and/or the influx of foreigners.

In the Hebrew grammatical tradition, chronology seems to be less significant, since contemporaries may hold differing views. While Saadia (d. 942 CE) and al-Qirqisānī (first half of 10th c. CE) exhibit negative attitudes towards foreign languages

and their influence on Hebrew, Ibn Qurayš (d. 10th c. CE) ex-
presses a more positive opinion regarding their usefulness for bib-
lical study. The reason for Ibn Qurayš's distinctly positive view
on foreign languages as opposed to his contemporaries is not im-
mediately obvious. It may be that Aramaic was viewed as more
of a 'cultural possession' for Ibn Qurayš. Saadia and al-Qirqisānī,
on the other hand, might have been more exposed in their (cul-
tural, societal, geographical, etc.) contexts to the Arabic gram-
marians—and thus more subjected to the influence of their stand-
ard language ideology. In any case, while it lies beyond the scope
of the present work to fully account for the different attitude of
Ibn Qurayš,[90] we may nevertheless highlight the fact that the ide-
ology regarding foreign languages reflected in Saadia and al-
Qirqisānī exhibits close parallels with that of the Arabic gram-
marians.

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[90] A linguistic-anthropological treatment of Ibn Qurayš that is sensitive
to language ideology in his context is a *desideratum* for future research.