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A Grammar of the Jewish Arabic Dialect of Gabes

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7. SYNTAX OF PRONOUNS

1.0. Demonstrative Pronouns

1.1. Historical Background

Semitic languages utilise a diverse array of demonstrative pronouns, which can be broadly divided into two categories: near and far deixis. According to Hasselbach's (2007) historical reconstruction, the most common morpheme of the former is /ḏV/, which is widespread across almost all branches of Semitic, including Ethiopic, North-West Semitic, and varieties of Arabic.[1] This base has in some languages the variant /zV/, as for example /zə-/ in Geʕez, or /ze/ in Hebrew. Apart from the aforementioned basic morpheme, Semitic features a variety of additional demonstrative elements, which either function as near deictics independently, or are attached to other elements to form a cluster of morphemes. The list of demonstrative elements utilised in Semitic includes, among others: /hā/, /la/, /n/, /t/.[2] The extension

[1] The /ḏV/ base is not attested in East Semitic, which utilises the /an/ base for near deixis instead.

[2] The /t/ element being a demonstrative element has been a matter of dispute among scholars. It occurs in pronouns like Geʕez *zəntu* (MS), Hebrew *zōt* (FS), and Arabic *tilka* (FS). Although, according to Bath (1907, 31), the /t/ element represents a Proto-Semitic demonstrative and originally had three gender-sensitive variants—/tu/ (MS), /ti/ (FS), and /ta/ (neuter)—it is more plausible that, in the case of Geʕez, it derives from the independent pronoun *wəʔətu*, while in the rest of the languages where it occurs, it marks the feminine.

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of the original /ḏV/ element by these other elements is exemplified by Hebrew *hallāze*, Arabic *ʔallāḏi*, Geʕez *zəntu* (Hasselbach 2007, 2). The plural base /ʔVllV/, which also has a shorter version /ʔVl/, can be extended in the same way. One of the most commonly agglutinated morphemes is the /n/ element, which is present, among others, in Geʕez and Aramaic.

The distribution of the far deixis markers is much less diverse and can be broadly divided into three groups. The first utilises the /k/ element, which is attached to the near deixis marker. This strategy is applied, among others, by virtually all Arabic dialects and by Geʕez. On the other hand, languages like Hebrew and Phoenician do not have a separate morpheme for expressing remote deixis and employ anaphoric pronouns instead. Finally, a small number of languages use demonstrative elements that play a part in the formation of near deixis, like /la/ in the Tigre /lohV-/ base, for example (Hasselbach 2007, 7).

It can therefore be assumed that Proto-Semitic had two demonstrative bases, namely /ḏV/ for the singular, and /ʔVl/ for the plural. The optionality of the demonstrative elements other than /ḏV/, alongside the fact that they are usually attached to other elements, points to their later development. Similarly, the /ʔVllV/ form of the plural seems to consist of the original /ʔVl/ base with an attached /lV/ element. The question remains as to what the relationship is between the singular and plural bases, and if their morphological heterogeneity reflects the original state of affairs. Hasselbach (2007, 1–27) has posed this question in her study on the demonstratives in Semitic. Judging from the

oldest textual attestations of demonstratives in Semitic, it is reasonable to assume that the Old Babylonian singular far deictic pronoun *ullûm* contains the Proto-Semitic element /ʔVl/ (Hasselbach 2007, 23). One can therefore not exclude the possibility that this element served to express far deixis at an early stage of Semitic.

1.2. Typological Perspective

Demonstratives, from a cross-linguistic perspective, exhibit an immense diversity and heterogeneity. A few in-depth studies of demonstratives in world's languages are available (Diessel 1999; Bhat 2007). The authors highlight that demonstratives fulfil crucial communicative functions and have multiple pragmatic usages. In addition, Brustad (2000, 113) points to the vital role they play in narratives, where they tend to occur abundantly, and especially in the management of discourse topics. Since my text corpus consists mostly of narratives, analysis thereof should yield a clear and reliable picture of deixis mechanisms in North African Arabic. This section will attempt to outline the main pragmatic functions of demonstratives from a typological perspective and provide solid theoretical underpinnings for further analysis of my data.

To begin with, languages utilise different categories in order to express deixis. The most common deictic criterion is a spatial distinction between near and remote. Bhat (2007, 177) demonstrates that the majority of the world's languages have two-fold spatial categories, although there are some languages in which distinction is based on three or more points. The spatial

reference point of the deixis also exhibits enormous diversity across languages. In most of them, the speaker is the centre of the deictic system; nonetheless, there are languages in which the location of the addressee is reflected by demonstratives as well. Apart from the location of the participants in the speech situation, some languages make deictic distinction between visible–invisible, above–below, inside–outside, etc. (Bhat 2007, 177).

Depending on their syntax, demonstratives can be divided into the following four categories: pronominal, adnominal, adverbial, and identificational (Dissel 1999, 4). While pronominal demonstratives function as independent pronouns substituting for a noun or a noun phrase, adnominal usage cooccurs with a noun. Adverbial demonstratives in Jewish Gabes do not exhibit any variation in terms of inflection or syntax, and will therefore not be covered in this chapter. Similarly, identificational demonstratives, which are applied in order to identify an entity appearing in a speech situation, are of no direct significance for the present analysis.

Apart from the above syntactic classification, demonstratives can also be divided according to their pragmatic functions. In scholarship on demonstratives, the most commonly applied division in this respect is that proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976, 57–76), according to which demonstratives can have either exophoric or endophoric use. The former type of demonstrative is sometimes described as 'pointer', namely, it directs the hearer's attention to entities found in the interlocutors' surroundings. As argued by Diessel (1999, 114), the exophoric use is apparently the basic and the unmarked one, and the other types

derive from it. All other three types are classified collectively under the term ‘endophoric’, since, in contradistinction to the exophoric use, they refer to the internal deixis of the discourse, and not to the entities from the external world. The first type, anaphoric, is utilised in order to track participants previously occurring in the discourse. Anaphoric demonstratives are obligatorily coreferential with the noun they accompany. They are crucial in the narrative, as they navigate the hearer through different layers of the discourse. Similarly, discourse deictic demonstratives, which constitute the second type of endophoric usage, fulfil a language-internal function (Diessel 1999, 101), namely, they refer to propositions expressed in the discourse by indicating a specific aspect of an utterance, like, for example, its truthfulness or falsehood. The last type of endophoric demonstrative is called ‘recognitional’ and is utilised adnominally to activate a specific item of knowledge shared by both participants in the speech situation. In other words, it introduces a piece of information that is discourse new and hearer old.

Another classification of pronouns, particularly useful in the study of discourse, is that of anaphoric and cataphoric. The former type refers to entities already mentioned in the discourse, while the latter points to elements which will occur later in the discourse.

It is important to point out that demonstratives across all the world’s languages present the same tendency towards grammaticalisation. Diessel (2007, 112) argues that the endophoric use of demonstratives can in fact be considered grammaticalised,

since it has evolved from a purely deictic exophoric application towards a functional organisation of the discourse information.

1.3. Pragmatic Analysis of the Data

The data pertaining to demonstrative pronouns in Jewish Gabes have been organised according to the criterion of spatial deixis. This includes near deixis, remote deixis, and the unstressed demonstrative pronoun. The morphology of the demonstratives has been treated in detail in chapter 4, §6.7, so, in what follows, I will limit myself to a description of the main pragmatic functions of the demonstratives in Jewish Gabes and in two neighbouring dialects, Jewish Wad-Souf (Algeria) and Jewish Tripoli, in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the functionality of pronouns in the region.

1.3.1. Syntactic Distribution

Demonstrative pronouns are usually used adnominally; nonetheless, there are some cases of pronominal usage in the text corpus as well. It appears that demonstratives substituting for nominals are applied to a lesser extent in North Africa than in, for example, the Neo-Aramaic dialect of the Christians of Urmi, where they occur in a variety of syntactic positions (Khan 2016, 238).

In various Arabic dialects, a demonstrative can either precede or follow the noun. Brustad (2000, 129) points out that, in Egyptian, demonstratives mandatorily follow the noun they modify, while in Moroccan, Syrian, and Kuwaiti, the post-nominal placement is obligatory only when the noun is in a genitive construction. Apart from these restrictions, the dialects demonstrate

a certain level of variation in terms of the placement of demonstratives, usually motivated by pragmatics. As my data indicates, demonstratives in Jewish Gabes are subject to strict grammatical rules. The proximal demonstrative obligatorily follows the noun, while the distal and the unstressed ones are placed before the noun. This diverges significantly from Moroccan Arabic, where Harrell (1962) does not mention a post-nominal demonstrative construction at all, while Brustad (2000, 129) mentions only a small number of examples occurring in her data. Brustad (2000, 130) proposed a pragmatic explanation of the post-nominal position of the pronoun, pointing out that the pre-nominal position is usually identificatory and deictic, while the post-nominal placement signals an adjectival function. Although my data contains several cases of identificatory pre-nominal demonstratives, there are numerous examples of non-identificatory occurrence as well. This is the case with distal demonstratives, which follow the first mention of a protagonist.

1.3.2. Proximal Demonstratives

Proximal demonstratives fulfil a variety of narrative functions. They modify an item which constitutes the subject of the ongoing discussion:

(1) *u bərša nāš kān yaʕmlu l-ḥāža* ***hādi?***
and a.lot people be.SFX.3MS make.PFX.3PL DEF -thing this
'And many people would do this thing?'

Pronominally, they designate a protagonist of the narrative:

(2) ***hāda*** *dīma* *yži* *yʕāwnu*
this always come.PFX.3MS help.PFX.3MS.him
u *ybīʕu* *əš-šəlha*
and sell.PFX.3PL DEF-stock
'This man always comes to help him sell the stock.' (5:3)

Moreover, they fulfil an identificatory function by narrowing the reference:

(3) *žāt* *bəntu* ***hādi*** *mšəmmya*
come.SFX.3FS daughter.his this name.her
maqṣūfāt *šəbʕa* *šnīn*
rascal seven years
'His daughter came, the one that is called a "seven-year-old rascal".' (7:12)

Similarly, as the following passage demonstrates, proximal demonstratives are utilised as a means of recognition:

(4) *qāllu* *ya* *šəddi* *HE*mélex*HE* ***hādi*** *bənti*
say.SFX.3MS.him VOC master.my king this daughter.my
qāllu *bəntek* ***hādi*** *nḥaḅḅ* *nāxədha*
say.SFX.3MS.him daughter.your this like.PFX.1SG take.PFX.1SG
'He said: your majesty, it is my daughter; he told him: this daughter, I would like to marry her.' (7:41–42)

In terms of the management of discourse topics, proximal demonstratives serve to retrieve an entity that recently appeared in the discourse, and therefore they function anaphorically:

(5) *əl-ʕbəd* ***hāda*** *kān* *mḥayyər*
DEF-man this be.SFX.3MS worried
'This man was worried.' (7:69)

Occasionally, proximal demonstratives can signal a pejorative connotation, expressing a personal disapproval of the speaker. The following passage is at the same time the only example of prenominal occurrence of a proximal demonstrative in my text corpus:

(6) *qāllu* ***hādi*** *l-mṛa* *ənta* *tāxədha?*
say.SFX.3MS.him this DEF-woman you take.PFX.2MS. her
hīya mahbūla qālət ʕaqla fi-ḥẓarha
she crazy say.SFX.3FS mind.her in-knees.her
'Are you going to marry this woman? She is insane, she said that her mind is on her knees.' (7:48)

Finally, near deixis is used by speakers to flag an item as particularly prominent in a certain part of the discourse. The water well appearing in the following example is the scene of a significant portion of the story, and is therefore followed by *hāda*:

(7) *təmma bīr ġārəq yāsər wa l-bīr*
there.is well deep a.lot and DEF -well
hāda *li yədxal fī ymūt*
this REL enter.PFX.3MS in.it die.PFX.3MS
'There was a very deep well and whoever goes in that well dies, does not go out.' (2:57)

1.3.3. Distal Demonstratives

One of the most important functions of far deixis is marking the crucial figures in the discourse. Usually, this technique occurs at the beginning of the story and involves the first mention of the protagonist flagged by the indefinite-specific article *wāḥəd*, which is subsequently repeated with the accompanying distal

demonstrative. In this context, the indefinite-specific has a cataphoric reference:

(8) *təmma* ***wāḥda*** *bnəyya yšəmmyūha maqṣūfāt šəbʕa*
there.is INDF girl call.PFX.3PL.her rascal seven
šnīn ***hādīk*** *əl-maqṣūfāt šəbʕa šnīn nhār*
years that DEF-rascal seven years day
ḍāḍāha tʕadda u lqā əṣ-ṣəlṭān
father.her pass.SFX.3MS and find.SFX.3MS.him DEF-sultan
'There was a girl, whom people used to call a "seven-year-old rascal", this seven-year-old rascal, one day her father was passing and the sultan met him.' (7:2–3)

(9) *kān ya ma kān ʕala* ***wāḥəd***
be.SFX.3MS or NEG be.SFX.3MS on INDF
ṣəlṭān ***hādāk*** *ṣ-ṣəlṭān qāʕad yxəmməm kīfāš*
sultan that DEF-sultan AUX think.PFX.3MS how
yaʕməl bāš yāṛa wlād l-blād
make.PFX.3MS SUB see.PFX.3MS people DEF-city
'Once upon a time there was a Sultan, that Sultan was thinking what to do in order to see the people of the city.' (Jewish Tripoli)

The far deixis forms are also utilised in order to indicate temporal distance, as demonstrated by example (10). In the first passage, *hadāk* marks temporal precedence of the first action, i.e., the man riding the donkey, followed by the more recent action of rubbing an onion:

(10) *ət-tīla fīha nqāb wa* ***hādāk*** *ʕaryān*
DEF-fabric in.her holes and that naked
u lābəš wa hādi xdāt ṛāṣ
and dressed and this take.SFX.3FS head
əl-ḅṣəl u ḥakkətlo ʕal žbīnu
DEF-onion and rub.SFX.3FS on forehead.his
'In a fabric there were holes, so he was both naked and dressed, and she took an onion and rubbed it on his forehead.' (7:36–37)

In addition, far deixis can express a spatial distance, as in example (11):

(11) *qāl ənтūm mahbūlīn ʕaqla*
say.SFX.3MS you.PL crazy mind.her
fi-ḥẓarha ***hādīk*** *txaḷḷaṣ fi-ṣaʕrha*
in-knees.her that finish.PFX.3FS in-hair.her
u ṣaʕrha wāṣəl ḥatta rəžlīn
and hair.her arrive.AP.MS until legs
kān tqūmi txabbər əržʕu l-ġādi
be.SFX.3MS get.up.PFX.3FS inform.PFX.3FS return.IMP.2PL to-there
'He told them: you are insane, her mind was on her knees because she was finishing [combing] her hair and her hair reaches her legs, when she stands up, she will let you know, go back there!' (7:49)

In certain contexts, a remote demonstrative can denote an unspecified entity, which did not occur previously in the discourse. When this is the case, the most accurate translation in English would include the indefinite article 'a':

(12) *humma žābu ẓġār wa*
they bring.SFX.3PL children and
ʕṭāw ***l-hādāk*** *l-ʕaššāš*
give.SFX.3PL to-that DEF-guard
'They would give birth to children and give them to a guard.' (2:52)

Anaphorically, far deixis is utilised to express a referent that has been mentioned previously in the discourse, but the speaker assumes that it is hardly retrievable from the memory of the listener:

(13) *əṛṛa mən kull ṛqa* ***hādīk***
see.SFX.3MS from all find.SFX.3MS that
əl-məṛt wāḥda li ʕanda ḍaṛḅa
DEF-woman INDF REL at.her blast
'He had a look and found among all of them the woman who has a scar on her back.' (2:47)

(14) *u l-mṛa u l-ṛāžəl li sāknīn fi-****hādīk***
and DEF-woman and DEF-man REL live.AP in-that
əl-ḥūš daxxlu u ʕamlūlu kaḅūḍu
DEF-house enter.SFX.3PL.him and make.SFX.3PL.him respect
'And the woman and man who lived in that house took him inside, and showed him respect.' (Jewish Tripoli)[3]

Moreover, in terms of managing discourse topics, distal demonstratives occur in a construction that marks the first mention of a

[3] This fragment has been excerpted from the following folktale: https://www.lashon.org/1/node/523, accessed 5 March 2024.

secondary story figure. It comprises the unstressed distal demonstrative *hāk* (see §1.3.4) and the distal demonstrative pronoun:

(15) *ʕaṛṛəṣt mʕa* ***hāk*** *əṛ-ṛāžəl* ***hādāk*** *əṛ-ṛāžəl*
marry.SFX.3FS with that DEF-man that DEF-man
yaxdəm ʕaləyəm yžīb u yəšri
work.PFX.3MS on.them bring.PFX.3MS and buy.PFX.3MS
'She got married to that man, that man would work for them, bring food, buy things.' (Jewish Wad-Souf)

1.3.4. Unstressed Distal Demonstratives

1. ***hāk*** *əl-qaḍḍ l-ʕažīž, əbṭāt* (1:6)
'What a precious figure! She was late [going back inside].'
2. *ʕṭātlu, xūd hād əl-xabža u kūlha, rfaʕha ʕažbathu* ***hāk*** *əl-xabža* (1:16)
'She gave to him saying: take this bread and eat it. He took it and found a favour in the bread.'
3. *fraḥ əṣ-ṣəlṭān, ža l-****hāk*** *əl-wəld, ʕṭālo flūš, lwīž* (2:53)
'The sultan was happy, he came to this man, gave him money, coins.'
4. *žūž axwāt, wāḥəd ẓāwāli wa wāḥəd məštaġni,* ***hāk*** *əl-ẓāwāli kull nhār xmīš, yəmši l-xu yaʕṭī flūš* (3:1–2)
'Two brothers, one poor and the other one rich. That poor one goes every Thursday to his brother, so he gives him money.'
5. *az hīya žābət* ***hāk*** *əl-məžān l-oṃha* (3:49)
'So she brought that scale to the mother.'

In addition to proximal and distal demonstratives, Jewish Gabes utilises also an ungendered, unstressed demonstrative article. Unlike the unstressed demonstrative article /had-/ in Moroccan Arabic, which, as argued by Harrell (1962, 147), does not distinguish between near and far deixis, *hāk* in Jewish Gabes is related

to remote deixis and, in some cases, substitutes for the full distal demonstrative.

As shown by the above examples, the functional interchangeability of the two types of demonstratives is significant. To begin with, the use of *hāk* in example (4) suggests that it can replace *hādāk* in the construction that introduces a protagonist. Moreover, as demonstrated by example (3), it functions anaphorically to mark an entity that has already been introduced in the discourse, but is not immediately retrievable from the memory of the listener. Similarly, in examples (1), (2), and (5), *hāk* denotes objects remote from both the speaker and the listener. It is reasonable, therefore, to suppose that *hāk* is not an independent article, like /ha-/ or /had-/ in other dialects, but rather a truncated version of *hādāk*.

1.4. Demonstratives in North African Arabic: A Comparative Perspective

As has already been mentioned, Moroccan Arabic utilises some demonstrative strategies that do not occur in Jewish Gabes. This discrepancy potentially suggests that the western varieties of North African Arabic diverge from their eastern counterparts in terms of expressions of deixis. In the present section, I will investigate the distribution of demonstratives in selected dialects of the region.

A preliminary examination of the data from Jewish Tunis already reveals some differences. Although the forms of near and far deixis converge in both dialects, Jewish Tunis utilises a shortened form of the proximal demonstrative, which Cohen (1975,

224) calls the 'construct state form'. In contradistinction to the full form, which as a rule follows the noun, its short counterpart precedes the noun. Its presence is also attested in Moroccan Arabic, as well as in Syrian and Kuwaiti varieties (Brustad 2000, 115). However, it appears that this form is not utilised in Jewish Gabes. Although *hād* occurs in passage (1:16), I argue that this is *hādi* with elided final vowel, rather than a separate form. The elision of vowels in word-final position, conditioned by the following word starting with a vowel, is a common phenomenon in Jewish Gabes. In addition, Jewish Tunis applies the form *āl* in order to express far deixis, which parallels the Syrian and Kuwaiti unstressed demonstrative article /ha/ (Cohen 1975, 225). This form has not been attested in Jewish Gabes either.

The Bedouin dialect of Douz presents some similarities to Jewish Gabes, namely, it has a set of two full far and near demonstratives and an ungendered *hāk*, but it utilises also the so-called 'double' demonstrative construction, attested, among others, in Syrian and Kuwaiti dialects (Ritt-Benmimoun 2014, 83; Brustad 2000, 131). This construction combines the /ha-/ demonstrative article preceding the noun, and the full near demonstrative in the postnominal position. Similarly to the previous two demonstratives, it has not been attested in Jewish Gabes.

Certain dialects, like Jewish Algiers and some Moroccan varieties, apply, in addition to the basic set of full demonstratives, a shortened form of the remote demonstrative *dāk*. Cohen (1912, 346) merely points out that, in Jewish Algiers, *dāk* is a shorter variant of *hādāk*, without giving any description of its syntactic behaviour. On the other hand, Brustad (2000, 126)

notes that, in the region of Fes, *dāk*, which can modify both singular and plural nouns of both genders, functions in a similar manner to the proximal anaphoric *hād*. In the region of Tangiers, this demonstrative has the form *dīk* and, like *dāk*, is anaphoric and ungendered (Brustad 2000, 127).