

MEDIAL DEICTIC DEMONSTRATIVES IN ARABIC: FACT OR FALLACY

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Abstract

This paper investigates two different views concerning the number of deictic degrees of demonstratives in Classical Arabic (CA) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). The first view claims that CA has a medial category of demonstratives in addition to proximals and distals; the second view postulates that there are only proximals and distals in CA. The study examines the dialectal origin of singular and dual CA demonstratives based on writings of ancient grammarians in addition to investigating the Semitic origin of these demonstratives. It is argued that the demonstrative system in CA is the result of a combination of two dialectal demonstrative systems: one of these had been used in Old Hijaazi, while the other had been used in Old Tamiimi Arabic. Each of these dialects had only proximals and distals but no medials. Demonstratives in these dialects had dissimilar forms for distals. Hijaazi distals had two suffixes attached to the proximal base, while Tamiimi ones had one suffix only. The presence of these different forms led grammarians representing the first view to the fallacy that demonstratives with one suffix are medials, while those with two suffixes are distals. However, the supposed medials are in fact the distals that were used in Old Tamiimi; their distance value is the same as that of Old Hijaazi distals.

Keywords: Deictic demonstrative degrees; Medial demonstratives; Classical Arabic; Spoken Old Arabic; Semitic.

1. Introduction and background¹

Demonstratives belong to spatial deixis, since they usually encode the location or distance of an entity in relation to interlocutors². The demonstrative system in many languages consists of two types of terms: proximals and distals (Diessel 1999: 38); examples here include languages like English and French. The literature on deictic demonstratives is also abundant with examples on languages that have a tripartite system of demonstratives (usually proximal, medial, and distal) or more (see Anderson and Keenan 1985: 282; Diessel 1999: 39-41; Dixon 2003: 90-91).

As regards Arabic, there are two different views concerning the number of distance categories within the demonstrative system of CA and MSA. In the first view, this system is tripartite, since it consists of proximals, medials, and distals; the

¹ I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to the editor and the four anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions. Special thanks also go to Ann Verhaert.

² Generally, deixis is reference to any of the elements of the context of an utterance (see Lyons 1977; Levinson 2006). Focus in this paper is on deictic demonstratives; these are used to refer to objects, people, or other entities in the real world of interactants. For further information on the different uses of demonstratives, see Lyons (1977) and Levinson (2006).

traditional example provided by grammarians representing this view is that the demonstrative /*ḍaaka*/ ‘Sg. M’ is a medial, while /*ḍaalika*/ ‘Sg. M’ is a distal in contrast to the proximal base /*ḍaa*/ ‘this-Sg. M.’³. In the second view, grammarians believe that CA has two degrees of deictic demonstratives represented by proximals and distals only.

The hypothesis in this paper is that CA distals and the supposed CA medials came into CA from two different Old Arabic dialectal demonstrative systems, where they had the same deictic degree; the only difference between the two systems relates to morphological form rather than to pragmatic function. It is believed here that an investigation of the dialectal sources and Semitic origins of CA demonstratives can solve the controversy and show whether medial demonstratives have ever existed or whether they are the result of a fallacy erroneously generated by some grammarians in the past.

The major focus of this study, therefore, is to seek answers to the following questions: 1. did medial demonstratives ever exist in Arabic to encode medial distance in contrast to proximal and distal demonstratives? In particular, is it true or is it a fallacy that CA demonstratives suffixed with /-ka/ only, as in /*ḍaaka*/ ‘that-Sg. M’. encode medial deixis, while demonstratives suffixed with both /-li-/ and /-ka/, such as in /*ḍaalika*/ ‘that-Sg. M’. encode distal deixis? 2. what is the cause and origin of the supposed existence of three categories of demonstrative degrees in Arabic? and 3. how can an investigation of the dialectal aspects and the Semitic origin of CA demonstratives help in revealing whether CA medial demonstratives ever existed or not?

1.1. *The literature on distance degrees of CA demonstratives*

Many grammarians of Arabic, representing the first view, believe that the different demonstrative forms for the same proximal base stand for three varying degrees of distance from interactants. For instance, according to Ibn ‘Aqil (d.1367, 1996: 100)⁴, among others:

Close entities are pointed at with demonstratives that have neither /-ka/ nor /-li-/ as in /*ḍaa*/ and /*ḍii*/, entities at middle distance are pointed at with demonstratives that have /-ka/ only as in /*ḍaaka*/, and entities that are distant are pointed at with demonstratives that have both /-ka/ and /-li-/ as in /*ḍaalika*/.

This same belief exists also in accounts by some other grammarians of Arabic such as al-Zamakhshari, (d. 1143, 1999: 177), and Al-‘Akbari, (d. 1219, 2001: 487, vol. I). The account concerning a tripartite system of demonstratives is also taken for granted by modern grammarians of Arabic when it comes to explaining the difference between the two demonstratives /*ḍaalika*/ and /*ḍaaka*/ (see, for instance, Qabbish 1979: 246 and

³ Arabic vowels are transliterated in this paper as short or long represented by the following three pairs: *a-aa*, *u-uu*, and *i-ii*. See Appendix for symbols of Arabic consonants and other conventions used in this paper.

⁴ Within this paper, the name of any of the ‘ancient’ Arab grammarians is followed by the date of his death (d.) when the name is mentioned for the first time, when relevant to the discussion at hand, and in the “References” below. Texts quoted from Arab grammarians have been translated by the author.

Ghalaaiini 1973: 129, vol. I). In addition, the claim that there are three categories of demonstratives in Arabic is established on many internet sites that aim either to provide a general overview of Arabic demonstratives or that attempt to explain the difference in use between demonstratives suffixed with */-li-/* and */-ka/* and ones suffixed with */-ka/* only, specifically */ḍaalika/* and */ḍaaka/*⁵. The idea of the presence of medial deictics in CA can also be found in Western studies of CA demonstratives. For instance, according to Wright (1898: 267), “some Arab grammarians noted a semantic difference between the remote demonstrative with and without *-li*. The form without suffix supposedly refers to the nearer object, while the form with *-li* refers to the more remote one when two objects are compared” (cited in Hasselbach 2007: 9). Indicating the same idea, Huang includes CA with languages like Breton, Czech, Greek, Latin, Spanish, Portuguese, and Welsh that, he claims, all have a “basic tripartite system” of demonstrative degrees (2007: 153).

On the other hand, and representing the second view, there are grammarians of Arabic who point out that demonstratives in CA encode entities in relation to two deictic degrees only: proximal and distal. That is, those grammarians, in contrast to the ones mentioned above, maintain that demonstratives with the suffix */-ka/* only such as */ḍaaka/* are distal rather than medial; well-known among these are al-Farraa’ (d. 822, 2001), al-Ashmuuni (d. 1522, 1993), al-Mubarrad, (d.898, 1963), Ibn Malik, (d.1273, in al-Ashmuuni 1993) in addition to, as cited in al-Ṣoyuūṭii (d.1505, 1975: 260), Sibawayhi (d.793), al-Kisaa’i (d. 805), and al-Suhaili (d. 1185), whose writings are considered authoritative within the field of Arabic grammar. Moreover, in Western studies of CA demonstratives, Fleisch (1979), based on Ibn Malik (d.1273), al-Ṣoyuūṭii (d.1505), and al-Farraa’ (d. 822), can be included in this second view as he points out that “cette répartition tripartite est factice, le fruit de la spéculation grammaticale” (1979: 45)⁶.

In short, grammarians who claim the presence of medials in CA are al-Zamakhshari, (d. 1143), Ibn ‘Aqil (d.1367), Al-‘Akbari, (d. 1219), many modern grammarians of CA and MSA such as Qabbish (1979) and Ghalaaiini (1973), in addition to some Western studies referring to CA demonstratives such as those by Wright (1898) and Huang (2007). Grammarians who believe that CA has only proximal and distal, but no medial, demonstratives are Sibawayhi (d.793), al-Kisaa’i (d. 805), al-Farraa’ (d. 822), al-Mubarrad (d. 898), al-Suhaili (d. 1185), Ibn Malik, (d.1273), and al-Ashmuuni (d. 1522).

1.2. Method of data collection and analysis

An observation of natural spontaneous use of deictic demonstratives in CA is not possible, as this Arabic variety is not spoken anymore (or perhaps has never been used as a spoken variety, see 1.3 below). The same also applies to MSA, which is only used as an official language and in mass media but never in everyday life in Arab countries. Instead, this study depends on the following two methods for the investigation of distance properties of demonstratives in CA: 1. the descriptions and analyses of

⁵ See, for instance, Ziad, <http://www.drmosad.com/index153.htm>

⁶ This study broadly agrees with Fleisch’s (1979) assessment and expands upon his view by 1. investigating the forms of CA demonstratives in greater detail, 2. explaining why the tripartite division is ‘artificial’, and 3. investigating the dialectal and Semitic aspects of CA demonstratives.

demonstratives provided by grammarians of Arabic whose works date from the late eighth century A.D. to the present, and 2. a brief investigation of the Semitic origin of the suffixes /-li-/ and /-ka/ that are attached to some demonstratives in Arabic. Applying these methods led to an analysis of the dialectal aspects of the relevant CA demonstrative forms and the suffixes attached to them in order to investigate the validity of the claim concerning the existence of medials in CA. The next section investigates how some dialectal forms from Old Arabic came to existence in CA.

1.3. *The effect of Old Arabic dialects on the standardization of Arabic*

Many linguists believe that the ‘standardization’ of Arabic started in the late eighth century A.D. (see Holes 2004: 11; Lipinski 2001: 78) by ancient grammarians of Arabic; their sources of ‘correct’ CA were, mainly, (literary) works that represented all forms of “elevated diction” (see Holes 2004: 11; Beeston 1970: 13)⁷. These sources consisted of, mainly, pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry, Quranic verses, in addition to observations by grammarians on the Arabic of their lifetime⁸. This suggests that the form of Arabic used for ‘elevated diction’ was not the everyday language of any Arab tribe as it was the language of poetry and other forms of literature (see Brockelmann 1977a: 42, vol. I⁹; Owens 2006: 38; Rabin 1951: 17; Al-Ḥamad 2004: 91-92). The indication one gets here is that this form of Arabic used for the composition of ‘elevated diction’ had gained the status of a shared ‘standard’ variety in many parts of the Arab Peninsula¹⁰. However, the literary works within these sources of CA were composed and recited by people who naturally spoke dialectal Arabic in their everyday life (Brockelmann 1977b: 29-30¹¹). It is assumed here that the many poets who used this form of Arabic in their poetry also added to it from their own spoken Arabic vernaculars; that is, as a shared literary variety, the form of Arabic used in ‘elevated diction’ never had a distinctive character that was fully independent from the spoken Old Arabic dialects.

The problem, however, is that some of the grammarians in the past, as did many in the modern times, looked at these literary forms as representing the same form of a supposed ‘standard’ or identical form of Arabic. Consequently, some ancient grammarians unknowingly combined features and structures belonging to different Arabic dialects into one framework representing CA¹².

⁷ There has been some controversy and several theories concerning the origins of CA and what it is exactly. Discussing these issues, however, is beyond the scope of this paper (see Owens 2007: 8 on Brockelmann 1908: 23; Fück 1950; and Bellamy 1985; Versteegh 2001: 23-73; Lipinski 2001: 78; Rabin 1951: 17-24).

⁸ I am indebted to one of the anonymous referees for raising the point that pre-Islamic poetry was not the only source for the ‘standardization’ of CA.

⁹ This is a translated Arabic version of Brockelmann’s multi-volume *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur*, originally published in Weimar, Germany during the period 1898–1902.

¹⁰ In addition, according to Versteegh (2001: 46-47), the case system used in the pre-Islamic ‘poetic koine’ “was beyond the reach of the ordinary speakers and could only be acquired by professional poets and their transmitters [...] after a long training.”

¹¹ This is a translated Arabic version of Brockelmann’s two-volume *Grundriss der Vergleichenden Grammatik der Semitischen Sprachen*, published in Berlin during the period 1908–1913.

¹² One of the anonymous referees of this paper pointed out that CA ‘reflects a different stage of Arabic than the pre-Islamic varieties’ and that grammarians of Arabic in the late eighth century ‘took features of various dialects and combined them into one grammatical framework.’ The referee also adds

Nowadays, our best sources about varieties of Old Arabic that were spoken by the different tribes, unlike the literary variety preserved in ancient literary texts, are represented by books of grammarians as early as Sibawayhi (d.793) and al-Farraa' (d. 822). According to Owens (2006: 34):

Arabic is one of the few languages in the world for which a detailed linguistic description exists which is as old as the oldest literary and religious texts of the language. This literature goes back to the eighth century and it details not only minute facets of phonology, morphology and syntax, but also gives interesting data on different linguistic variants. The modern linguist thus meets not only linguistic forms, but also descriptions and interpretations of these forms as developed by the Arabic linguists themselves.

The detailed linguistic explanations and analyses provided by these grammarians have proven to be useful nowadays in helping us to recognize differences between Old Arabic varieties. As Owens (2006: 95) puts it, Sibawayhi and other grammarians were probably “more ready than the population at large to concretize subtle distinctions among competing variants whose origin was not necessarily of a purely linguistic (as opposed to stylistic, sociolinguistic or dialectal) nature.” These grammarians, therefore, would sometimes refer to such varieties when discussing how a word should be/was used, or how it should be/was pronounced, in one or more of the spoken varieties. The two Old Arabic varieties that are mostly referred to by CA grammarians concerning variation in the forms of demonstratives are Old Hijaazi and Old Najdi (sometimes also called Old Tamiimi) Arabic.

1.4. Dialectal features of Old Arabic infiltrating into CA

Geographically, ‘Hijaaz’ normally refers to the western region of the Arab Peninsula (excluding present-day Yemen) stretching from the north of Saudi Arabia to its south. ‘Najd’ refers to the central and eastern region of the Arab Peninsula (excluding present-day Oman)¹³. Several ancient dialects of Arabic, which had common features, had been used within the Hijaaz area; the same applies to the Najd area in the east (Rabin 1951: 1). In general, ancient grammarians mostly referred to the dialects used in Najd as the ‘dialect of the tribe of Tamiim’, while ‘Hijaazi dialect’ had been used to refer to the dialects common within Hijaaz (Rabin 1951: 11). As far as the deictic degrees of demonstratives in CA are concerned, when ancient grammarians of CA discuss these in relation to the ‘dialect of Tamiim’ and the ‘dialect of Hijaaz’, it is assumed that these two expressions are used as cover terms for a good number of dialects (spoken by different tribes) that shared distinctive characteristics within each of the respective labels¹⁴; these two terms are used in this sense in this study.

that CA, which is ‘a fairly artificial product of grammarians’, differs from pre-Islamic Arabic, which is a product of poets.

¹³ According to Prochazca (1988: 5), ‘Hijaaz’ refers to “the mountain range between Jordan and Yemen” in the west of Saudi Arabia, while “[g]eographical Najd refers broadly to central Arabia, and ‘Najdi’ dialects are spoken there. These Najdi dialects, however, are spoken well outside geographical Najd, as far as the Syrian Desert” (1988: 7). In this paper, whenever the terms ‘Hijaazi’ and ‘Tamiimi’ are used, reference is made to the Old varieties of these dialects unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁴ I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers of this paper for raising this point.

As explained below (in section 2), and as far as the sources of CA are concerned, it seems that some features of spoken Tamiimi and Hijaazi Arabic had always, perhaps unconsciously, infiltrated into the poets' and orators' forms of 'elevated diction'. Therefore, different dialectal forms related to any particular lexical item would be sometimes mistakenly considered, by some CA grammarians, as representing different functions of a term rather than as coming from different Old Arabic varieties and as having the same function in actual language use.

2. The dialectal origin of demonstratives in CA

One of the dialectal features that had infiltrated from Old Tamiimi and Hijaazi Arabic into Arabic as used in 'elevated diction', and, in turn, into CA, relates to demonstratives. The following table shows the singular, dual, and plural demonstratives and their different dialectal variants as attested in the writings of CA grammarians investigated in this study¹⁵.

Demonstrative	Description	Meaning
<i>ḍaa/haaḍa</i>	Sg. M	'this'
<i>ḍaaka</i>	Sg. M	'that'
<i>ḍaalika</i>	Sg. M	'that'
<i>haaḍih, ḍih, ḍii, tih, ḍihi, tii, ḍaat, tih, taa</i> ¹⁶	Sg. F	'this'
<i>ḍiika</i>	Sg. F.	'that'
<i>tiika</i>	Sg. F	'that'
<i>taalika</i>	Sg. F	'that'
<i>tiilika</i>	Sg. F	'that'
<i>ḍaani</i>	DI. M	'these two'
<i>ḍaanika</i>	DI. M	'those two'
<i>ḍaannika</i>	D. M	'those two'
<i>taani</i>	DI. F	'these two'
<i>taanika</i>	DI. F	'those two'
<i>taannika</i>	DI. F	'those two'

¹⁵ Demonstratives in CA are distinguished according to gender and number of the entity referred to. Dual demonstratives in CA are inflected for case also; for example, the dual masculine nominative */haaḍaani/* 'these two' becomes */haaḍaini/* in the accusative and genitive (see al-Ṣoyuṭī, d.1505, 1975: 260; Ibn Maṣṣū' d. 1311, 1999: 9-10, vol. V). CA plural demonstratives are not inflected for case and are not differentiated according to gender of referents.

¹⁶ The proximal */ḍii/* 'this' was used in Old Tamiimi Arabic only, while */ḍih/* was used in both Hijaazi and Tamiimi (Sibawayhi, d.793, 1991: 182, vol. IV). Though (to my knowledge) grammarians do not mention which of the other singular feminine proximals belonged to Hijaazi, Tamiimi, or other dialects, it is probable that some of these forms were exclusively used in one dialect but not in the others. Some of these demonstratives still exist in modern Najdi Arabic, which has the feminine singular demonstratives */ḍii/*, */ḍih/*, */haaḍi/*, and */haay/* (see Ingham 1994: 55).

'ula, 'ulaa' ¹⁷	Pl. M/F	'these'
'ulaka, 'ulaa'ika	Pl. M/F	'those'

Table 1: Nominal demonstratives and their variants as attested in CA

On a more specific level, demonstratives in CA cannot be described or classified as if they represented one system. As shown below in Tables 2, 3, and 4, distal demonstratives in Old Hijaazi and Old Tamiimi Arabic were not the same. There had been two distinctive systems of demonstratives in Old Arabic that are related to these two different ancient dialects. The differences between demonstratives in the two spoken varieties are basically related to the type of suffixes attached to the proximal base forms in the two varieties¹⁸.

There were four types of morphemes that were attached to the proximal base of demonstratives in Old Arabic. This feature of Old Arabic demonstratives is a reflection of the dominant behavior of demonstratives within West Semitic languages; in these languages, the “two main demonstrative bases, **ǝV*: as near demonstrative in the singular [...] and **'ul* in the plural [...] could be expanded and semantically modified by several affixes, most of which go back to ancient AA [i.e. Afro-Asiatic] demonstrative elements” (Hasselbach 2007: 24). Table 2 below shows the proximal base forms for demonstratives in Old Hijaazi and Old Tamiimi dialects; most of these were shared by the two varieties.

In Old Arabic, the affixes that were attached to a proximal demonstrative base are the following: /*haa-*/, /*-li-*/, /*-ka-*/, and /*-n-*/¹⁹. /*haa-*/ had no distance-indicating value and seems to have been used “to strengthen the demonstrative notion” (Hasselbach 2007: 17)²⁰. It was prefixed to proximals in the two Old Arabic dialects and functioned as an attention-getter that was employed to attract the addressee’s attention to entities encoded by proximals. This morpheme was optional as it was normal for proximal demonstratives in CA to occur without it.²¹

¹⁷ Plural demonstratives in CA are not discussed in this study for space considerations. It is expected that the argument concerning singular and dual demonstratives in Hijaazi and Tamiimi Arabic, as the focus of this study, will also generally hold for plural demonstratives. For information on plural demonstratives, see Azhari (d. 980, 2001: 29, vol. XV), al-Šoyuūṭī (d.1505, 1975: 260-261), and Rabin (1951: 153-54).

¹⁸ According to Azhari (d. 980, 2001: 26, vol. XV), the base for singular demonstratives in CA is /*ǝ*/; this base becomes /*ǝaa*/ when encoding a masculine entity but /*ǝii*/ or /*ǝih*/ when encoding a feminine entity.

¹⁹ Another type of suffixes that can be added to demonstratives in CA and MSA is represented by attaching second-person pronouns to distal demonstratives. As a result, gender and number of the addressee (in addition to those of the referent) could be indicated when demonstratives are used. These pronouns can be singular, dual, or plural and, of course, they are also either feminine or masculine. Any of these pronouns would be attached to the morpheme /*-ka-*/ at the end of distal demonstratives. It was also acceptable to use demonstratives in CA without indicating gender or number of the addressee (this is the norm in MSA and Spoken Arabic nowadays), since demonstratives were used according to the qualitative properties of the referent only.

²⁰ According to Hasselbach, /*haa-*/ is a very common prefix in West Semitic languages and is “used in Classical Arabic, modern Arabic dialects, and in various forms of Aramaic” (2007: 15).

²¹ This prefix is mandatory in many modern spoken Arabic dialects; its “strengthening function was mostly lost, so that forms with *hā-* become the normative formations” (Hasselbach 2007: 17). However, in some Eastern Arabian dialects such as Hajiri and Dosiri, demonstratives are sometimes used without /*haa-*/ (see Johnstone 1967: 15; Ingham 1994: 55).

2.1. Differences in form between demonstratives in the two Old Arabic dialects

The morphemes /-li-/, /-ka/, and /-n-/ that are attached to the base forms of demonstratives (i.e. proximals) in CA are distance-indicating. Demonstratives in Old Hijaazi differ from those in Old Tamiimi in relation to which of these three morphemes are attached to them. In Hijaazi Arabic, all of these three suffixes were used to indicate distance, while in Tamiimi only /-ka/ was used to indicate the same function. This generated two distinct dialectal systems of demonstratives; one of these belonged to Hijaazi and the other belonged to Tamiimi Arabic. Each of these systems had its own distinct distal demonstratives. That is, differences between distal demonstratives belonging to the same category (e.g. masculine singular), from the two dialects, relate to form only rather than to deictic or semantic function. Since the focus in this paper is on singular and dual demonstratives, differences between these are investigated below in relation to spoken Old Hijaazi and Tamiimi Arabic.

2.1.1. Different forms for singular distal demonstratives

In the case of singular demonstratives used by the tribes of Tamiim, only /-ka/ was suffixed to proximal demonstratives to produce distals, as in /*ḍaa*/ ‘this, M.’ becoming /*ḍaaka*/ ‘that, M.’ and /*taa*/ ‘this, F.’ becoming /*taaka*/ ‘that, F.’. In Old Hijaazi, /-li-/ and /-ka/ were both suffixed to singular proximals to produce singular distals, and so the proximal base /*ḍaa*/ ‘this’ became /*ḍaalika*/ ‘that, M.’, while /*taa*/ ‘this, F.’ became /*taalika*/ ‘that, F.’. Al-Farraa’ (d.822) mentions that the demonstratives /*ḍaalika*/ ‘that, M.’ and /*tiika*/ ‘that, F.’ are used in Quraish (i.e. representing the Hijaazi dialect) Arabic only, while /*ḍaaka*/ ‘that, M.’ and /*tiika*/ ‘that, F.’ are used in Tamiimi Arabic only (2001: 109, vol. I). Similarly, Al-Ashmuuni (d. 1522, 1993) remarks that the suffix “/-ka/ is attached to a demonstrative that does not have /-li-/ in the variety of Tamiim, while it is attached to a demonstrative that has /-li-/ in the variety of Hijaaz” (1993: 171).

In addition, there are other grammarians of Arabic, such as al-Mubarrad (d.898, 1963: 275, vol. 3), al-Jawhari (d.1002, 1990), Azhari (d. 980, 2001), and Ibn-Malik (d.1237, in al-Ashmuuni d. 1522, 1993), who explain differences between Old Arabic demonstratives in relation to two deictic degrees only: close vs. far. Thus, the suffix /-ka/ was shared in the singular distals of the two varieties, while /-li-/, in addition to /-ka/, was suffixed to distals only in Hijaazi, as shown in the following table²²:

Proximal base	Tamiimi distals	Hijaazi distals
<i>ḍaa</i> ‘this, M.’	<i>ḍaaka</i> ‘that, M.’	<i>ḍaalika</i> ‘that, M.’
<i>ḍii</i> ‘this, F.’	<i>ḍiika</i> ‘that, F.’	-
<i>taa</i> ‘this, F.’	<i>taaka</i>	<i>taalika</i> ‘that, F.’
<i>tii</i> ‘this, F.’	<i>tiika</i> ‘that, F.’	<i>tiilika/tilka</i> ‘that, F.’

²² CA is similar to some other West Semitic languages in how distal demonstratives are formed, since the “most basic form of the remote demonstrative, the base of the near demonstrative plus suffix -k(a), is attested in Ge’ez, MSA, Arabic (particularly in modern Arabic dialects)” (Hasselbach 2007: 16). See footnote 27 below for further details.

Table 2: Differences between singular distal demonstratives in Old Hijaazi and Old Tamiimi as regards the type of suffixes attached to their proximal base

Since the proximal base /*ðii*/ did not exist in Hijaazi (Sibawayhi, d.793, 1991: 182, vol. IV), it had no distal degree there. This is why the form /*ðiilika*/ (i.e. with both /-li-/ and /-ka/) does not exist in CA. Consequently, as illustrated in Table 2 above, the two demonstrative systems shared the singular proximals /*ðaa*/, /*taa*/, and /*tii*/ but had different distals. On the other hand, the proximal /*ðii*/ is supposedly exclusively Tamiimi, since it had a distal form with the suffix /-ka/ only but no distal form with both /-li-/ and /-ka/²³.

2.1.2. Different forms for dual distal demonstratives

In addition to differences between Old Hijaazi and Old Tamiimi concerning singular distals, the two varieties also had different distal forms for dual demonstratives. The dual proximal demonstratives had been the same in both varieties; these are /*ðaa*nī/ ‘these two masculine entities’ and /*taa*nī/ ‘these two feminine entities’ (see al-Şoyuūṭī d.1505, 1975: 260). In both varieties, the morpheme /-ka/ is attached to dual proximals to generate dual distals; the morpheme /-li-/ does not appear in dual proximals in any of the two varieties.

However, since distals of singular proximals in Hijaazi were morphologically different from these in Tamiimi, dual distal demonstratives in Hijaazi were also different from Tamiimi ones, as they were suffixed with the morpheme /-n-/ in addition to /-ka/. Al-Farraa’ (d. 822, 2001: 109, vol. I) points to the existence of two dialectal forms for dual distals in Arabic (see also Ibn Manḍuur d. 1311, 1999: 9-10, vol. V). The same idea is expressed in Azhari (d. 980, 2001: 27, vol. XV); he mentions that “speakers of the Arabic variety who add /-li-/ to /*ðaa*ka/ to say /*ðaa*lika/ are the same ones who double the /n/ [in dual distal demonstratives] instead of adding /li/ thus saying /*ðaa*nika/.” The following table shows the different forms for dual distals in Old Hijaazi and Old Tamiimi Arabic:

Proximal base	Tamiimi dual distals	Hijaazi dual distals
<i>ðaa</i> nī ‘these two-M’	<i>ðaa</i> nika ‘those two-M’	<i>ðaa</i> nika ‘those two-M’
<i>taa</i> nī ‘these two-F’	<i>taa</i> nika ‘those two-F’	<i>taa</i> nika ‘those two-F’

Table 3: Differences between Old Hijaazi and Old Tamiimi dual distal demonstratives

As Table 3 illustrates, Tamiimi dual distals were suffixed with /-ka/ only, while Hijaazi ones were suffixed with /-n-/ and /-ka-/. According to Fischer (1987: 275), the doubling of /-n-/ in /*ðaa*nika/ “presumably derives from *ðānlika*, with an irregular regressive assimilation of /l/ to /n/” (cited in Hasselbach 2007: 9)²⁴. The masculine dual proximal

²³ Of all those feminine distals in Table 2, only /(*ha*)*ðiik(a)*/ is used in modern Hijaazi and Tamiimi dialects (see Sieny 1978: 33, and Ingham 1994: 55). Moreover, in the detailed and lengthy studies of modern Hijaazi Arabic by Sieny (1978) and Ingham (1982) and studies of modern Tamiimi Arabic by Ingham (1994), demonstratives have two degrees only: near and far, with no demonstratives at all for medial distance.

²⁴ Fischer’s “*ðānlika*” is the same as /*ðaa*nlika/ in this paper.

/ḏaani/ in Hijaazi becomes */ḏaannika/*, where the second */-n-/* reflects the *//* of the presumably original distance-indicating morpheme */-li-/* found in singular distals in Hijaazi. Therefore, */ḏaannika/* originates from */ḏaanlika/*, where the *//* had been assimilated to the */n/* before it. In dual distals in Old Tamiimi, */-n-/* was not doubled, since the distance-indicating morpheme */-li-/* (i.e. the presumed cause for the doubling of */-n-/* in Hijaazi) was originally never attached to Tamiimi distals.

Consequently, each of the two Old Arabic varieties had its own system for distals in the case of singular and dual demonstratives. Nevertheless, many grammarians of CA, beginning in the twelfth century A.D., believed (see section 1.1. above) that demonstratives to which only */-ka/* is attached are medial demonstratives in contrast to those that had both */-li-/* and */-ka/* or those that had both */-n-/* and */-ka/*.

2.2. Two distinct demonstrative systems taken for one homogenous system

As argued in the previous section, some ancient grammarians of CA, in addition to many modern grammarians of Arabic, mistakenly attributed a medial deictic value to demonstratives suffixed with */-ka/* only²⁵. Tables 2 and 3 (in section 2.1 above) show that demonstratives in Old Hijaazi and Old Tamiimi Arabic had only two deictic categories: one encoding proximal entities and another encoding distal ones. The majority of proximal demonstratives were shared by the two varieties; however, their distal demonstratives were different. This difference relates only to form, since these demonstratives had the same deictic degree. This is explained by al-Ṣoyuṭī (d.1505, 1975: 260) as follows:

Demonstratives without */-ka/* and */-li-/* encode close entities but those with either */-ka/* only or those with both */-ka/* and */-li-/* encode far entities, and this has been approved by Ibn Malik, who said that, according to early grammarians, and this has been related to Sibawayhi, demonstratives are like vocatives, and grammarians all agree that vocatives have two degrees only. Furthermore, al-Farraa' mentioned that the people of Tamiim do not attach */-ka/* together with */-li-/* [to distals], while Hijaazis attach both; therefore, this confirms that demonstratives in the two varieties have only two degrees.

As mentioned above (in section 1.3), during the process of the 'standardization' of CA, grammarians combined many linguistic features from various dialects into the framework of CA. As a result, they erroneously combined Hijaazi distals, which had both */-li-/* and */-ka/*, with Tamiimi distals, which only had */-ka/*, within one single system of demonstratives in CA. It seems that, because they noticed the presence of these two types of demonstrative forms within the same (resulting) system, they supposed that demonstratives with one morpheme added to the base (i.e. Tamiimi ones) were used, principally in 'elevated-diction' and Old Arabic, to encode entities at medial distance from interlocutors. However, as argued in this paper, the medial category of

²⁵ Thus, because they recognized three different forms for some demonstratives, these grammarians supposed that such forms represented three deictic functions encoding proximal, medial, and distal entities.

demonstratives in Arabic did not actually exist in either of the two ancient dialects and so its deictic function in CA is artificial and invalid²⁶.

3. The Semitic origin of distal demonstratives in Old Ḥijaazi and Old Tamiimi Arabic

The issue concerning the presence or absence of the suffix */-li-/* in Old Arabic distals can be traced back to ‘ancient’ morphological developments within the demonstrative system of Semitic in general. Hasselbach (2007), while analyzing the history of prefixes and suffixes attached to demonstratives in Semitic languages like CA, Hebrew, and Aramaic, mentions that the

demonstrative element **l-* goes back to AA [i.e. Afro-Asiatic], where it probably primarily expressed far deixis. In Semitic, it was replaced by other demonstrative elements, notably *-ka* and the anaphoric pronoun, and, in some cases acquired a secondary function denoting a different degree of remote deixis than *-ka*, while, in others it lost its original demonstrative force. (Hasselbach 2007: 22)²⁷

This indicates three possibilities for distal demonstratives in Semitic: *a.* distals in the majority of Semitic languages (or language varieties) were suffixed with */-ka/* only, *b.* in some Semitic languages (or language varieties) the **/l-/* was suffixed to some demonstratives to express “a different degree of remote deixis” (Hasselbach 2007: 22) than that expressed by demonstratives to which only */-ka/* is suffixed, and *c.* in some other languages (or language varieties) the **/l-/* existed alongside */-ka/* in some demonstratives but this **/l-/* did not have any distance-indicating value.

Based on the investigation of demonstratives in section 2 above, the first situation (i.e. *a.*) applies to Old Tamiimi distal demonstratives that are suffixed with the morpheme */-ka/* only. The third situation (i.e. *c.*) applies to Old Ḥijaazi distals, as these have both */-li-/* and */-ka/*. In these demonstratives, the morpheme */-li-/* seems to have no distance-indicating force; there are no demonstratives, in this variety, that have only the morpheme */-ka/* (i.e. without */-li-/*) to indicate distance.

The second situation (i.e. that, in some Semitic languages, the morpheme **/l-/*, as maintained by Hasselbach (2007: 22), “acquired a secondary function denoting a different degree of remote deixis than *-ka*”) is exemplified, by Hasselbach, with only one case. This happens to be from CA and is based on what is mentioned by Wright

²⁶ It is worth mentioning here that, whenever encountered by native speakers of Arabic, the demonstrative */ḍaaka/*, perhaps the most common demonstrative of Old Tamiimi origin in MSA, is never recognized as a medial but rather as a distal.

²⁷ Hasselbach (2007: 1) mentions that a reflex of a basic element **ḍV:* is used in most West-Semitic languages for proximal deixis in the singular, as in, for example, “Hebrew *ze* (ms) < **ḍi*, Biblical Aramaic *dā(ʿ)* and Geʿez *zā* (fs) < **ḍā*, while far deixis is either expressed by a suffix *-k* or the anaphoric pronoun, as in BA [i.e. Biblical Aramaic] *dēk* (ms) and Geʿez *zēku* (ms) from **ḍik(u)*, Hebrew *hū(ʿ)* and Old South Arabian *hʿ/hwʿ* (3ms anaphoric pronoun)” (‘fs’ stands for feminine singular whereas ‘ms’ stands for masculine singular). Besides, Rabin (1951: 153-154) believes that the origin of plural demonstratives in Arabic is the proto-Semitic **/ullai/* (which becomes *ʿuulai/* in early Arabic). This agrees with Hasselbach’s (2007: 1) finding that West-Semitic proximal demonstratives in “the plural are most commonly construed around a base *ʿVI(IV)* as in Hebrew *ʿelle*, Old Aramaic *ʿl*, BA *ʿēlle* and *ʿēl*”; to these we can perhaps add the CA plural demonstratives mentioned in Table 1 above.

(1898: 267) that, according to “some Arab grammarians,” “the pronoun [*ḍaalika*] as opposed to [*ḍaaka*] expresses the more remote object when two objects are compared” (Hasselbach 2007: 21). As I hope to have shown, this latter idea referred to by Wright is an erroneous assumption created by ‘some Arab grammarians’ who believed that the two different forms of masculine singular distals (i.e. /*ḍaaka*/ and /*ḍaalika*/) belonged to the same Arabic variety (i.e. one identical CA variety), and that these forms indicated two different degrees of remoteness, while, in fact, they represented two different dialectal variants for the same distance-indicating function. Moreover, many ancient grammarians, commenting on these two forms, clearly show that the second situation (i.e. *b*) never existed in Arabic, as the two forms merely came from two different Old Arabic varieties (see sections 1.1 and 2.2 above).

Since there are distal demonstratives with the suffix /-*ka*/ only, while there are no distal demonstratives in CA with the suffix /-*li*-/ only, this indicates that /-*ka*/ probably had more force in Proto-Semitic to indicate far deixis than did /-*li*-/ and perhaps this can be cited as one of the reasons why /-*li*-/ “lost its demonstrative force in Semitic when its function was taken over by *-ka*” (Hasselbach 2007: 25). “This implies that the most original Semitic demonstratives should be reconstructed without affixes such as **hā*, *-n*, and *-li*, since these are functional elements that are not original to the demonstrative pronouns” (Hasselbach 2007: 22). Moreover, the suffix /-*li*-/ never occurs alone in demonstratives, as it is always suffixed to demonstratives that already have the suffix /-*ka*/.

Consequently, as far as demonstratives in many Semitic languages are concerned, the “element *-ka* is the only element that consistently has been assigned a function,” since it “regularly marks far deixis in those languages in which it occurs” (Hasselbach 2007: 3). As for Hijaazi Arabic which retained the Proto-Arabic distal forms with both /-*li*-/ and /-*ka*/, it can be assumed that the suffix /-*li*-/, occurring in most Hijaazi distals is “a vestige of an older AA demonstrative element primarily used to mark far deixis” (Hasselbach 2007: 25). This suffix survived as a form with no function in Old Hijaazi probably because “its function was taken over by *-ka*” (Hasselbach 2007: 25)²⁸.

4. Summary of results and conclusion

The historical claim concerning the existence of medial demonstratives in CA and MSA is the result of a fallacy engendered by some grammarians of CA in the twelfth century A.D.; this fallacy is persistently taken over in descriptions of demonstratives by modern grammarians of Arabic. The origin of the fallacy is the fact that these CA grammarians have erroneously combined the two different dialectal demonstrative systems belonging to Old Hijaazi and Old Tamiimi into one (artificial) framework in CA.

The difference between many demonstratives in these two dialects relates to form only, as they (i.e. demonstratives) have the same deictic function. Some of the singular proximal demonstratives are shared by both dialects; however, the fallacy has been caused by the presence of different forms for distal demonstratives in the two

²⁸ There is no claim in this study that Proto-Arabic distals only had both /-*li*-/ and /-*ka*/, since it is possible that the language also had distals with /-*ka*/ only. Investigating the (historical and linguistic) reasons why Old Hijaazi singular distals had both /-*ka*/ and /-*li*-/ and why Tamiimi ones had only /-*ka*/ is beyond the scope of this paper.

dialects. Thus, Hijaazi distal demonstratives are formed by adding two suffixes to the proximal base; these are /-li-/ and /-ka/ in the case of singular demonstratives and /-n-/ and /-ka/ in the case of dual ones. Tamiimi singular and dual distals are formed by adding only /-ka/ to the proximal base of these demonstratives. As a result, when those CA grammarians joined the two dialectal systems of demonstratives into one system, they supposed that demonstratives with one suffix are medials, while those with two suffixes are distals. The origin of the misconception by those grammarians is that they have taken distals belonging to Old Tamiimi as representing the medial category of demonstratives in CA. They have not recognized that these supposed medials are in fact distals that have a deictic value equivalent to the ones they referred to as distals and which, in fact, came from Old Hijaazi Arabic.

These results confirm the hypothesis in this paper that CA distals and the supposed CA medials in fact encode the same deictic distance value and that they differ in morphological form only, as shown in Table 4 below. Each of the two dialectal systems had only two degrees of encoded distance (i.e. proximals and distals) and the supposed third category (i.e. medials) never existed in either.

Proximal base	Tamiimi distals	Hijaazi distals	Description
<i>ḍaa</i>	<i>ḍaaka</i>	<i>ḍaalika</i>	Sg. M.
<i>ḍii</i> (Tamiimi)	<i>ḍiika</i>	-	Sg. F.
<i>taa</i> (Hijaazi)	-	<i>taalika</i>	Sg. F.
<i>tii</i>	<i>tiika</i>	<i>tiilika/tilka</i>	Sg. F.
<i>ḍaani</i> ‘these two’	<i>ḍaanika</i>	<i>ḍaannika</i> ‘those two’	Dl. M.
<i>taani</i> ‘these two’	<i>taanika</i>	<i>taannika</i> ‘those two’	Dl. F.

Table 4: Differences in form between singular and dual distals in addition to some proximals in Old Hijaazi and Old Tamiimi Arabic dialects

As for the Semitic origins of the suffixes /-li-/ and /-ka/ in distal demonstratives in CA, it has been found in this study that, because it “lost its demonstrative force in Semitic” (Hasselbach 2007: 25), the suffix /-li-/ no longer had demonstrative force in a Proto-Arabic demonstrative system, as “this force was taken over by *ka*” (Hasselbach 2007: 25) during an earlier stage. Accordingly, the suffix /-li-/ in Old Hijaazi distals already had no distance-indicating force. This further demonstrates that Old Hijaazi demonstratives with both /-li-/ and /-ka/ had the same distance-indicating properties as the Tamiimi ones that had /-ka/ only. These forms did not express varying deictic values, as mistakenly claimed by some CA grammarians in the past and by many modern grammarians of Arabic. While distals in Old Hijaazi Arabic retained the form but lost the function of the suffix /-li-/, distals in Old Tamiimi Arabic lacked both the form and function of /-li-/. Consequently, CA demonstratives suffixed with /-ka/ only or suffixed with both /-ka/ and /-li-/ encode the same distance value; these deictics reflect different historical stages in the development of Arabic distal demonstratives from Semitic over Proto-Arabic to the various ancient dialects of Arabic; these different forms do not stand for varying degrees of deictic distance that supposedly include medials.

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Appendix

The following two tables provide an explanation of the transliteration symbols and abbreviations used in this paper:

Symbol	Description
/ʔ/	glottal stop
/ð/	voiced interdental fricative
/t̤/	emphatic voiceless alveolar stop
/ħ/	voiceless pharyngeal fricative
/Kh/	voiceless velar fricative

/ʕ/	voiced pharyngeal fricative
/dh/	emphatic voiced interdental fricative
/ḏ/	emphatic voiced dental-alveolar stop
/Gh/	voiced velar fricative
/a/-/aa/	short-long vowel /a/
/i/-/ii/	short-long vowel /i/
/u/-/uu/	short-long vowel /u/
/Q/	voiceless uvular stop
/ṣ/	emphatic voiceless alveolar fricative

Abbreviation	Description
V	Vowel
Sg.	Singular
Dl.	Dual
Pl.	Plural
F.	Feminine
M.	masculine
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
CA	Classical Arabic
BA	Biblical Aramaic
AA	Afro-Asiatic