Semitic Languages (esp. Sudanese Colloquial Arabic [SCA])

Suggested questions to address:

- What kind of unusual morphological properties does the language have?
- How does the morphology interface with the syntax?
  - What kinds of features / meanings are expressed by those morphemes?
  - Is there any evidence for morphological / phonological processes across distinct syntactic words and / or distinct roots?
- How does the morphology interface with the phonology?
  - What kinds of phonological rules are present?
  - To what extent are the proposed phonological rules synchronic (v. diachronic)?
  - Are any of the phonological rules keyed to particular morphemes?
- What kinds of new perspectives on linguistics do you see in this work (perhaps inspired by the language)?
- How do the regular and idiosyncratic interact in this language?

Unusual morphological properties:

Templatic / distributed morphemic system:

"root" of (usually 3) consonants

[for relatively independent evidence that the triconsonantal root is a linguistic reality, see Prunet et al. (2000)]

grammatical / relational information conveyed by vowel pattern

manipulations / "augmentations" of consonantal and vocalic pieces

Also affixes (for subject-verb agreement and pronominal objects; perhaps prefixes for some verb types)

Verbal "measures" in SCA

	Perfect	Ex.	Imperfect	Ex.	
I.	1a2a3	*kasar*	ya12al	*yaksir*	'break'
II.	1a22a3	*kassar*	yi1a22i3	*yikassir*	'smash'
III.	1a:2a3	*ka:tab*	yi1a:2i3	*yika:tib*	'correspond'
IV.	ʔa12a3	*ʔaʕlan*	ya12i3	*yaʕlin*	'announce'
V.	t1a22a3	*ʔitkassar*	yit1a22a3	*yitkassar*	'get smashed'
VI.	t1a:2a3	*ʔitka:tab*	yit1a:2a3	*yitka:tab*	'correspond with'
VII.	n1a2a3	*ʔiŋkasar*	yin1a2i3	*yiŋkasir*	'get broken'
VIII.	1ta2a3	*ʔistalam*	yi1ta2i3	*yistalim*	'receive'
X.	sta12a3	*ʔistafham*	yista12a3	*yistafham*	'inquire'

Meanings of measures:

I: general meaning of root

II: causative / intense / evaluation

III: reciprocal

IV: virtually identical to measure I in SCA

V: reflexive of measure II
VI: reflexive of measure III
VII: reflexive of measure I
VIII: reflexive of measure I, sometimes identical to measure VI
X: reflexive of measure IV or V

These "measures" can be considered to be the conglomeration of at least three individual morphemes—the root (the set of 3 ordered consonants or "radicals"), the manipulation of that root (particularly the gemination or lack thereof of the second radical), and the vowel melody.

Phonological processes across word boundaries:

There are a number of phonological processes that occur more-or-less freely across word boundaries. Here are a few examples:

* The preservation of syllable well-formedness – SCA syllables must have onsets of one and only one consonant. So, for words in isolation that begin with consonant clusters epenthesis must occur (e.g., measures V-X above). However, the epenthesis can be lessened or even eliminated if the word in question follows another word and so can syllabify with it:

/ʃtara/	→	*ʔiʃ.ta.ra*	'he bought'
/kama:l # ʃtara/	→	*ka.ma:.l # iʃ.ta.ra*	'Kamal bought'
/waladu # ʃtara/	→	*wa.la.du # ʃ.ta.ra*	'his son bought'

* The deletion of non-stressed high vowels (when acceptable syllable structure can be maintained) across word boundaries:

ʔuku̲l attamur → *ʔukl attamur*
eat the-dates
'eat the dates'

ʔalkali̲b allakalu → *ʔalkalb allakalu*
the-dog that-ate-it
'the dog that ate it'

ʃugu̲l aħmad → *ʃugl aħmad*
job Ahmad
'Ahmad's job'

* The assimilation of features across word boundaries:

*de:**f***	'guest'
*de:**v** **z**aki*	'Zaki's guest'
*de:**v** **g**a:sim*	'Gasim's guest'

*de:**f** **k**abi:r*	‘an old guest’
*bi**t***	‘daughter/girl’
*bi**d** **b**akri*	‘Bakri’s daughter’
*bi**d** **g**a:sim*	‘Gasim’s daughter’
*kita:**b***	‘book’
*kita:**f** **f**ari:d*	‘Farid’s book’
*kita:**p** **s**a:mja*	‘Samia’s book’
*kita:**b** **z**aki*	‘Zaki’s book’
*bala**d***	‘country’
*bala**t** **f**ari:d*	‘Farid’s country’
*bala**s** **s**a:mja*	‘Samia’s country’
*bala**dʒ** **dʒ**ala:l*	‘Jalal’s country’
*bala**d** **g**a:sim*	‘Gasim’s country’
*sama**k***	‘fish’
*sama**k** **f**ari:d*	‘Farid’s fish’
*sama**g** **z**aki:*	‘Zaki’s fish’
*sama**g** **dʒ**ala:l*	‘Jalal’s fish’
*sama**x** **x**a:lid*	‘Khalid’s fish’
*sama**ɣ** **ɣ**a:li*	‘expensive fish’

Interaction between morphology and phonology

Besides the various types of feature assimilations that occur due to consonants becoming adjacent due to morphological processes, the initial /h/ of some suffixes is deleted when the suffix is attached to a (non-geminate[1]) consonant-final stem:

/*darab+ha*/	→	*da.rá.ba*	‘he hit her’
/*darab+hum*/	→	*da.rá.bum*	‘he hit them (m)’
/*darab+hin*/	→	*da.rá.bin*	‘he hit them (f)’
/*naxal+ha*/	→	*na.xá.la*	‘her palm trees’
/*naxal+hum*/	→	*na.xá.lum*	‘their (m) palm trees’
/*naxal+hin*/	→	*na.xá.lin*	‘their (f) palm trees’
/*kutub+ha*/	→	*ku.tú.ba*	‘her books’
/*kutub+hum*/	→	*ku.tú.bum*	‘their (m) books’
/*kutub+hin*/	→	*ku.tú.bin*	‘their (f) books’

[1] When the final consonant of the stem is geminate, an epenthetic [a] is inserted between the stem and the consonant-initial suffix, preventing deletion of the /h/ (e.g., *ma.sán.na.hum,* ‘their (m) sharpener’).

cf.:

dawa(:)[2] + *ha*	→	*da.wá:.ha*	‘her medicine’
dawa(:) + *hum*	→	*da.wá:.hum*	‘their (m) medicine’
dawa(:) + *hin*	→	*da.wá:.hin*	‘their (f) medicine’
ʔabu(:) + *ha*	→	*ʔa.bú:.ha*	‘her father’
ʔabu(:) + *hum*	→	*ʔa.bú:.hum*	‘their (m) father’
ʔabu(:) + *hin*	→	*ʔa.bú:.hin*	‘their (f) father’

also cf. the following, which show that [h] is not epenthetic:

galam + *ak*	→	*gá.la.mak*	‘your (m sg) pen’
galam + *u*	→	*gá.la.mu*	‘his pen’
dawa(:) + *ak*	→	*da.wá:k*	‘your (m sg) medicine’
dawa(:) + *u*	→	*da.wá:*	‘his medicine’
ʔabu(:) + *ak*	→	*ʔa.bú:k*	‘your (m sg) father’
ʔabu(:) + *u*	→	*ʔa.bú:*	‘his father’

This seems to be limited to inter-morpheme situations, since when one of the radicals is [h] it is not deleted when it comes after another radical (e.g., *ʔa.na # fi.him.ta* → *ʔa.na # f.him.ta*, ‘I understood’; see also the examples of measure X above).

References:

Goldenberg, Gideon. 1994. Principles of Semitic word-structure. In G. Goldenberg and Sh. Raz (eds), *Semitic and Cushitic Studies*. pp.29-64. Reprinted in Goldenberg, Gideon. 1998. *Studies in Semitic Languages*. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University.

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[2] The underlying length of these root-final vowels is not clear. Word-finally (i.e., in unsuffixed cases), they are short. Hamid (1984) comes to the tentative conclusion that these are underlyingly short vowels with a lengthening rule before consonant-initial suffixes (as well as a rule of vowel assimilation to account for such forms as *da.wáa* and *ʔa.búuk* below). However, it is far from clear that this is the correct analysis.