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A Grammar of the Jewish Arabic Dialect of Gabes

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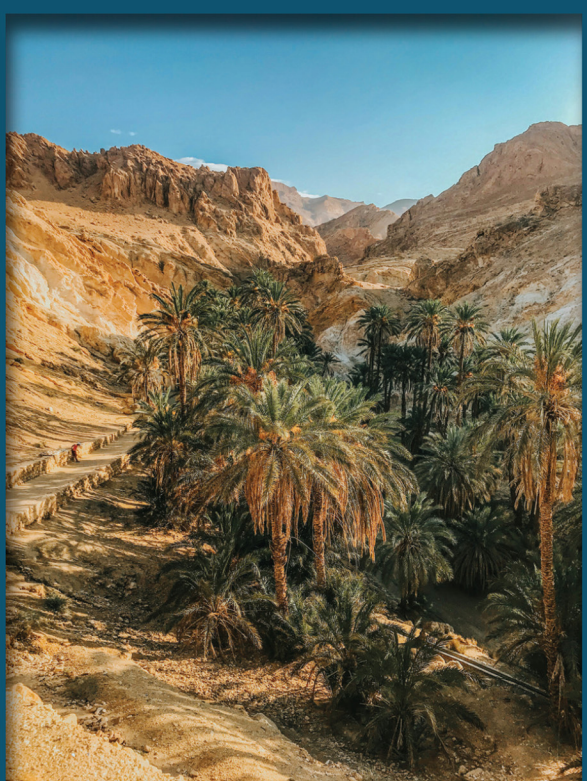

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.0. Historical Background of the Jewish Community of Gabes

Gabes (in the local Jewish dialect pronounced as Gābəš), alongside Tunis and Djerba, was one of the centres of Jewish life in Tunisia. It is hard to establish when exactly the Jews first settled down in this city, since sources about the beginning of the Jewish presence in the region are rather obscure. The Jewish community in Gabes started to prosper after the Muslim conquest in 670 (Saadoun 2006, 11) and significantly increased the number of its members after 1492 when many Jews were forced to leave Spain. The historical documents of the Cairo Genizah constitute an invaluable source of our knowledge of the day-to-day life of the Jewish community of Gabes. Among them are the responsa of the Babylonian Geonim to halakhic questions asked by the Jews of Gabes, which attest to robust trade networks, as well as a wide range of agricultural activities (Ben-Sasson 1982, 278). In the first half of the 20th century, the Jewish population of Tunisia was gradually increasing. According to official statistics, there were 48,436 Jews in Tunisia in 1921, whereas in 1946 this number increased to 70,900, and then rapidly dropped in 1956 to 57,543 (Saadoun 2006, 30). The population of the Jewish community of Gabes exhibits a similar tendency, reaching 3,210 members in 1946, then decreasing to 2,252 in 1956 and falling to its lowest point in 1976 with only 70 members. Currently,

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most of the speakers of Jewish Gabes live in France (Paris, Marseille), and Israel (Ashkelon, Ramle, Netivot, and others).

2.0. Linguistic Features of Jewish Gabes

The Jewish dialect of Gabes can be categorised as a sedentary, urban Maghrebi dialect and, like many other Jewish dialects, it differs in certain ways from Muslim dialects.[1] The linguistic features of this dialect have their origin in the first wave of Arab settlement in this region (7th–10th century), which was subsequently followed by an extensive invasion by the tribes of Banū Sulaym and Banū Hilāl. The latter event brought about a shift from the sedentary rural dialects to dialects of the Bedouin type (Palva 2011). In the present book, following a recently coined terminology, the terms 'pre-Hilālī' and 'first-wave' dialects will be used interchangeably.

The cultural and linguistic legacy of North African Jews faced the threat of disappearance after the foundation of the state of Israel in 1947. After massive migrations to Israel from Arabic countries, Jewish communities were immersed in a Hebrew-speaking environment, where their native Arabic tongue was perceived as second class by the local population and the immigrants alike. The generations born in Israel did not acquire the languages of their parents and grandparents and hence nowadays the only native speakers of Jewish Arabic dialects are people born between the 1930s and 1950s, i.e., those who grew up in an Arabic-speaking environment and whose first language is Arabic. It

[1] Considering the classification coined by Ph. Marçais, Jewish Gabes exhibits several isoglosses characteristic for *parlers citadins* (1957, 221).

is estimated, therefore, that all Jewish Arabic vernaculars will disappear within a generation (except for the Jewish dialect of Djerba, where a Jewish community still exists).

From a typological point of view, the dialect of Gabes shares many features with dialects of Libya, Algeria, and, naturally, other sedentary Tunisian dialects. In this study, therefore, the dialect of Jewish Gabes will be compared with Muslim and Jewish dialects of Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria. The data for the Jewish dialect of Wad-Souf (El-Oued) in eastern Algeria and Jewish Djerba have been collected by the author and are also analysed in the study.[2] The data for Muslim Gabes come primarily from Skik (1969) and from a recording of a male Muslim speaker from Gabes.[3] Due to the lack of sufficient data, the comparative study of the Jewish and Muslim dialects of Gabes is limited to phonology. Nevertheless, as will be demonstrated, phonological features indicate that these dialects are typologically distinct, with the Jewish variety being of a sedentary character, while the Muslim one exhibits numerous Hilālī features.[4] Occasionally, some references are made to Moroccan Arabic, which, however,

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[2] Unless indicated as based on Behnstedt (1998; 1999), my observations of Jewish Djerba are based on my own recordings of 7 informants made in December 2022 in Israel.

[3] The speaker was recorded by Dr Maciej Klimiuk in 2016. I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr Klimiuk for sharing this recording with me.

[4] Indeed, William Marçais classifies the dialect of Gabes as Bedouin (1950, 207).

due to its complexity and distinct character, is beyond the comparative scope of this study. Finally, Classical Arabic serves as comparative material when discussing the historical development of selected forms in Jewish Gabes.

3.0. Previous Research on North African Arabic and its Challenges

In contradistinction to the eastern branch of Arabic (i.e., east of Egypt), North African Arabic is distinguished by a relative dearth of linguistic studies. Due to the vast distances involved and the geographic isolation of many communities, previous research has been mainly focused on large coastal cities, e.g., Algiers (Cohen 1912), Djidjelli (Marçais 1956), Tunis (Muslim Tunis: Singer 1984, Jewish Tunis: Cohen 1975), Jewish Tripoli (Yoda 2005), Benghazi (Benkato 2014), Oran (Guerrero 2015), and Dellys (Souag 2005). Lucienne Saada published a study on the west Tunisian dialect of Tozeur containing an extensive glossary (1984). In addition, Peter Behnstedt has made an important contribution to our knowledge of Tunisian Arabic by publishing two extensive articles on the dialects of Djerba, both the Muslim and Jewish ones (1998 grammar; 1999 texts). In recent years, there have also been some detailed studies of the Bedouin varieties, mostly from Tunisia (Ritt-Benmimoun 2011; 2014). It is worth noting, however, that the aforementioned works deal primarily with phonology and morphology. Syntax, on the other hand, remains heavily understudied. An exception to this rule is found in a detailed description of the syntax of Moroccan Arabic by Caubet (1993).

Modern varieties of spoken Judaeo-Arabic have started to attract significant scholarly attention in recent years. This has given birth to several valuable studies, like those of Bar-Moshe on Baghdadi Arabic (2019), Matsa on Damascene (2019), and Shachmon on Jewish Yemeni (2022), and numerous other books and articles. The Jewish dialects of North African Arabic have also sparked much interest, with most of the publications focusing on Moroccan (e.g., Heath & Bar-Asher 1982; Chetrit 2017; Sibony 2022) and more recently, on Libyan Arabic (D'Anna 2021). General overviews of the Jewish Maghrebi dialects have been offered by Chetrit (2014; 2015). Jewish varieties of Tunisian and particularly of Algerian Arabic, on the other hand, have received much less attention.[5] In fact, since Cohen's (1975) grammar of the Jewish dialect of Tunis, no major grammar of Tunisian Judaeo-Arabic has been published.

The field of spoken Judaeo-Arabic faces limitations due to socio-historical factors. Conducting fully-fledged fieldwork is increasingly difficult, as most of the informants are of advanced age. Moreover, the reliability of data is diminishing because of prolonged contact with the speakers' L2 languages, such as Hebrew or French. Currently, the only Jewish community in the Arab world where robust field research is still feasible is that of

[5] Lucienne Saada published two articles on spoken Tunisian Judaeo-Arabic, specifically the dialect of Sousa (1958) and a short description of the dialect of Djerba (1963). It is important to notice, however, that Behnstedt (1998; 1999), in his study of Djerba Arabic, notices some differences between Saada's data and his own. This highlights the need for more updated and comprehensive fieldwork.

Djerba. As mentioned before, Behnstedt (1998; 1999) has provided a preliminary description of this dialect, but a more extensive and in-depth study is still needed.

The field of North African dialectology suffers from three major defects: lack of sufficient primary data, lack of comparative studies, and lack of syntactic studies. Naturally, the last lacuna stems from the two previous ones, since syntactic phenomena can be ascertained only on the basis of text corpora. In addition, we still do not have a complete picture of the confessional and communal aspects of Maghrebi Arabic, presumably due to the difficulty of reaching both Jewish speakers in Israel, and their Muslim neighbours in their country of origin. On the other hand, the field of Jewish North African dialectology has its own challenges. One of them is undoubtedly a lack of a diachronic approach to both older forms of Judaeo-Arabic and its modern varieties, which currently exist as two separate entities. As a result, the historical development of Jewish Arabic as spoken in the Maghreb has been almost completely neglected in scholarship. Additionally, due to the age of the speakers, the modern varieties of Maghrebi Judaeo-Arabic face imminent extinction. Admirable efforts to document and preserve these dialects, and indeed many other Jewish languages, have been made in recent years by the Mother Tongue Project (Israel, directed by Yehudit Henshke). The final factor hindering thorough research on modern Jewish Arabic is extensive language contact with Hebrew, which causes serious erosion of original linguistic features and contributes to the loss of complexity. A scholar of Jewish North African Arabic therefore has to distinguish which forms and structures constitute the original

layer of the language, and which have emerged under the influence of Israeli Hebrew.

4.0. Languages Spoken in North Africa Prior to the Arrival of Arabs: Historical Background[6]

As mentioned earlier, Jewish Gabes represents one of the so-called 'first-wave' dialects, which emerged at the onset of the Muslim presence in North Africa. The debate regarding the exact start of Jewish settlement in North Africa is yet to be concluded, but even the most stringent historical accounts suggest a Jewish presence in the region as early as the first century CE (Le Bohec 2021, 89).[7] Given the historical depth of these varieties, it is pertinent to provide a brief overview of the languages spoken in the Maghreb before the arrival of Arabs, as they are relevant to the formation of the first Arabic dialects.

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[6] This section is a modified version of a part of my article 'The Development of Sibilant Harmony in Maghrebi Arabic from the Perspective of Language Contact in Pre-Islamic Africa' (Gębski 2023b).

[7] Some historians propose an even earlier dating. N. Slousch (1906) argues that the first Jewish settlements in North Africa were established during the Punic era. Le Bohec (2021, 19) rejects this assumption, calling into question the arguments presented by Slousch and claiming that the first Jews arrived in North Africa after the two Jewish uprisings against the Romans in the first century CE. Regardless of whether Jewish settlement in the Maghreb started before the common era or, as suggested in §4.2, at the beginning of it, Punic could have survived as a vernacular until the first half of the first millennium CE. It therefore seems reasonable to look for potential linguistic traits it could have left in first-wave dialects.

Synchronically, the linguistic landscape of North Africa is relatively homogenous compared to other parts of the Arab world, where Arabic dialects coexist with different language families. For example, in northern Iraq, apart from Arabic, there are spoken numerous varieties of Kurdish (Indo-Iranian) and dialects of Turkish (Turkic) as well as North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects (Semitic; Khan 2018). However, this has not always been the case, and a diachronic study reveals that the linguistic situation in the Maghreb in the seventh century was much more diverse. Apart from different varieties of Berber, African Latin and Neo-Punic are believed to have been used to some extent in the region of present Libya and Tunisia on the eve of the advent of Islam (Adams 2007; Kossmann 2009, 194, 521; Whittaker 2009, 194). Sources about the active usage of these languages are naturally very scarce, and establishing precisely when they ceased to be used is therefore rather difficult. Nevertheless, one should not assume that a lack of textual sources after a certain point in time necessarily implies the complete extinction of a language. It is entirely possible that both African Latin and Neo-Punic went on being spoken in the first decades of the Arab presence in the Maghreb. Although the expansion of Arabic as an official language was undoubtedly rapid, its adoption in rural and remote areas by speakers of Berber, Latin, and Neo-Punic was rather a gradual process. The multi-linguistic reality of pre-Islamic North Africa should therefore not be omitted in the reconstruction of the processes that led to the formation of the present-day Maghrebi dialectal group.

4.1. Berber

Berber is the only family of languages that has remained in permanent contact with Arabic in this region up until the present day. The mutual influences between Arabic and Berber have been the subject of numerous studies (Diem 1979; El Aissati 2006; Kossmann 2013; Souag 2017). As one would expect, the influence of Arabic on Berber is significantly more prominent than that of Berber on Arabic. After the Islamic conquest of the Maghreb, Arabic started functioning as the *lingua franca* of the region, and, as a prestigious language of administration and trade, it naturally triggered contact-induced changes in Berber. Nevertheless, it is plausible to assume that the prolonged contact between the two languages on the one hand, and their genetic proximity (both of them belong to the Afro-Asiatic family) on the other, could also have furnished linguistic developments in Arabic. These two factors should not be omitted in studies on Maghrebi Arabic and Berber, as they could potentially cast light on some of the phenomena that distinguish North African Arabic from its eastern-branch counterparts.

Due to cultural and political reasons, Berber was in the weaker position in the language-contact situation from the get-go. The Arab conquest of the Maghreb led to the spread of Islam in the region, and Arabic naturally became the language of the transmission of Islamic teaching and communication (Chtatou 1997, 103). Thus, the religious and linguistic domination imposed by the Arabs on the region inevitably situated Berber in the position of the recipient, rather than the donor, of linguistic

borrowing. Nevertheless, there are local fluctuations in Arabic that can be attributed to Berber influence.

Investigation of Berber-induced changes in Arabic presents two major obstacles. Firstly, due to the fact that both linguistic families have been in permanent contact for over 1300 years, it is rather difficult to establish whether certain phenomena in Arabic developed under the influence of Berber, or whether they result from internal language development. Moreover, in cases where both families demonstrate some innovations, the direction of the borrowing is very often uncertain. Another factor weakening any diachronic argumentation is that, since both Maghrebi Arabic and Berber are mainly spoken languages and only limited written sources are available, the history of the language contact between them is always burdened with a high level of vagueness. Therefore, scholars tend to disagree on the nature of many borrowings, often presenting contradictory opinions.

There are several studies available on linguistic borrowings from Berber to Arabic, mainly Moroccan Arabic (Chtatou 1997; El Aissati 2011; Aguadé 2018). Although in the case of lexical borrowings and morphological change there is not much dispute between scholars, explanations of phonological peculiarities of Maghrebi Arabic that involve Berber influence are often met by radically different opinions. Aguadé lists several morphosyntactic phenomena in Moroccan and Algerian Arabic where the influence of Berber is evident (Aguadé 2018, 36). This includes *inter alia* a shift in gender of some nouns, e.g., the originally masculine *lḥam* ‘meat’ and *ṣūf* ‘wool’ become feminine since they are femi-

nine in Berber. Certain varieties of Maghrebi Arabic grammaticalise the noun *ṛāṣ* 'head' instead of *nəfs* 'soul' as a reflexive marker. In addition, Aguadé argues that comparative sentences with *ʕal* instead of *mən* are a calque from Berber. Other morphosyntactic developments are more controversial. El Aissati adduces instances of verb serialisation consisting of two verbal forms, in which the first verb loses its inflection. Although the same phenomenon is attested in Berber, several other varieties of spoken Arabic (Egyptian, Lebanese, Iraqi) also employ this strategy (El Aissati 2011). This evidence, therefore, calls into question the idea of Berber influence and points rather to an internal innovation of spoken Arabic.

As has previously been mentioned, the influence of Berber on the phonology of Maghrebi Arabic is less evident, and many cases of language change in North African Arabic fall within the 'grey zone', i.e., their occurrence cannot be unequivocally accounted for by either internal or external factors. This is the case, for instance, with the loss of the glottal stop in Maghrebi Arabic. Chtatou (1997, 107) has argued that the disappearance of [ʔ] in Moroccan Arabic was caused by the lack of a corresponding sound in Berber. This view was criticised by Aguadé (2018, 35), who points out numerous dialects where [ʔ] is retained, and argues that it is rather a matter of internal innovation. Similar controversies surround the development of the Maghrebi Arabic vowel system, which is noticeably reduced in comparison to its eastern counterparts. Although both Chtatou (1997) and El Aissati (2011) point with a high degree of certainty to Berber influence, Kossmann (2013, 173) expresses a more moderate

view. He argues that the present vowel inventory in both Maghrebi Arabic and Berber is a result of innovation and, since we do not have sufficient knowledge of the diachronic development in Berber, it is impossible to establish the starting point of the vowel system reduction.

The examples of language change described above cannot be unequivocally explained either by contact with Berber or by internal innovation of Maghrebi Arabic. Nevertheless, the presence of similar or parallel developments in Berber, considered together with the lack of these phenomena in the eastern branches of Arabic, allows us to tentatively propose that Berber could be what provoked them, or at least not to preclude its role.

4.2. Late Punic

Punic is a term designating a Phoenician language spoken in the western Mediterranean. Following an extensive expansion in the whole basin of the Mediterranean, by the ninth century BCE, the Phoenicians had established a number of colonies with prominent urban centres across North Africa, e.g., Carthage in present-day Tunisia. They had at the same time developed a chain of harbours located on the North-African coast, which facilitated their trade and settlement (Segert 1976, 25). The Phoenician language in North Africa, due to its disconnection from the mainland, soon evolved and developed its distinct features. Our knowledge about vernacular Punic is very limited. We should assume some level of both historical and linguistic discrepancy between the spoken and the written forms of Punic. With regards to the latter, the

available inscriptions attest to a shift that took place in approximately the first century CE whereby the Neo-Punic script was replaced by Latino-Punic, namely Punic written in Latin script.

Did the first Arab warriors and their families settling down in North Africa get to hear Punic? The presence of Punic in the Maghreb is well documented up until the fourth century CE. However, similarly to African Latin, it is unknown when exactly it ceased to be actively used as a vernacular. The main source of our knowledge of Late Punic is inscriptions, whose absence does not imply the extinction of a spoken language. The population that used Punic was not limited only to cities. Numerous words in Punic are of Libyco-Berber provenance and attest to widespread usage of this language also across rural areas, where we should assume some level of bilingualism among both Berbers and native speakers of African Latin. As pointed out by Jongeling (2005, 4), the last attestations of vernacular Punic come from St Augustine, who knew this language himself to some extent. We can infer from his works that Punic was still very much alive in his times, i.e., in the late fourth and early fifth centuries CE. Interestingly, in one of his letters, he makes mention of rural parishes where Punic was the dominant language (Ep. 66.2). The following passage (Ep. 209.3, CSEL 57, 348; Adams 2003, 238) also confirms this assumption:

> *quod ut fieret, aptum loco illi congruumque requirebam, qui et Punica lingua esset instructus, et habebam, de quo cogitabam, paratum presbyterum.*
>
> Fussala, a fortified, settlement of Augustine's diocese, had been a scene of violence between Donatists and Catholics. Because of its distance from Hippo, Augustine decided to

> appoint a bishop for the place. One of the requirements was that he must know Punic, and Augustine had a presbyter who was thus prepared.

This and other passages from Augustine seem to indicate that, although Latin enjoyed the status of prestige language, Punic remained the vernacular of the ordinary people across North Africa (Jongeling 2005, 4). Its extinction, therefore, despite the lack of historical evidence, might have taken place much later, and one cannot exclude the possibility that, in rural areas, some portions of the population shifted directly from Punic to Arabic.[8]

4.3. African Latin

We can assume with a great degree of certainty that, upon the arrival of the first Arab colonisers in North Africa, some sort of Romance language was spoken across the region. There is a debate about whether it was Latin or some other vernacular derived therefrom (Kossmann 2009, 195). Adams presents a number of arguments suggesting that 'African Latin' was a vernacular, possessing phonological and syntactic features that set it apart from Roman Latin (Adams 2007, 259). Indeed, certain indirect attestations, including passages from St Augustine and Statius, imply that African speakers of Latin had different pronunciations, which could be perceived by speakers in Italy (Adams 2007,

[8] Cf. Jongeling (2005, 5): "Based on what we know of the Vandal period and the following Byzantine reconquest, there is no reason to suppose a dramatic decline in Punic culture.… Romanization in the [*sic*] North Africa was but minimal and indigenous culture seems to have continued to flourish under Roman suzerainty."

193). A hint as to how this variety of Latin might have sounded is provided by a passage from Jerome, who tells a story of a student who imitated the manner of speaking of his African teacher (Adams 2007, 269):

> A certain person had an African teacher of grammar at Rome, a most learned man, and [yet] he thought that he was emulating his teacher if he reproduced the hissing of his speech and merely the vices of his pronunciation.

This fragment seems to suggest that the peculiarity of African Latin pronunciation to some extent involved sibilants, as the teacher's speech is described as 'hissing'.

Naturally, the central question in the investigation of the language contact between African Latin and Arabic is whether, and for how long, this variety was in use after the Arab invasion of the Maghreb. Was it replaced rapidly by Arabic, or was the adoption of Arabic rather a gradual process, during which Latin continued to be spoken in provincial and rural areas? Unfortunately, there are no attestations of African Latin being actively used in the sixth or the seventh century CE. This does not mean, however, that it was in that period already extinct. Heath (2002, 3) rightly points out that the same lack of sources for vernacular Latin is true for Europe, where Classical Latin was used as a means of official communication. Indeed, a relatively slow process of conversion of the Romanised communities in the Maghreb from Christianity to Islam probably paralleled the communal shift from African Latin to Arabic (Bulliet 1979). Rushworth (2004, 94) even suggests that African Latin, termed *al-lisan al-latini al-Afariq* by al-Idrisi in the twelfth century CE, was spoken

up until the fourteenth century CE. Another indirect piece of evidence for the prolonged use of African Latin is provided by numerous linguistic traces that this language has left in Arabic itself.

The Latin substrate in North African Arabic has been discussed by several scholars. One of the most vocal supporters of this theory is Heath, who manages to make a strong case regarding Moroccan Arabic by presenting compelling historical arguments (Heath 2002, 2). In the realm of morphology, the Latin influence on Arabic is particularly conspicuous in some northern dialects of Morocco, which adopted the plural morpheme *-əš / -oš* (Colin 1926, 65). As observed by Aguadé (2018, 34), this morpheme can be agglutinated to both Latin loanwords and original Arabic items alike. Another morphological feature that is pointed out by some scholars as a possible Latin influence is a merger of gender marking. As argued by Corriente (2012, 142), in Andalusi Arabic, as well as in some Maghrebi dialects and in Maltese, the distinction between 2FS and 2MS has disappeared, both in personal pronouns and in verbs. This isogloss, according to Corriente, must have emerged due to the Romance substrate. Finally, there is a significant number of lexical items which have been borrowed from Latin into Maghrebi Arabic. Most of the loanwords are related to fauna, flora, and agriculture. There exist numerous studies on this topic and it is therefore superfluous to deal with it here in detail.[9]

[9] For the Romance verbs adopted in the Arabic spoken in Susa, Sfax, and Tunis, see Talmoudi (1986).

As can be inferred from the above paragraph, the Latin/Romance substrate in North African Arabic is most obvious in lexicon and morphology. The fate of phonology, on the other hand, is much more obscure and little is known as to the extent to which the development of vowels and consonants in North Africa was conditioned by Late Latin. Nevertheless, considering the political and cultural influence of the Roman Empire on the entire region of North Africa, as well as the vast proportion of the population using Latin, we cannot exclude the possibility that the receding Latin would have left some sort of traces in the newly adopted Arabic in the realm of phonology also.

5.0. Aims of the Study

The present volume aims to address some of the challenges outlined above. Firstly, one of its major aims is a comprehensive linguistic study of Jewish Gabes from a comparative perspective. To this end, data from both sedentary and rural dialects have been utilised in order to understand better the typological status of the dialect in question and place it within a wider dialectological framework. Secondly, it attempts to cast some light on the historical development of the Jewish varieties of North African Arabic in general, particularly in the field of phonology and syntax of the verb. A special interest has been taken in notions of language contact and substrate. Finally, a significant part of the volume is devoted to the study of syntax from a cross-linguistic, as well as a Semitic, perspective.

6.0. Methodology and Transcription

The data utilised in this study were obtained during several stints of fieldwork undertaken in Israel and in France between December 2018 and March 2022, and comprise recordings of a total running time of 42 hours.[10] The total number of native speakers of Jewish Gabes that participated in the research is eight. Out of four men and four women, seven have completed basic secondary education, while one of them has obtained a higher academic degree.

Table 1: Native speakers of Jewish Gabes participating in the study

Gender	Age when recorded	Location
F	81	Ramle, Israel
F	72	Rehovot, Israel
F	76	Ramle, Israel
F	79	Beer Sheva, Israel
M	81	Marseille, France
M	92	Ashkelon, Israel
M	87	Beer Sheva, Israel
M	70 (?)	Haifa, Israel

My text corpus of Jewish Gabes included in this volume represents the traditional oral culture of the informants, primarily folktales. For practical reasons, some transcriptions could not be included in the corpus. In addition, for the purpose of grammatical clarification, some examples were elicited. When an example quoted in the volume has been excerpted from the corpus, its location is indicated by two numbers: the first marks the number

[10] This includes portions of free speech, as well as elicitations and questionnaires.

of the text, the second one the number of the passage. Otherwise, when no location is indicated, an example has been excerpted from the data not included in the corpus. Other recordings, not included in the appendix, include personal memoirs, dialogues, and narratives about day-to-day life in Gabes.[11] The division of passages has been made according to the natural prosodic pauses applied by the speakers.

In the course of my search for potential informants, I encountered numerous speakers who were introducing Hebrew words and expressions into their Arabic. These speakers were not included in the study due to the high level of contamination of the dialect with Hebrew words, which, in turn, calls into question the reliability of the data obtained from such informants. The genuine Hebrew component in Jewish Gabes, which does not stem from the extensive language contact with Israeli Hebrew but constitutes an integral part of Arabic spoken by Jews, has not been studied due to the lack of sufficient data. In general, the focus of this study is primarily grammatical and not lexical.

The system of transcription used in this volume is mostly phonemic, but some elements of phonetics have been included as well, as explained in the following. The transcription of vowels is generally phonemic, i.e., only the following phonemic vowels are rendered: long vowels: /ī/, /ā/, /ū/, short vowels: /a/, /o/

[11] The transcription of the recordings not included in this volume, together with texts from other undocumented Jewish dialects of Algeria and Tunisia, will hopefully be published in the future in a separate book.

and /ə/. The only exception to this rule is the reflex of the historical short vowels /u/ and /i/, which are retained in certain contexts. Thus, /u/ is preserved in certain verbs, e.g., *yuṣkur* 'to thank', and the determiner *kull* 'all'.[12] In this case, /u/ is not an allophonic realisation of /ə/ conditioned by the consonantal environment, and although short /u/ is not phonemic, it has been transcribed as such in places where it is relevant for linguistic discussion. Similarly, although short /i/ is generally non-phonemic, it is retained in the preposition *fi* when followed by a noun starting with a non-emphatic consonant.[13] It has therefore been transcribed as such. For practical reasons, different qualities of vowels are not represented in the transcription. As a general rule, short vowels are not permitted in open syllables in Jewish Gabes. The long vowels are marked by a macron, while the short ones are unmarked. The final vowels are presumed to be long by default and therefore they are not marked as such. The only exception to this rule is verbal forms and prepositions ending with a vowel followed by a 3MS personal pronoun, in which the final vowel is significantly prolonged, and is therefore marked by a macron, i.e., *qərqru* 'they dragged', *qərqrū* 'they dragged him'; *fi* 'in', *fī* 'in him'. Stress is generally not marked, except for cases where its placement is not obvious. On the other hand, the transcription of the consonants is more phonetic, in order to render some of the characteristic traits of Jewish Gabes. Thus, I strove

[12] Both *kull* and *kəll* variants have been attested. They are transcribed accordingly.

[13] As opposed to a noun starting with an emphatic consonant. In this case, /i/ shifts to /ə/, i.e., *fi-l-bīt* 'in the room', but *fə-ḍ-ḍāṛ* 'in the house'.

to render some secondary processes like emphasis spread. Naturally, it is not feasible to precisely establish the exact range of the spread in every word, and it was therefore marked only in the most explicit cases. In addition, the occasional gemination of final consonants attested in Jewish Gabes has also been marked in transcription, e.g., *ḍṛəḅḅ* < *ḍrəb* 'he hit'. Preverbal particles, the definite article, and the prepositions *lə-* 'to' and *fi-* 'in' are followed by a hyphen. The prepositions that in Classical Arabic are not attached to the noun are written separately.

The table below demonstrates the transcription of Classical Arabic sounds used in this volume:[14]

Table 2: Transcription of Classical Arabic sounds used in this volume

أ	ب	ج	د	ه	و	ز	ح	ط	ي	ك	ل	م	ن
ʔ	b	j	d	h	w	z	ḥ	ṭ	y	k	l	m	n
ص	ع	ف	ض	ق	ر	س	ت	ث	خ	ذ	ظ	غ	ش
ṣ	ʕ	f	ḍ	q	r	s	t	ṯ	x	ḏ	ẓ	ġ	š

7.0. Structure of the Volume

The volume consists of three main sections: phonology (part I), morphology (part II), and syntax (part III). The first two sections follow a traditional grammatical model. Syntax has been approached from historical and cross-linguistic points of view. Chapter 2, on phonology, is broadly divided into two subsections: analysis of the sounds inventory (§§2.0–4.0), and phonotactics

[14] A table containing all the consonants found in Jewish Gabes and used in the transcription of the dialectal words is presented in chapter 2, §2.0 (Table 3).

(§5.0), which includes a description of the syllable structure and the epenthesis patterns. The section on morphology consists of chapter 3, on verbal morphology, and chapter 4, on nominal, including pronominal, morphology. Finally, the section on syntax (chapters 5–7) includes a number of subsections devoted to various syntactic phenomena: definiteness, genitive constructions, grammatical agreement, subordination, expressions of tense and aspect, syntax and pronouns, and sentence typology. The grammar is followed by an appendix containing a corpus of selected folktales that have been quoted in the earlier sections of the volume.

In order to ascertain whether certain linguistic features are unique to Jewish Gabes, a comparison with other North African dialects has been applied throughout the study.