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Observations on Traditional Muṭallaṭ Arabic Internal Differentiation

ABSTRACT In this paper, I show some internal variations in different areas of the Israeli Muṭallaṭ. Muṭallaṭ Arabic, first described by Jastrow (2004), is considered a unitary linguistic area within rural Muslim Palestinian Arabic. I consider here only the traditional varieties, spoken by elders over age 70. In particular, I analyse the diverse diffusion of the loss of emphasis of */q/ and the affrication of */k/ that characterises the entire Muṭallaṭ linguistic region. Dialectal differences are also found in anaptyctic vowels, presentative forms, personal pronouns, final *imāla*, pausal forms, lexical items, among other features.

KEYWORDS Muṭallaṭ Arabic, Muṭallaṭ Arabic dialectology, Palestinian Arabic, affrication, Arabic in Israel, field research

1 Traditional Arabic dialects spoken in Israel

The dialectal geography of Arabic in Israel involves a striking number of varieties that attest to an intense linguistic history and kaleidoscopic modern landscapes. Local sedentary dialects are labelled with the common term Palestinian Arabic (not including local Bedouin varieties) and encompassed within the dialectal area called Greater Syria (Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian Arabic) (Palva 1984). The exiguous territory included within the boundaries of contemporary Israel is home to a multitude of indigenous Arabic varieties as well as to exogenous types that arrived through the immigration of foreign Arabic-speaking families, groups and religious communities (Cantineau 1939; Cleveland 1967; Fischer and Jastrow 1980; Shahin 2000). Ancient and modern political events, the strategic position of Israel between Africa, Asia, and the Mediterranean, and the presence of places sacred to a plethora of faiths have been in continuous interplay, leading to the linguistic and cultural enrichment of the southern Levant (Borg 2007). Until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the

local Bedouin, sedentary, urban and rural Arabic dialects reflected the traditional life patterns of pre-industrial, patriarchal societies (Blau 1960; Féghali 1928; Rice and Sa'ed 1960), endogamous to varying degrees, and extraordinarily linguistically conservative, as the first modern linguistic portraits of some of these communities revealed (Dalman 1928–1942; Spoer and Nasrallah 1909; Schmidt and Kahle 1918; von Müllinen 1907).

The establishment of Israel marked a decisive linguistic turning point. For local Arabic speakers, alongside classical and standard Arabic models, the reference language became Hebrew, increasingly spoken in public offices, state infrastructures and the media (Henkin 2011; van Mol 2003). The level and degree of literacy of the local Arab society proceeded in parallel with an increasing mastery of Hebrew (Amara 2007). In the first decades, the female population, which had relatively little access to formal education, remained less exposed to contact with the new language (Amara 1999; Piamenta 1992). Nonetheless, the situation evolved rapidly over the generations in both sedentary and Bedouin communities (Halloun 2003ff.; Henkin 1995; Levin 1994; Piamenta 1966). Exogenous Arabic types, spoken by Jewish immigrants from Arab countries (Spolsky and Cooper 1991; Spolsky and Shohamy 1999), and Christian vernaculars from neighbouring states were introduced into the local landscape and sometimes mixed with local varieties (Piamenta 2000; Shachmon 2017; Shachmon and Mack 2019). The creation of political borders had several effects. The lifestyle of the Bedouin communities became sedentary (Kressel 1975; Marx and Shmueli 1984), levels of formal education increased over time, especially for women, and the dialects spoken within the new Israeli borders progressively lost contact with the once contiguous dialects spoken beyond them. The results of the progressive loss of contact between the two sides of the border are already evident in the strong koineization among the Arabic varieties spoken in Israel and the diverging directions developed by these in relation to the varieties of the Palestinian Authority, especially among young speakers in the last decade (Durand 1996). The second half of the twentieth century brought a significant wave of progress that inexorably transformed Israeli Arab societies and led to a deep transformation of the material culture, with profound impacts on the linguistic horizon (Cerqueglini and Henkin 2016, 2018). This contribution focuses on the 'traditional' Arabic dialects, i.e. the systems that still reflect the linguistic practices of pre-modern local Arab societies. These are now spoken only by elders over the age of 70, including speakers of Bedouin, rural and urban varieties, and are often hardly mutually intelligible. Mutual intelligibility strongly increases among younger generations, who speak a koineized variety wherein dialectal features fade. Many of the Arabic dialects spoken in Israel and Palestine have been extensively documented, from the rural, urban and Bedouin Galilean varieties with their communal variants (Blanc 1953; Geva-Kleinberger 2004, 2009, 2018), the foreign types (Geva-Kleinberger 2011, 2012), the varieties of the northern and central coasts (Geva-Kleinberger 2004; Geva-Kleinberger and Tavor 2003; von Müllinen 1907),

the communal dialects of Jerusalem and its surrounding area (Piamenta 1966, 2000), to the varieties of the Negev Bedouin tribes (Alatamin 2011; Henkin 2010; Shawarbah 2007, 2012). Nonetheless, some traditional dialects, such as that of the Muṭallaṭ region (Traditional Muṭallaṭ Arabic, TMA) and their neighbouring northern Cisjordanian rural types, are disappearing without sufficient documentation. The only available description of the Muṭallaṭ dialects consists of a remarkable article by Jastrow (2004), which traces a phonological and morphological profile of these dialects, which emerge from this description as a quite homogeneous regional linguistic expression. Prof. Jastrow's masterful work deeply inspired me and aroused in me a strong interest in what I thought were unique and, in a sense, mysterious local varieties, very different from the Arabic of the Galilee and Jerusalem, with some typical traits of the Bedouin dialects of the contiguous area, different from the neighbouring northern Palestinian Authority (Nablus-Samaria), and an exceptional lexical richness and specificity. Unfortunately, since then Prof. Jastrow has not addressed TMA varieties, nor have other researchers done so in a systematic manner. To fill this significant gap in the research of this subject and in line with the interests of my students at Tel Aviv University, most of whom come from the Muṭallaṭ, I have dedicated myself to the collection of an oral corpus of TMA varieties.

2 The Israeli Muṭallaṭ Region

The Muṭallaṭ (Hebrew: Ha-Mešullaš) lies along the border with the Palestinian Authority (PA), between Umm el-Faḥm to the north and Kufur Ḳāsim to the south. It comprises the eastern Plain of Sharon, between Nahal Taninim to the north, the Yarkon to the south, the Israeli Central Plain to the west and the Samaritan Mountains to the east. The Muṭallaṭ, with its sedentary, agricultural lifestyle, is considered linguistically homogeneous. TMA is generally considered a conservative rural Muslim dialect, characterised by the preservation of interdental, voiceless uvular (among men) and pre-uvular (among women) articulation of *q, environment-based affrication of *k, and preservation of long unstressed vowels (Jastrow 2004). The young Muṭallaṭ Arabic speakers who have taken my courses on Arabic dialectology and Palestinian Arabic dialectology in the past five years have repeatedly pointed out that 'Muṭallaṭ Arabic' seemed to them too general a linguistic category. They supported their claim with the fact that the so-called Muṭallaṭ had by no means in the past ever represented a unitary region with a deep historical identity like that of the Upper Galilee, the Lower Galilee, the Carmel or the Jerusalem area. The Muṭallaṭ became a geographic and military concept when the term *mešullaš* 'triangle' was coined in Hebrew to indicate the area of Kufur Ḳāsim, Ġalġūlya and Kufur Bara (originally: the 'Small Triangle,' to differentiate it from the 'Big Triangle' between Čanin, Țulkarem and Nablus). Here, Israelis had established control prior to the 1948 war. Of course, this

situation in itself generated a sense of solidarity and belonging among the people of this area. The concept of a unitary region later extended to the entire area along the border with the West Bank, from the Green Line northwards, as people living there suffered from similar vicissitudes of separation, loss and military control. Nonetheless, evident linguistic and cultural differences are still evident among them and are especially striking in terms of lexical choices. Probably only the area of the original ‘Small Triangle,’ i.e. the southern part of the Muṭallaṭ, north-northeast of Tel Aviv, has a unitary linguistic identity, most prototypically reflecting the features described by Jastrow (2004).

The Traditional Muṭallaṭ linguistic area can be subdivided into four main sub-areas:

1. Umm el-Faḥm/Zalafe/ṢArṣara (Northern TMA),
2. Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya,
3. Ṭīra/Ṭaybe/Ḳalanswe (Central TMA),
4. Kufur Ḳāsim/Kufur Bara/Ġalġūlya (Southern TMA).

Across these micro-areas, the same features may be present to different extents, while often fade, lexical patrimony and heritage are quite varied. Therefore, my main interest here is the comparison of the different varieties included under the general label of ‘Muṭallaṭ Arabic.’ Along the way, this work reveals many surprising linguistic facts, which will be discussed here only briefly. More than one hundred and seventy elders, women and men over the age of 70 have been recruited so far as informants for the present research. They have provided linguistic data from different areas of the Muṭallaṭ region over the course of five years (2016–2019) in the form of folktales, narratives and spontaneous conversations among speakers of the same age, cross-generational conversations in the form of interviews on specific topics, songs, proverbs and jokes. I feel deeply indebted to them and their families for their cooperation, hospitality, efforts and generosity. The linguistic atlas of the Muṭallaṭ currently in preparation is dedicated only to them, a linguistic monument to the years of their youth.

3 The socio-linguistic profile of the Muṭallaṭ dialects: uniformity and internal variation

Due to the absence of major urban centres of acculturation, the diffusion of linguistic models and the innovation as well as the rural character of Muṭallaṭ society, the traditional varieties spoken in this area are still quite well preserved, especially among elderly women. Contrary to other regions, such as the Galilee and Jerusalem, the population of the Muṭallaṭ is homogeneously Sunni Muslim. According to Jastrow (2004), the religious unity of the Muṭallaṭ is one of the major causes of its dialectal evenness. Interestingly, Jastrow (2004) stresses the linguistic uniformity of the Muṭallaṭ area,

but in the title of his contribution, he refers to its ‘dialects.’ My inquiry aims to shed light on the coexistence of both uniformity and differentiation within the ‘Muṭallaṭ linguistic region’ considering its socio-historical background, some aspects of which are mentioned above. In addition to the fact that the Muṭallaṭ only became a socio-political entity after 1948, we should also consider that intermarriage between people from different cities and micro-areas of the Muṭallaṭ, from south to north, was quite rare in the past and remains so. Over the last four years, more than fifty students from the Muṭallaṭ attended my courses, men and women between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, from different social backgrounds, degrees of religious devotion and different micro-areas. Interestingly, yet not surprisingly, none of them reported that his or her parents came from two different areas of the Muṭallaṭ. This is not unusual in the region. The Bedouin tribal order in a quite restricted and homogeneous area, for example the Negev, works in exactly the same way. Community seclusion is customary in the Muṭallaṭ, even within a shared religious and socio-economic landscape. As in every community, jokes, sayings and preconceptions circulate to ironically stigmatise the attitudes and traits of people from neighbouring communities, marking neat distinctions between different social identities. The social differentiation seems to be reflected in a number of linguistic features, notwithstanding the undoubtedly unitary quality of some general, structural characteristics. As we will see below, some linguistic features differ to various extents from place to place, tracing a very nuanced picture. Thus, for example, the final *imāla*, the affrication of **k*, the de-emphasising/fronting of **q* and the pre-pausal lowering of *-i(C)#* are realised to different degrees and with variable frequency and distribution among the speakers of different settlements.

4 Unitary features and diverse distributions

The first account of the distinctive features of the TMA dialects appears in Palva (1984), who provides a very informative table in which some linguistic features are observed cross-dialectally in Palestine and Transjordan. The distinctive features typical of TMA (**/q/ > /k/* and **/k/ > /č/*) are found in the row called ‘Rural Central Palestinian.’ Here, Palva notes that the affrication of **/k/ > /č/* takes place in all environments. He reports the phenomenon in both *dīč* (‘cock,’ SG), after /i/, and *dyūč* (PL), after /u/. **/q/ > /k/* is also treated as a common feature of the entire dialectal group.

From the lexical point of view, the spatial adverb for ‘here’ is reported to be both *hān* and *hēn*. In fact, in my corpus, northern TMA seems rather to be characterised by *hōn*, while southern TMA shows *hēn*. The form *hān* appears in the Bedouin varieties still spoken in the Galilee (Rosenhouse 1984). The temporal adverb for ‘now’ is reported to be *halḳēt* and *halloḳēt*. The latter form appears only twice in my corpus, while the former is very common in the central and southern TMA varieties. In my corpus, *hassa* is very frequently used for ‘now,’ while the northern varieties use *assa* instead.

Interestingly, Palva (1984: 15) affirms that ‘Central Palestinian dialects are in many respects more conservative than the Galilean dialects. They have also been indirectly influenced by Bedouin dialects of the Syro-Mesopotamian type (*biḳūl*).’ Jastrow (2004) provides the following list of the features shared throughout the Muṭallat:

1. the complete interdental series (sounded, soundless and emphatic),
2. the preservation of *-h-* in the third personal pronominal suffixes *-ha-*, *-hum* and *-hin*,
3. the fronting of **/q/ > /k/*,
4. the palatalisation of **/k/ > /č/*.

Except for the complete interdental series, these features are quite problematic, as they by no means appear consistently throughout the Muṭallat. Jastrow noted that the behavior of the palatalisation of **/k/ > /č/* was quite unclear. Indeed, after having stressed the importance of the **/k/ > /č/* process as an identity factor for Muṭallat Arabic speakers, he reported that this shift was ‘by no means complete; quite to the contrary, there are many words in which the old *kāf* has not been fronted, but preserved as such’ (Jastrow 2004: 168). He reported three words where the shift was not detected: *akal* ‘he ate,’ *akli* ‘something to eat, a meal’ and *kull* ‘all, every.’ Jastrow assumed that there were probably as many words with a shift **/k/ > /č/* as words in which **/k/* has been preserved, that the conditions of the sound change had not yet been established, and that the shift had probably been triggered by the presence of front vowels, ‘including fronted /a/.’ He wondered why there was *hača* ‘he spoke,’ but *akal* ‘he ate.’¹ He hypothesised that this was probably the case because the prefix conjugation of *akal* is pronounced *bōkil* with /k/, due to the presence of the preceding back vowel.

As we will see below, according to my data, classified by place of origin, the prefix conjugation of ‘to eat’ is not pronounced *bōkil* with a /k/ in all TMA. In fact, the form itself diverges across the region, as stated below in Table 10. Nor do *akal*, *akli*, and *kull* appear everywhere and always with the plosive velar.

Indeed, the affrication of **/k/* significantly decreases from south to north, as Jastrow noted. Jastrow reports some comparative examples of affrication of suffixed second person singular and plural pronouns between Umm el-Faḥm (in the extreme north of the Muṭallat) and Kufur Bara (in the south, just north of Kufur Ḳāsim). Both varieties have *dāarak*, ‘your (MSG) house,’ *dārič*, ‘your (FSG) house,’ *dārčīn*, ‘your (FPL) house,’ but for ‘your (MPL) house,’ Umm el-Faḥm has *dārḳum*, while Kufur Bara has *dārčūm*.

The general impression is indeed that the affrication of **/k/* in the northern system is more consistent. It seems to clearly correlate with the presence of front vowels, while, proceeding towards the south, the local systems seem increasingly chaotic.

1 The *hamza* is transcribed only where it is pronounced; in TMA it is heard only rarely.

In the south, the rules of affrication of */k/ seem to have been overextended and overdeveloped already in local TMA varieties, probably because this innovation came from the north and was locally subjected to reanalysis and implementation. In the southern TMA varieties, it is not unusual to hear the same word pronounced in both plosive and affricate ways by the same speaker, as I will report below. This could be considered evidence of the exogenous character of the shift, introduced from the northern area into the south and reanalysed there.

Interestingly, in the southern Muṭallaṭ, young people exaggerate the use of /č/, which they perceive as a linguistic marker of identity, sometimes ironically applying it to improper cases. Apropos, one day in one of my Arabic dialectology classes, in order to mock their friends from Kufur Ḳāsim, two young men from Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya pronounced the name of their town 'Čufur Čāsim!' This locution sounded very interesting to me mainly because the affricated pronunciation of Kufur Ḳāsim > **Čāsim is a clear overextension of the */k/ > /č/ rule. In fact, in the southern TMA phonemic chain, while */k/ becomes /č/, the place of the velar plosive /k/ is taken by */q/, which is pronounced fronted, i.e. completely deemphasised (the fronting of */q/ > /k/, mentioned in the list above.). But the /k/ sound that is derived from */q/ never becomes /č/. Therefore, shouting 'Čufur Čāsim!' to their mates, the two students from Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya sought to exaggerate the attitude of the southern people towards the use of the affrication of */k/ to /č/, pushing it beyond its phonological limits.

In fact, such a joke is made possible by the fact that in southern TMA varieties */q/ is fully deemphasised/fronted into /k/. Thus, because of the spread of affrication in the south, northern people hint at the possibility that southern people could push themselves as far as */q/ > /k/ > /č/, but this never happens.

Furthermore, going northwards, the fronting of */q/ works differently. In Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya, for example, men pronounce */q/ as /q/ or /k/ and women /k/. Further north, */q/ is usually realised as /k/ or just /q/ by those with some education, even among the elders. Further details on geographic and social distribution and realisation of */q/ and */k/ are provided below.

Other features, which are consistent throughout the TMA varieties, are listed in Jastrow (2004). The vowel system is considered unitary and defined as conservative, with three short vowels (/a/, /i/, /u/) and five long vowels (/ā/, /ē/, /ī/, /ō/, /ū/); the old diphthongs */ay/ and */aw/ became /ē/ and /ō/ respectively. Long stressed vowels in open syllables are shortened when they lose the stress, but this kind of shortening does not take place if the syllable is closed, differently from Cairene Arabic, as Jastrow noticed, and from other neighbouring sedentary Palestinian varieties, but similar to what happens in Galilean Bedouin dialects. A series of exceptions to this general rule is produced by the suffixation of the negation -š/-iš, which causes the reduction of the long vowels even when they remain accented (*šufnāč*, 'we saw you [FSG]' vs. *ma šufnāčiš*, 'we did not see you [FSG]'). TMA also preserves an independent feminine form in verbs and pronouns for the second and third plural persons. The perfect verbal forms with a suffixed

consonant cluster require an anaptyctic vowel, with possible different placement of the stress: for ‘I hit,’ there is *đárabit* and *đarábit*. Jastrow proposes these forms as full alternatives, without further considerations of geographic and social order.

5 Further observations on Muṭallaṭ dialectal differentiation

In the last five years, I had the opportunity to teach courses on Arabic dialectology to Palestinian Arabic native speakers of different local varieties from the Golan, the Galilee, the central coastal plains and the Negev, but, for the most part, from the Muṭallaṭ. Most of the students come from the Muṭallaṭ. Tel Aviv University is indeed very close to their home area. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to teach several students from all areas of the Muṭallaṭ, from Umm el-Faḥm in the far north of the region to Kufur Kāsim and Kufur Bara at the southern boundary.

As I explained some very classical topics of comparative Arabic dialectology, such as the pronunciation of consonants, vowel system, anaptyctic vowels, *imāla*, pausal forms, syllable structure, pronominal forms, verbal conjugations and so on, students were often requested to pronounce specific words that contained the characteristic that we were discussing in the class. The students liked to raise their hands when in their home village or city the feature in question produced a peculiar outcome compared with what they heard from friends from neighbouring areas. Furthermore, they often added that their grandparents knew a different pronunciation, grammatical form or different word for a certain object.

Certain inter-dialectal differences were certainly expected between the dialects of the different regions of Israel. Indeed, differences between the tribal varieties in the Negev or communal dialects and rural vs. urban dialects in the Galilee are well known and have been addressed in the dialectological literature (Behnstedt and Geva-Kleinberger 2019; Blanc 1953). But what struck me most was the exceptional internal diversity of the Muṭallaṭ varieties that was revealed.

The internal dialectal diversity revealed itself in so clear a way as to be almost suspect. Indeed, today, when speaking of the history of the Arab dialectal varieties spoken in Israel, one must proceed with some caveats. It is necessary to examine the area’s history, as frequent relocations of the Arab populations (Hadawi 1970; Mills 1932; Palmer 1881), the movement of settlements and, inevitably, linguistic mixing all took place (Bergsträsser 1915). Thus, I began asking specific questions about the origins of each informant and, most of all, of his or her family, going back several generations. Through my increasingly frequent visits with families in the Muṭallaṭ, first through my students, and then more and more autonomously, I came to realise that in the decades around the Israeli War of Independence, the Muslim Arab population of the central coastal plains, from Jaffa and Šix Mūnis to the old Ṭanṭūra, had gradually moved towards the central Muṭallaṭ, especially towards Ṭaybe and Ṭira.

It is difficult to trace the path of the relocations, because, according to my informants' reports, some families changed their names during the process through the new matrimonial networks that were being established or by taking on the names of the local host families. This immigration from the central plains to the Muṭallat region was, nonetheless, restricted to a relatively small number of families and individuals from the villages of the plains. Furthermore, it must be said that, according to the maps sketched before 1948 (Robinson 1856) and historical and archeological reports (Cytryn-Silvermann 2004; Tavernari 2012), the villages scattered over the central plain between the Muṭallat region and the Mediterranean were not numerous or heavily populated. The stretch of coast between Jaffa and Caesarea was marshy and malarial, and thus it was avoided by the caravan trade routes, which passed instead along the eastern hills. The eastern hills, constituting the current Muṭallat region, were very heavily populated, being rich in water and at an elevation that allowed the cultivation of olive trees, a fundamental activity of the local pre-industrial society, as is clearly expressed by some elderly informants in the stories I have recorded.

From a dialectological point of view, the *Sprachatlas* of Bergsträsser (1915) clearly notes the linguistic uniformity of the eastern hills and the adjacent western plains. Furthermore, even today, the oldest informants describe the dialect of the people who came from the western plains as nearly the same as that of the central Muṭallat hills, with just a few lexical differences.

In his *Sprachatlas*, Bergsträsser sketches what is today the Muṭallat and the adjacent coastal plains as a uniform linguistic area, characterised by the following:

1. affricate pronunciation of the consonant *ǧim*, while Galilee, Jaffa and the urban centres of what constitutes today's Palestinian Authority are characterised by the fricative pronunciation *ž* (1915: Karte 2),
2. totally deemphasised (or fronted) realisation of **q*, different from the emphatic realisation found in the Galilee and Jaffa (1915: Karte 4),
3. affricate pronunciation of **k*, with the exception of Jaffa (1915: Karte 3).

To sum up, the arrival of external elements from the western plains and coastal cities after 1948 did not significantly impact the dialectal configuration of the Muṭallat region, as, with the exception of Jaffa, they belonged together within a uniform linguistic area. Interestingly, in 1915, Bergsträsser did not report any internal dialectal differentiation among the varieties spoken in the region corresponding to today's Muṭallat, such as the differential treatment of **q* and **k* in the different Muṭallat sub-regions reported by Jastrow (2004) and mentioned above.

The affrication of **k* is a widespread phenomenon in the southern Levant. The dialects of the Bedouin tribes of northern Israel who live in the central and southern Galilee have this feature in addition to the affrication of the original **q > ǧ* (Rosenhouse 1984). These features are indeed common among the Najdi/North-Arabian/Jordanian

Bedouin types, of which the Galilean Bedouin dialects are a part (Cantineau 1936, 1937). The affrication of **k* is found among the sedentary dialects of what is today the Palestinian Authority, both in the immediate vicinity of the border with the Israeli Muṭallaṭ (Bergsträsser 1915) and towards the south, around Ramallah (Seeger 2009a, 2009b, 2013), yet not throughout the area. The areas of Ṭülkarem and Bāka š-Šarkīyya show the affrication of **k* and the fronting of **q* (personal observation), while neither shift is evident in the hills of Šomron (Bergsträsser 1915).

The geographic distribution of the different treatments of **q* and **k* seems to point to the existence of a sedentary conservative area, with the emphatic pronunciation of **q* and the plosive pronunciation of **k* in the central massif of Šomron. This conservative mountainous area seems to be surrounded by Bedouin dialects, to the north and to the east, that are characterised by affrication of **k* and **g* < **q*, and sedentary dialects, located to the north-west and to the south, characterised by a mixed character. Indeed, in both the Muṭallaṭ (as I will demonstrate) and the rural areas around Ramallah (Seeger 2009a, 2009b, 2013), the fronting of **q* and the affrication of **k* are not distributed homogeneously. In particular, in the Muṭallaṭ, the affrication of **k* is governed by different phonetic rules in the different areas, with an extreme overextension of the phenomenon in the southernmost sub-region, around Kufur Kāsim, while in the northernmost area, the affrication takes place close to front vowels, as it does in the Galilean Bedouin varieties (Rosenhouse 1984). The affrication could thus be a historically contact-induced linguistic change that entered from the northern Muṭallaṭ due to contact with Bedouin varieties of the Galilean type, and then spread towards the southern Muṭallaṭ and the rural area north of Ramallah, where the rules governing the affrication were clearly reinterpreted.

Comparing my data with the outlines sketched by Seeger (2009a, 2009b, 2013), it clearly appears that the continuity between the rural area of the Muṭallaṭ and the rural area north of Ramallah is expressed by the diverse distribution of further features, such as the final *imāla* in the FSG ending, the pronominal system, the personal suffix of the third MSG, the negated suffix of the third MSG and the ending of the suffix of the third MPL of verbs with the third radical consonant *y*. In both these areas, different treatments of these features are scattered across the settlements. This picture seems to point out to a situation of contact between ancient southern Levantine rural dialects and surrounding Bedouin varieties (Najd, Jordan), where the rural varieties acquire exogenous features to different extents in each settlement.

The contact between rural and Bedouin varieties in the Muṭallaṭ and around Ramallah was probably due to the Bedouin presence along the local stretch of the Cairo-Damascus caravan route (Tavernari 2012) between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries. According to archeological findings, in the southern Levant the caravan route consisted of tracks that ran along the line of the Muṭallaṭ settlements. Jerusalem and Ramallah were touched by the caravan route, which continued along the Muṭallaṭ, as both the internal Palestinian mountain region and the western coastal plains were

avoided for different practical reasons. The historical presence of the caravan route and the passage of diverse Arabic-speaking groups could help explain the high degree of internal variation of dialectal features and lexical items across the Muṭallaṭ region. One should be aware, nonetheless, that the internal dialectal variation is not only a historical phenomenon across the settlements of the Muṭallaṭ. Linguistic dynamicity is very well expressed today through the use of different words for objects associated with modern life. For example, plastic cups are called *čulučib* in Kufur Ḳāsim, from the expression *kul w-kibb* lit. ‘eat and throw,’ and *xadpami* in Ṭaybe, from the Hebrew word *xadpašami*, ‘disposable,’ reflecting the actual Modern Hebrew pronunciation. A small part of the population of Ṭaybe also uses *čulučib*. Indeed, an interesting aspect of Muṭallaṭ internal variation, both among traditional and neo varieties, is the diffused and gradual way in which features change across sub-regions, genders and age groups.

Nevertheless, some features clearly represent specific sub-regions. Among these are the extended use of affrication in the south and the striking contour-rising and vowel-lengthening of pre-pausal syllables and development of a slight internal conditioned *imāla* in Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya. Interestingly, the frequency of such community-specific features seems to have increased over the last generations. The prosodic profile of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya is perceived as extraneous and unique by speakers of other communities within the Muṭallaṭ. In fact, it could be seen as a local evolution of the central and northern Levantine prosodic types (Bergsträsser 1924; Chahal 1999; de Jong and Zawaydeh 2002; Hellmuth 2019).

5.1 Internal diversity and utility of the TMA annotated corpus

In light of the historical and sociolinguistic observations made so far on the character of the Muṭallaṭ region, it becomes easier to understand how the linguistic features that characterise the entire area are found to varying degrees in the different communities from north to south, as I explained regarding the **k > č* shift. Considering this situation, I felt the need for an annotated corpus for the study of the frequency and contexts of use in which the phenomena that characterise TMA manifest themselves throughout the region. The data provided by the corpus will be presented in a visual format in the form of a linguistic atlas.

The first linguistic insights into TMA internal dialectological differentiation that I present here are based on my 245,000-word corpus of TMA, collected so far (2015–2019) across the Muṭallaṭ settlements and comprising narrative, spontaneous and guided conversations, proverbs, greetings and blessings, poetry and songs of different genres and for various occasions. The corpus currently consists of 300 pieces of different genres and lengths that have been recorded and transcribed and are being annotated for roots, morphological categories and English meanings. The annotation for morphological categories is very important because it enables the searcher

to see all occurrences of the same roots across different vocalic patterns in order to establish the influence of morphophonology on the realisation of */k/, the fronting of */q/, the emergence of *imāla* rising and the colour of anaptyctic vowels across different communities and genders. Pausal forms are annotated. While a detailed description of the content of the corpus and the annotation system that is being followed is beyond the scope of this discussion, I include here some basic explanations necessary for understanding the criteria followed in the transcription of the data provided in the paragraphs below. The transcription does not follow IPA rules but rather the transcribing standards traditionally followed in Arabic dialectology (e.g. *š* for *ʃ*, *ǧ* for *dj*, *ṭ* for *θ*, etc.). The transcription is not phonological: e.g. if */q/ is pronounced *k*, *k*, or in both ways in the same text, it is transcribed each time just as it is articulated. The same is true for */k/ and for the entire vowel system, including the anaptyctic vowels. In relevant cases, the transcription marks prosodic lowering and lengthening. Secondary emphatic articulation, which is quite rare, is not marked.

Most of my informants are over the age of seventy, with some isolated exceptions between the ages of sixty and seventy. The informants are 54 men and 67 women. None attended school after the first grade. In all cases, they can be considered elders whose dialects represent TMA varieties.

In fact, dialectal communities are divisible by generational varieties. Elders over the age of seventy speak the traditional varieties of the local dialects. The middle generation consists of people between fifty and sixty-five years of age, educated at various levels, depending on gender, economic possibilities and socio-cultural constraints. Young people include those under forty-five years of age, in general highly educated, often up to university level, in Modern Standard Arabic, Hebrew and other languages.

As noted above, the disappearance of the traditional lifestyle—due to formal education in Hebrew, Standard Arabic and English and changes in material life—endangers the traditional varieties, which are converging toward a koineized language in which dialectal differences fade. Many TMA lexical sectors are no longer used or understood by younger people. Several prosodic and phonological distinctions are no longer salient. Both morphology and syntax have been deeply restructured.

The lexical annotation enables a search by English meaning and semantic category (object used for digging, drilling, cutting, sowing, transporting containers, liquid container, grain container, etc.). Indeed, words for objects of material culture are often not directly translatable between different languages. To avoid possible misunderstandings, photographs have been added to each of the agricultural and domestic objects mentioned in the corpus.

The search for objects through images, English terminology and semantic categories has produced an unexpected finding; many names of household utensils, especially supports and metal objects, have different names in the different areas of the Muṭallaṭ, while the terminology for containers, cutlery and agricultural objects is far more homogeneous. Moreover, from a comparative perspective, the terminology

related to agricultural and domestic objects and their formal typology are quite surprisingly different from those described so far in Palestinian varieties, especially in relation to the non-Arabic names, studied mainly in the areas of Jerusalem, Ramallah and the Galilee (Basis 2009; Bassal 2004, 2006–2007, 2010, 2012; Bauer 1903, 1926; Dalman 1928–1942; Diem 1979; Elihai 2004; Fraenkel 1886; Griffith 1997; Elizur 2004; Féghali 1918; Fleisch 1974; Halayqa 2008, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014; Halloun 2000; Hasson 1984; Hopkins 1995; Neishtadt 2015; Piamenta 1973; Rubinovitch 1923; Shehadeh 1983; von Mülinen 1907; Weninger 2011). Further typological and linguistic comparisons are currently being carried out, in particular with other Syro-Lebanese material cultures and both sedentary and Bedouin linguistic facies (Arnold and Behnstedt 1993; Borg 2003, 2004, 2008; Jastrow 2001; Retsö 2006).

Below are some quantitative data on internal TMA dialectal variation extrapolated from my TMA corpus. For each dialectal region—North, Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya, Centre, South—I selected a sample of 15 prose texts (around 20,000 words) from 10 men and 10 women, as a balanced sample.

5.2 The affrication */k/ > č: geographic and sociolinguistic distribution

The data from the TMA corpus reported in Table 1 show a differential treatment of the affrication of */k/ > č across the four major areas represented here. The occurrences indicate the number of times */k/ is pronounced č, not necessarily overlapping with the number of words in which the affrication is manifested, i.e. in the same word the affrication can happen more than once. The roots indicate the number of different roots in which the phenomenon is manifested. The *k/č* overlap indicates the percentage of occurrences of both affricated and non-affricated pronunciation. Each gender group (women and men) in each of the four areas area was assigned the same number of words (10,000) from about ten texts from the TMA corpus as a sample. The data stems from such samples.

TABLE 1. The affrication */k/ > č in TMA across the Main Areas of the Muṭallaṭ.

		North	Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya	Centre	South
		10,000 words	10,000 words	10,000 words	10,000 words
Women	occurrences	1,230	2,002	2,434	3,878
	roots	37	34	36	31
	<i>k/č</i> overlap	1.20%	1.34%	2.83%	6.78%
Men	occurrences	1,036	1,245	1,728	2,678
	roots	36	35	36	30
	<i>k/č</i> overlap	1.05%	1.12%	1.65%	3.66%

While the number of roots employed in the texts is almost the same among men and women, since the sample prose texts deal with the same topics (marriage, agriculture, natural medical remedies), the number of affricated realisations of */k/ increases meaningfully from north to south, in line with the observations provided by Jastrow (2004). What emerges from this merely quantitative analysis is that there is a remarkable gender-based difference in producing the affricated */k/, with a wide preponderance of this phenomenon among women. A qualitative analysis of the cases in which the affrication is manifested is left for a further monographic enquiry. In general, corpus data support Jastrow's hypothesis (2004) of an impact of the surrounding vowels on the affrication (northern *dārčēn/dārġum* vs southern *dārčēn/dārčum*). While cross-generational observations are beyond the scope of the present article, cross-generational comparative data show how affrication decreases among younger people in the north, while it is overextended and implemented in the south.

5.3 The de-emphasising/fronting of */q/: geographic and sociolinguistic distribution

The quantitative data regarding the fronting or de-emphasising of */q/ are quite homogeneous. Yet, in the north and in the area of Bāqa l-Ġarbiyya, there is a clear gender-based difference in the degree to which the fronting is realised. Among the men, */q/ are pronounced with higher energy than among the women, yet without emphasis.

TABLE 2. The de-emphasising/fronting of */q/ in TMA across the Main Areas of the Muṭallaṭ.

	North	Bāqa l-Ġarbiyya	Centre	South
	10,000 words	10,000 words	10,000 words	10,000 words
Women	k	k	k	k
Men	ķ	ķ	ķ/k	k

5.4 The final *imāla* in the feminine singular ending

Similar to what has been reported by Seeger (2009a, 2009b, 2013), the realisation of the final *imāla* of the feminine singular ending is not homogeneous. The phenomenon seems to follow different phonetical rules in the different areas. So, while in the northern area the *imāla* is in general of middle height (-e, not -i), in the south the rising is more intense (-i). Furthermore, in the area of Bāqa l-Ġarbiyya, the *imāla* rising seems to correlate with the height of the preceding vowel, as shown in Table 3. The differences in the degrees of *imāla* rising across the different varieties are purely

phonetic, with no phonological implications. The phonological vowel system is unitary, as in Jastrow (2004).

TABLE 3. The final *imāla* in the feminine singular ending.

	North	Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya	Centre	South
	20,000 words	20,000 words	20,000 words	20,000 words
<i>madrasa</i> 'school'	-a/-e	-a (<i>midrasa</i>)	-e	-i
<i>mʕallima</i> 'teacher' (F)	-a/-e	-e	-e	-i
<i>sxnūna</i> 'warmth'	-a	-a	-e	-i

5.5 The third person masculine singular pronominal suffix

As Seeger (2009a, 2009b, 2013) noted, the treatment of the third MSG pronominal suffix may vary across local varieties. In TMA, this morpheme does not vary as widely as it does around Ramallah. The morpheme */-u/ can be high or lowered to -o, both after names and after verbs.

TABLE 4. The third person masculine singular pronominal suffix.

North	Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya	Centre	South
-u	-o	-o	-o

5.6 Distribution and quality of anaptyctic vowels

In comparison to the sedentary dialects of the Galilee and the Bedouin dialect of the southern Levant, TMA varieties in general do not easily tolerate -CC groups at the ends of words. This phenomenon is reflected in both the nominal and the verbal morphologies. The main reference work on anaptyxis in central rural Palestinian varieties is the work of Palva (1965), who accounts for the existence of different anaptyctic systems in the Lower Galilee and mentions the phonological laws that rule the functioning of the anaptyctic system of Ṭurṣān. As Table 5 shows, different TMA areas have different rules for anaptyxis, regarding the nature of -CC cluster as divided and the type and length of the vowel used as a divider. In northern TMA, as in some of the Lower Galilean types described by Palva (1965), the anaptyxis is absent when the second radical consonant of the word is *r* or *l*. In Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya, anaptyxis is always there: frontal/dental consonants attract the vowel -i-, while in other cases -e- is used. The anaptyctic vowel is a fully articulated vowel, similar to the vowel used in

Ṭülkarem. In central TMA varieties, the anaptyctic vowel is always used and it is very short and quite centralised (°). A full vowel appears after an emphatic sound in all varieties except southern TMA, where the anaptyctic vowel is stably a full *-i-*.

TABLE 5. Distribution and quality of anaptyctic vowels.

(**The vowel */u/ in the group CvCC is usually lowered to *-o-* in the northern TMA varieties, similar to what happens in several Galilean types. Likewise, */i/ in the same group CvCC is usually lowered to *-e-*. ***In fact, in central TMA, the current word for ‘oven’ is *wakḳāde*)

	North	Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya	Centre	South
<i>al-Quds</i> ‘Jerusalem’	<i>al-Ḳods/al-Kods**</i>	<i>al-Ḳudis/al-Kudis</i>	<i>al-Kuds/al-Kud°s</i>	<i>al-Kudis/al-Kud°s</i>
furn ‘oven’	<i>forn</i>	<i>furen</i>	<i>fur°n***</i>	<i>furin</i>
ḥarb ‘war’	<i>ḥarb</i>	<i>ḥareb</i>	<i>ḥar°b</i>	<i>ḥarib</i>
xubz ‘bread’	<i>xob°z</i>	<i>xubez</i>	<i>xub°z</i>	<i>xubiz</i>
milh ‘salt’	<i>melḥ**</i>	<i>miliḥ</i>	<i>mil°ḥ</i>	<i>miliḥ</i>
naṣr ‘victory’	<i>naṣer</i>	<i>naṣer</i>	<i>naṣer</i>	<i>naṣir</i>

5.7 The pre-pausal lowering of *-ī(C)#*

I report here an example of the lowering of *-ī(C)#*, i.e. of stressed *ī* in pre-pausal position. A similar phenomenon is observable for *-ū(C)#*, which is lowered to *ō* under the same conditions.

TABLE 6. The pre-pausal lowering of *-ī(C)#*.

	North	Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya	Centre	South
<i>qalbī</i> ‘my heart’	<i>ḳ/kalbī</i>	<i>ḳ/kalbē</i>		

5.8 Third person singular independent personal pronouns

The series of the independent personal pronouns shows some inter-dialectal differences across TMA varieties, more in terms of preference than of exclusive use. For example, *huwwe/hu* ‘he’ and *hiyye/hi* ‘she’ are both known to TMA elderly speakers.

TABLE 7. Independent personal pronouns.

	North	Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya	Centre	South
‘he’	<i>huwwe/hu</i>	<i>huwwe</i>	<i>hu/huwwe</i>	<i>hūtu/hūti/hu</i>
‘she’	<i>hiyye/hi</i>	<i>hiyye</i>	<i>hi/hiyye</i>	<i>hūtha/hīti/hi</i>

Notably, the long forms are formally feminine nouns and therefore show the degree of the final *imāla* according to the internal rules of each dialect. In the north, elderly people prefer to use the long forms, while young people prefer the short forms. According to the data yielded from the corpus, in central TMA, the elders use the long forms when the pronouns are uttered in isolation (in a pause), while they use the short forms within an utterance. In the south, the independent pronouns pronounced in isolation are *hūti/hīti* and *hūtu/hūtha*, which are also found scattered across the varieties described by Seeger around Ramallah (2009a, 2009b, 2013).

Pragmatic investigations are being carried out in order to reveal the existence of possible additional rules of alternation of long and short pronominal forms in context. Regarding the plural forms of the third person masculine and feminine, southern TMA has *hummi* (M) and *hinni* (F), while central TMA more frequently has *hum* (M) and *hin* (F). The second person masculine and feminine are generally separated in both the singular and the plural, especially in the southern and the central varieties. The southern series is *inta* (MSG), *inti* (FSG), *intu* (MPL) and *intin* (FPL). The northern series sounds: *inti* (M and F), *into* (MPL), *inten* (FPL).

5.9 Demonstrative pronouns

The series of the demonstrative pronouns for close and far objects was originally unitary from a morphological point of view, yet it shows the outcomes of different phonological systems. Notably, the northern variety has just one form for the masculine and the feminine singular close demonstrative. While the final *-a* does not appear in the northern series, it appears very consistently in Bāḩa l-Ġarbiyya. As with other linguistic features, in the series of the demonstratives central and southern varieties are consistent with each other. Similar to what was noted regarding the independent pronouns, the different treatment of **/k/* in the masculine and feminine forms of the second person show that in the southern varieties, the extension of the affrication of **/k/* close to *-a-* and other back vowels is quite a recent phenomenon.

TABLE 8. Demonstrative pronouns.

	North	Bāḩa l-Ġarbiyya	Centre and South
'this' (M)	<i>hāḩ</i>	<i>hāḩa</i>	<i>hāḩa</i>
'this' (F)		<i>hāy</i>	<i>hāḩi</i>
'these' (M, F)	<i>haḩōl</i>	<i>haḩōla</i>	<i>haḩōla</i>
'that' (M)	<i>haḩāk</i>	<i>haḩāka</i>	<i>haḩāk</i>
'that' (F)	<i>haḩiĉ</i>	<i>haḩiĉ</i>	<i>haḩiĉ</i>
'those' (M, F)	<i>haḩlāk</i>	<i>haḩūlāka</i>	<i>haḩōlāk</i>

5.10 Presentative forms

Presentative forms are used for introductions such as ‘here I am!’ and ‘there he is!’ and are one of the grammatical fields in which TMA internal variation is expressed at its best. Table 9 reports only some of the many series of presentative pronouns found across the Muṭallaṭ.

TABLE 9. Presentative forms.

	North	Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya	Centre and South
‘I’	<i>hiyyāni</i>	<i>haḡāni</i>	<i>hayni/haḡani</i>
‘you’ (M)	<i>hiyyātak</i>	<i>haḡanti</i>	<i>hayyak</i>
‘you’ (F)	<i>hiyyātič</i>		<i>hayyič</i>
‘he’	<i>hiyyātu</i>	<i>hāḡu</i>	<i>hayyu/haḡahū</i>
‘she’	<i>hiyyātha</i>	<i>haḡahī</i>	<i>hayha/haḡahī</i>
‘we’	<i>hiyyātna</i>	<i>haḡāhna</i>	<i>hayna</i>
‘you’ (M)	<i>hiyyātkum</i>	<i>haḡantu</i>	<i>hayčum</i>
‘you’ (F)	<i>hiyyāčġin</i>	<i>haḡanten</i>	<i>hayčġin</i>
‘they’ (M)	<i>hiyyāthum</i>	<i>haḡahumme</i>	<i>hayhum/haḡahummi</i>
‘they’ (F)	<i>hiyyāthin</i>	<i>haḡahinne</i>	<i>hayhin/haḡahinni</i>

5.11 The position of the stress in the perfect paradigm

As Jastrow noted (2004), the perfect paradigm of the strong verb presents two different forms for the first and second person singular: *kátabit* and *katábit* (the treatment of the anaptyctic vowel works according to the rules of each dialect). Jastrow also remarked that, in any case, these forms never overlap with the third person feminine singular, which is always *katbat*. According to my data, the form *katábit* ‘I/you (M) wrote’ is typical only of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya.

5.12 The position of the stress in the third person masculine plural of the imperfect

In the third person masculine plural of the imperfect, TMA varieties, especially in the southern area, use two different forms derived from different anaptyctic strategies interchangeably. Thus, in the recordings, both *byúskunu* and *byúsknu* ‘they dwell’ can be heard, similar to what Blanc observed among the Galilean Druze (1953).

5.13 TMA internal lexical variation

One of the most striking aspects of TMA internal variation is the presence of several clearly different lexical items for objects associated with the traditional life. Alongside lexical internal variation, TMA dialects also use different roots for very basic actions and states, even for the verb 'to be.' Furthermore, the morpho-phonological outcomes of even simple and very frequent verbal forms vary across TMA varieties. Table 10 reports a small number of cases. The existence of a southern lexical facies that diverges from the central and northern one is a matter of fact, clearly demonstrated among TMA varieties and continuing in members of the young generations.

TABLE 10. Some examples of the internal TMA morpho-lexical variation.

	North	Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyya	Centre	South
'broom'	<i>miknasa/e</i>	<i>moṣṣaḥa/mičinse</i>	<i>mičinsi</i>	
'I was'	<i>kun't</i>	<i>bakét</i>		
'he eats'	<i>bōkel</i>	<i>bōkel</i>	<i>bōkel/byočel</i>	<i>byōčil</i>
'plastic cups'	<i>kubbayāt plastik</i>	<i>kabābi plastik</i>	<i>xadpamí</i>	<i>čulūčib</i>
'watch!'	<i>fakkir</i>	<i>šūf</i>	<i>šūf/baḥḥar</i>	<i>šūf</i>
'he types'	<i>bikbis</i>	<i>byikbis</i>	<i>buṭbuš</i>	
'girls'	<i>banāt</i>	<i>banawitti</i>	<i>banāt</i>	
'cemetery'	<i>mağğanna</i>	<i>mikbara</i>	<i>makbara</i>	
'olive tree'		<i>zītōn</i>	<i>resīs</i>	
'bee'		<i>samle</i>	<i>naḥle/i</i>	
'cauliflower'		<i>kambūṭa</i>	<i>zāhara</i>	
'slim'		<i>ḍīf</i>	<i>rakaš</i>	
'baskets'		<i>sallāt</i>	<i>slāl</i>	

6 Conclusions and further plans: towards a linguistic atlas of Traditional Muṭallaṭ dialects

I hope I have at least partially demonstrated the existence of different aspects of variability within the borders of the linguistic region called the Muṭallaṭ, in particular among its traditional dialects. The distribution of linguistic characteristics identifies at least four areas from north to south. From a lexical point of view, at least two macro-areas are clearly evident, one northern and one southern, with profoundly different characters. I have reported only a small number of the changing features. Many others are currently under investigation. Due to the complexity of the distribution of linguistic features and in order to provide a historical interpretation of the

internal diversity of the area, I will prepare a linguistic atlas of the area that represents the geographical and social distribution of variable characteristics.

To conclude, the preliminary analyses carried out so far have encouraged me to support the hypothesis expressed by Palva (1984) that the Muṭallat is a transitional area, characterised by koineization phenomena rather than shared innovations (as in the case of the overextension of *k > č in the south). The region has historically been subject to influences from both rural central-southern Palestine (Galilee and the Ramallah area) and the Bedouins of the Syrian area. As a general pattern, innovative features seem to begin in different focal areas and move from north to south along the path of the caravan route. Morphological and lexical elements are differently distributed across the area in a complex and nuanced way. Therefore, each feature should be identified and described on a geographical basis.

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