

## REVIEWS

*Das Bʿēri-Arabische bei Luxor: Grammatische Skizze und Text.* (= *Semitica Viva*, 39,3). By MANFRED WOIDICH. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2025. XVI, 390 p., 1 Abb., 6 Tabellen. ISBN: 978-3-447-12245-0.

Woidich can be considered one of the most successful researchers of the modern Arabic dialects and perhaps also the most prolific. His main field of interest has always been the Egyptian dialects, especially the area of the Rīf and Cairo. In his new book, however, he explored a new territory, the Luxor area of Upper Egypt, about which he had already written a short treatise in 1974 (*Ein arabischer Bauerndialekt aus dem südlichen Oberägypten*) as well as many other studies during the last decades, in addition, of course, to his contribution to the entry “Egyptian Arabic” in the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, where he was responsible, among other things, for the description of the Saʿīdī dialects.

The author describes in the Introduction how he collected the dialectal material described in the present book between 1969 and 1971 in Luxor, explaining why he delayed the organisation and publication of the whole collection for many years (it was sent to the publisher in 2015). While the population explosion, the large-scale migration of villagers and inhabitants of smaller towns into the great urban centres, together with the linguistic unifying role of the media, has changed the dialectal map considerably, this huge material presented in this book has kept its relevance at least as a historical linguistic description.

The study comprises two large parts, as indicated by the title: a briefer first part called “Grammatical Sketch” which consists of 74 pages and a significantly larger second part containing the texts and their German translations, comprising 314 pages. The grammatical outline of the Bʿēri dialect describes the most important phonetic, morphonological and morphological phenomena of the dialect under study, but it contains only incomplete and scanty references to the syntax of the Bʿēri dialect.

In the field of phonetics there are two interesting sounds, the glottalised emphatic [d̥], which occurs in some of the Saʿīdī dialects, and the palatal or dorso-palatal [ɟ] which corresponds to [ǧ] and is also found throughout the Sudanese dialect area. Woidich accepts Gairdner’s view that it is an affricate. Since this sound occurs in the Hungarian language as well, Hungarian linguists refuse to consider it as an affricate and instead it is viewed as a voiced plosive.

The author gives detailed descriptions of vowels occurring in contact with different consonants, such as emphatics and laryngeals. Word stress is also thoroughly described with regard to different syllable structures. The different types of consonantal assimilation occupy an important place in the phonetic description. The most interesting cases are the total assimilations between the laryngeal sounds, such as [ʕ] and [h] = [hh] (*bāʕhe* → *bāhhe*, he bought it), or [ʕ] and [ħ] (*taṭlaʕ ḥāġa* → *taṭlahḥāġa*), etc. Although these are quite regular phenomena in the Arabic dialects, they are often neglected in grammatical descriptions. The assimilation of the article [l] follows the same pattern as in other Egyptian dialects, being assimilated to [ġ] and facultatively to [k] as well.

The assimilative power of the emphatic consonant, which expands to the whole word regressively as well as progressively, is correctly presented, but it might have been mentioned that this phenomenon generally characterises not only the dialects but also Classical Arabic, the emphatic being a so-called long phonological feature. In lexicography it appears as the exclusion of words which would have two consecutive emphatic sounds. Thus, there is *saṭara*, but no *ṣaṭara*, or *ṣadara*, but no *ṣadara*, as independent words, since they would be pronounced similarly. In the field of the emphatic sounds mention is made of the secondary emphasisation of [r], [l], and [m] in certain vocal environments.

The author discusses in detail the problems of syllabic structure which is very important for all dialects and even for Classical Arabic. He, among other things, deals with the so-called *gahawa-syndrome*, which means that after a laryngeal, pharyngeal, or postvelar fricative, an [a] sound is inserted in the syllable structure CaCC making it CaCaC: *gahwa* → *gahawa*. There is a similar well-known phenomenon in the eastern Bedouin dialects of Mesopotamia and the Arabian Peninsula, the only difference being that there it occurs in every case when the syllable ends in two consonants in pausal form, independently of the quality of the consonants. This clearly illustrates one of the most interesting characteristics of this dialect, namely its having some attributes of the Maghribi dialects together with other features characteristic of eastern dialects.

The pronouns are also thoroughly described together with some adverbial forms. The plural forms of the nouns and the verbal conjugation are also sufficiently presented. The only significant deficiency lies in the syntactic description, which is noticeably brief and we learn nothing about the relevant characteristics of this dialect, which may either resemble those of other Egyptian dialects or differ from them.

The second and bulkier part of the book under review is the collection and German translation of the texts which are mainly but not exclusively narratives. In a very stylish way Woidich divides this part into twelve thematic chapters (from A to L): Land and people, housework, the events of everyday life, popular medicine, herbs, agriculture, cattle, adventurous experiences, all kinds of narratives, storytelling, Ġḥa

anecdotes and six proverbs. All texts are accurately transcribed and translated and they are captivating in themselves even without considering that they stand here as descriptions of a dialect and as material for linguistic analysis.

To summarise, I must say that this book represents another milestone in the recent scholarship of Arabic dialect studies.

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*The Dialect of Għarb (Gozo/Malta)*. (Semitica Viva 67) By MARIA LIPNICKA. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2025. XII, 182 p., 3 ill., 1 map. ISBN: 978-3-447-12405-8.

The work under review presents an overall picture of an archaic dialect spoken in the small Gozitan village of Għarb. This village is situated at the western end of the island and is inhabited by about 1,500 people. Interestingly, the dialect reflects both Maghrebi and eastern Arabic dialectal features, especially Syro-Palestinian ones.

The Introduction gives a short account of the theoretical framework for the second chapter, which deals with the morphophonemics of the dialect. This is an interesting attempt to use a generative model of grammar in connection with prosodic phonology, especially regarding the relationship between the pausal forms and, in the author's wording, the overall linguistic architecture of the dialect. The short account of this theoretical introduction, however, contains several inaccuracies. First, the study by Chomsky and Lasnik was not published in 1974, but in 1977, and it does not speak about the minimalist T-model and the Y-Model of grammar, mentioned by Lipnicka, but these two notions may instead originate elsewhere, i.e. in Nespor and Vogel and Irurtzun respectively. Second, the subtitle of Figure 3 on page 2 is misleading, since 'the hierarchy of phonological constituents' cannot be found in this form in Nespor and Vogel 1986, p. 16, but it reflects rather the way our author, a bit arbitrarily, interpreted the theory of the above-mentioned authors. It must also be noted that the author does not appear to have applied this model in Chapter Two.

Chapter One deals with the phonology of the dialect. One of its main peculiarities lies in preserving not only the voiced fricative [ǧ], but also both members of the pharyngeal fricative pair [ħ] and [ʕ]. The note on page 7 that there are minimal pairs involving [ǧ] and [ʕ], however, seems strange to me, since the voiceless counterpart of [ǧ] is not [ʕ] but rather [ħ], although [ħ] has merged with [h] into a single phoneme. On p. 8 one can read valuable information about the behaviour of the [ʕ] sound, which assimilates to [h] and [ħ] and is devoiced at the end of a word. A similar example is cited in the dialect of Hatay (Antioch), although it should have been mentioned that these are well-known and documented phenomena in several other dialects or perhaps in most of them. In connection with the vocal system, the Arabic grammatical

terms *imāla* and *išmām* are used without specifying their meanings. It would have been important, because neither of these terms has been used unequivocally throughout the history of Arabic grammatical studies.

In Chapter Three, morphology, the expression ‘etymologically’ is always used in comparing the dialectal forms of words with Classical Arabic ones. This presupposes that the dialects are viewed as distortions of Classical Arabic and are therefore etymologically derived from it, but this theory is not supported by facts and is generally rejected today. The phenomenon of the special pausal forms occurring in the verbal conjugation is one of the interesting features of this dialect. The Maghrebi character of the Għarb dialect is well illustrated by the use of the *n*- prefix in 1st person singular. All in all, the verbal forms are thoroughly and excellently described. Chapter Four, which is short, contains a summary and conclusion, while Chapter Five contains texts with translations.

To sum up, this volume contributes significantly to our knowledge of the Maltese language, while the texts constitute valuable material for Arabic dialectology.

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