

Preface

Semitic dialectology seems to be in crisis. While its main goal is to describe previously unknown languages/dialects with data collected during fieldwork, fewer and fewer researchers are able and willing to spend their time in the field. Such research is a series of sacrifices and commitments, months spent in other countries after a long period of preparation and training, but also significant financial costs. The person conducting it is also required to have some special skills. He or she needs to communicate in the language studied or master it as quickly as possible to analyse it. Characterised by the multiplicity and diversity of research and methodology, the European tradition of Semitic linguistics has always supported fieldwork and highly valued the data obtained in this way. It should not abandon research into spoken languages in favour of, for example, only comparative studies, which can be comfortably done in armchairs.

In the spirit of this tradition and to uphold it, the present book is a collection of articles whose data was gathered primarily during field research. The volume is divided into two parts—*Studies* on various specific linguistic issues and *Texts* containing previously unpublished transcriptions of audio recordings in Arabic dialects and Jibbali/Shehret.

The first part opens with an article by Manfred Woidich on the term ‘blind’ in Arabic dialects. Besides the common term *ašma*, the author discusses a number of others, like *kaṣf*, *makfūf*, *ḍarīr*, *ḍaṣīf*, *ṣāgiz*, *mašzūr*, *ṭasīs* etc., and uses the concept of lexical absorption to explain them. In another paper, Giuliano Castagna deals with the toponomastics of the island al-Ḥallāniya in the archipelago of Kuria Muria, off the southeastern coast of Oman. He analyses, etymologically and grammatically, data obtained by interviewing one of the most prominent elders of the island. In the article that follows, we remain in Oman, where Roberta Morano conducted her field research on Arabic dialects in al-ʿAwābī district. She devotes her text to the expression of possession in this vernacular and focuses on the syntactic use and occurrence of the analytic genitive compared with the synthetic one. Aziza Al-Essa’s article draws attention to Arabic interdentalals and processes of variation and change affecting them, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Assaf Bar-Moshe describes, using the example of

the Jewish Arabic dialect of Baghdad, a construction called The Argument Flagging and Indexing Construction (AFIC). He shows that the AIFC is more frequent in use in this dialect than in any other modern dialect known today. Letizia Cerqueglini deals with internal variations in the dialects of the Mutallat region. She describes such issues as anaptyctic vowels, presentative forms, personal pronouns, final *imāla*, pausal forms, lexical items etc. Meanwhile, Liesbeth Zack presents two theories on the origin of vowels in the pronominal suffixes after two consonants in Cairene Arabic. She uses grammars and textbooks from the 19th century, which cite two sets of such suffixes: *-aha*, *-ukum*, *-uhum*, and *-iha*, *-ikum*, *-ihum*. Then we move to Morocco with three articles. Mina Afkir, discusses zero-marked nouns and how to delimit depictive secondary predicates from adverbials in Moroccan Arabic. Peter Behnstedt, without doubt the most important dialect geographer of the Arabic language, describes his language atlas of Morocco. He discusses the circumstances that surrounded its rejection and opportunities offered by latest publications. The third text on Moroccan dialects, by Felipe Benjamin Francisco, is a short description of the current situation of the Jewish Arabic dialect of Essaouira, showing that the levelling process towards the Muslim dialect has not been completed, as linguistic characteristics specific to the Jewish dialect have been preserved. The first part of the book closes with three texts on the Maltese dialects of Gozo. Ruben Farrugia focuses on acoustic measurements and accounts for the quality of vowels present in the vowel systems of two dialects—Sannati and Naduri. Maciej Klimiuk deals with vowel length in Maltese and Gozitan dialects and postulates that in rural Gozitan dialects, it is phonetic, not phonological. In the last article, Maria Lipnicka focuses on pausal diphthongisation in Gozitan dialects, comparing this phenomenon with pausal forms in the Arabic dialect of Zaḥlê in Lebanon.

The second part of the book contains texts recorded in dialects and languages from the following towns, regions or countries: al-Ḥallāniya (Giuliano Castagna), Arabkhane and Khalaf (Volkan Bozkurt), Khuzestan (Bettina Leitner), Sarāb (Ulrich Seeger), Ṭaybe (Letizia Cerqueglini), Damascus (Maciej Klimiuk), Harran-Urfa (Stephan Procházka and İsmail Batan), il-Kāf (Veronika Ritt-Benmimoun), Essaouira (Felipe Benjamin Francisco), Mauritania (Peter Behnstedt and Ahmed-Salem Ould Mohamed-Baba), and Sannat (Maciej Klimiuk and Ruben Farrugia).

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