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A Grammar of the Jewish Arabic Dialect of Gabes

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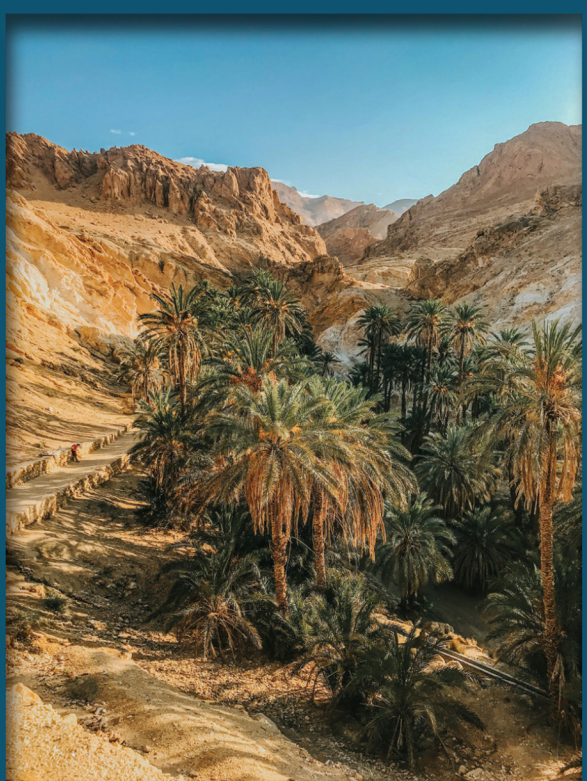

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8. CONCLUSION

This study was concerned with systematic description of the grammar of Jewish Gabes and, by providing comparative data, it attempted to situate it within the dialectological landscape of North African Arabic. It has striven to address several challenges that modern Maghrebi dialectology faces. As was pointed out in the introduction, this field suffers from a lack of a diachronic approach to syntax, particularly from a comparative perspective. The linguistic analysis presented in this volume has hopefully, on the one hand, contributed to a better understanding of Jewish North African dialects, and on the other, cast more light on the differences between Jewish and Muslim dialects. It has been established that Jewish Gabes belongs to the first-layer (pre-Hilāli) dialects of Maghrebi Arabic, which, with the exception of several cities like Mahdia and Tunis, are no longer spoken in Tunisia. The linguistic features of this variety, due to its ancient character, point to a number of substrate and language contact scenarios.

In Part I, on phonology, I demonstrated that the interdental consonants have merged with their plosive counterparts. As is the case with other sedentary dialects, /q/ is generally preserved, although /g/ is found in certain lexemes and there exist minimal pairs proving its phonemic status. When it comes to the distribution of /h/, I have demonstrated that, in contradistinction to Jewish Tunis, this sound has in Jewish Gabes rather stable and audible realisation, except in word-final position. I paid special attention to the development of sibilants in North Africa and argued

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that plain /s/ and /z/ are not phonemic in Jewish Gabes, although, as demonstrated, the range of emphaticity of /ṣ/ and /ẓ/ is fairly wide. The following part of the chapter dealt with emphasis spread in Jewish Gabes. The preliminary results of this analysis prove, firstly, that the pharyngealised character of /q/ is weak, and secondly, that the emphatic consonants in the dialect in question have different degrees of spreadability. In terms of the vowel inventory, I have demonstrated that Jewish Gabes has three long phonemic vowels: /ī/, /ā/, and /ū/, and three short phonemic vowels: /a/, /ə/, and /o/, although the phonemic status of /o/ is uncertain, as only one minimal pair has been found where the opposition between short /o/ and /a/ differentiates the meaning. I have pointed out a few possible qualities of /ə/, depending on the consonantal environment. My findings prove that, although the vowel inventory of Jewish Gabes is similar to that of Jewish Tunis, the distribution of /o/ in the former is much more limited. On the other hand, short /a/ does seem to be phonemic in Jewish Gabes, in contrast to Jewish Djerba, where only /ə/ is phonemic. Finally, I have demonstrated that David Cohen's (1975, 64) claim about the tendency towards the preservation of diphthongs among Jewish dialects of Tunisian Arabic is not valid for southern Tunisian dialects, where they tend to be contracted.

Part II, on morphology, has demonstrated that the dialect of Gabes differs in some aspects from one of its typologically closest neighbours, namely the Jewish dialect of Tunis. This is the case, for example, with the gender distinction in 2FS forms of both the suffix and prefix conjugations, which does not exist in

Jewish Tunis. Jewish Gabes, similarly to Jewish Djerba, has preserved this distinction. I have paid special attention to the diachronic evolution of the verbal system, which demonstrates a significant departure from the CA stem system. Moreover, as has been argued, Jewish Gabes has developed an alternative way of expressing the passive, by means of a bipartite construction involving an active verb together with a personal object pronoun. I have explained this development by means of analogy. Chapter 4, on nominal morphology, was primarily focused on thorough presentation of the data. Where possible, I have made remarks on semantic differences between selected nouns in Jewish Gabes and in Jewish Tunis. As has been demonstrated, there exist salient lexical differences between Jewish Gabes and the dialects spoken in the North of Tunisia.

Part III was devoted to the investigation of syntax. It included discussion of a number of syntactic phenomena, which were analysed from cross-linguistic and Semitic perspectives. In the section on definiteness, I pointed to salient differences in the way Moroccan Arabic and Jewish Gabes encode definiteness. Subsequently, I presented a classification of genitive exponents, followed by a description of nominal concord. As I have shown, Jewish Gabes, similarly to other Jewish dialects of the region, demonstrates strict syntactic agreement between constituents of the sentence. This phenomenon, which constitutes another isogloss shared by several Jewish dialects of the region, could potentially be explained by language contact with Israeli Hebrew. Nevertheless, in-depth diachronic research into the development of agreement is needed in order to ascertain whether deflected

agreement has ever been generalised in Judaeo-Arabic. In contradistinction to this, the second-wave dialects (and some first-wave dialects like Muslim Tunis), have deflected agreement when the subject is of low individuation. In my study of subordination, I have considered three types of subordinate clauses: relative clauses, adverbial clauses, and complements. I have argued that relative clauses in Jewish Gabes are of an external, post-nominal type and can be either restrictive or non-restrictive. As in many other modern Arabic dialects, the syntactic behaviour of relative clauses in Jewish Gabes is to a large extent dependent on the definiteness of the head noun. It has been demonstrated that definite nouns attract the relative pronoun and bring about resumption in the relative clause. On the other hand, when the relativised item is indefinite, relativisation tends to be realised by means of coordination or asyndetically. The study of adverbial clauses provided a thorough presentation and taxonomy of data. The data analysis involved six semantic groups of adverbial clauses in Jewish Gabes. Special attention was paid to temporal clauses. The analysis of the third type of subordination, i.e., complementation, was primarily concerned with syntactic phenomena caused by the semantics of the matrix predicate. I argued that the meaning of the main predicate conditions, to a large extent, the syntagm of the complement. In addition, a semantic taxonomy of complement-taking predicates was presented. Each class of complements was classified according to tense predetermination. I have argued that Jewish Gabes makes a clear distinction between deontic and epistemic modality. Moreover, I have

shown different ways of expressing obligation in the dialect, involving the particles *lāžəm*, *məlžūm ʕal*, and *yəlžəm* + personal pronoun. §2.0, on expressions of tense and aspect, has demonstrated that the p-stem and s-stem are primarily aspectual, and the temporal dimension is expressed by other constituents of the sentence. I have shown that the active participle in the Jewish dialects encodes the present progressive, while in their Muslim counterparts it functions as a perfect. It has been tentatively suggested that this divergence could point to a North-West Semitic substrate in the Jewish varieties. In the section on word order, I demonstrated that the SVO order differs from T–C, and that these should generally be regarded as two distinct types of sentence with different discourse functions. I have presented two arguments in support of this view, related to the intonation and syntax of these sentences. Finally, in chapter 7, I made a distinction between proximal, distal, and unstressed distal pronouns, simultaneously analysing their discourse functions.

To sum up, as the present volume has demonstrated, Jewish Gabes belongs typologically to the group of first-layer, sedentary dialects, which constitute a minority in the North African dialectal landscape. This is mostly due to an influx of rural and Bedouin populations to Maghrebi cities, which has brought about a merger of the first- and second-layer dialects, resulting in turn in the redefinition of the traditional isoglosses. Part of this volume was devoted to investigation of confessional differences as reflected in the Jewish and Muslim varieties of Arabic. One of the promising pathways of future research would be to extend this

line of investigation to other communities, in order to better understand the nature and the development of Judaeo-Arabic. As I have demonstrated, not only do Jewish dialects differ from their Muslim counterparts on the lexical level, but there exist certain salient grammatical divergences as well. Research combining linguistic inquiry with social history could therefore yield some intriguing results.