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The Golden Season of Olive Harvesting and Weddings Without Limousines: A Text in the Central Traditional Muṭallaṭ Arabic of Ṭaybe

ABSTRACT The text represents an excerpt from an intergenerational conversation in the Muṭallaṭ Arabic of Ṭaybe between a 73-year-old grandmother and her grandson, a student at Tel Aviv University. In the introduction, I describe the loss of the emphasis on */q/ and the affrication of */k/, highlighting the differences between the generational varieties of both participants. The variety spoken by the elders shows interesting pausal forms at the ends of both speech units and speech turns. The conversation focuses on two traditional themes of rural life in Palestine, the olive harvest and a wedding celebration.

KEYWORDS affrication, Arabic dialectology, loss of emphasis, Muṭallaṭ Arabic, Muṭallaṭ dialectology, Palestinian anthropology, Rural Palestinian Arabic, Ṭaybe Arabic, field research

This is a passage taken from a long interview conducted by a student from Tel Aviv University with his grandmother. Over the last two years, Amir Aḡmal has extensively recorded family members, all native to the area of Ṭaybe. In his interviews, the old lifestyle is the focus. Marriage, food and traditional medicine are the most common topics. In this interaction between Amir and his grandmother, one can notice that Amir pronounces */q/ as /q/, and only rarely deemphasises it (only twice in this text, in *kulli*, ‘tell me’ and in *ndukk*, ‘we beat’). He also makes an extensive use of /ʔ/, especially at words’ onset. The use of initial /ʔ/ is quite rare in Traditional Muṭallaṭ Arabic (TMA), with some exceptions (see below: *ʔilna* ‘to us’). Furthermore, Amir never uses [č].

In general, Amir's pronunciation is thus quite different from that of his grandmother. In her speech, a phenomenon quite widely spread among the speakers of central TMA of her generation is evident, i.e. the use of /k/ for both */q/ and for most of the occurrences of */k/. Central TMA is characterised, especially among women, by a very high level of overlap of [k] and [č]. That is, */k/ is pronounced both [k] and [č], according to the preference of each speaker, or even in both ways in the same words by the same speaker, apparently fully interchangeably. Furthermore, as shown in this text, women pronounce */q/ as the fully deemphasised [k]. As a result of the entire system of shifts, in the speech of many women of the central Muṭallaṭ, [k] can express both */q/ and */k/, which is the case of Amir's grandmother, reported here. In this text, the elderly woman pronounces */k/ as [č] only once, in *hičī*, the modal adverb 'so, this way', where the phoneme /k/ is found in a fronted environment.

Thus, as this excerpt shows, the phonological profile of central TMA is difficult to define. The situation of Ṭaybe and the central Muṭallaṭ has also been complicated by the wave of immigration from the coastal villages and, more markedly, cities (especially Jaffa) after 1948. Amir's family claims to be native to Ṭaybe and not to have hosted foreign elements. Nonetheless, the contact with Western varieties could have caused internal changes even among the local native population. The absence of the affricate pronunciation of */k/ could also be the outcome of school training that this woman received before marrying, even though it was restricted to elementary classes. Despite her age, she may have been influenced by the literary language and even by contact with Hebrew, which is quite a rare finding among the elderly women of the Muṭallaṭ. Indeed, Amir uses the Hebrew word *hitpatxuti* 'evolutionary, developed', meaning 'modern, up-to-date'.

A further interesting phenomenon observable here is the lowering of */i/ in a pause in TMA, not observed in the speech of Amir and his generation. So, in a pause, while his grandmother says: *tisfa w-sittēn... sabʿēn* 'sixty-nine, seventy-nine', Amir says: *tisfa w-sittīn* 'sixty-nine'. The effect of the pause position is evident in this text in the word *iši*, 'thing', which is short within speech unit, long at speech unit borders (*iši*), and lower at the end of a speech turn (*išē*). Also the word *kbiri*, 'big' (FSG), is pronounced *kbīre*, with a /the lowering of the final -i at speech unit border.

The form *lalli*, 'to those who...' is the development of *la-illi*.

The TMA represented here has the *imāla* of the feminine singular ending as [-a] in emphatic context, as [-e] and [-i] in other cases, not according to systematic rules.

In the transcription, the vowel length and high represent the actual way in which the speakers pronounce the sounds. This kind of transcription enables the reader to notice the difference between the pronunciation of TMA in the younger generations; in TMA, long vowels within the same word are pronounced long, while young people pronounce length only in the last long and accented vowel (Amir pronounces *zamamīr*, instead of *zamāmīr*, 'klaxons').

Text

Interviewer (A): Amir Ağmal, age 21, Muslim, born and currently living in Țaybe, BA student at Tel Aviv University in Arabic and Islamic Studies

Speaker (B): Woman, Muslim, age 73, born and currently living in Țaybe

- A: 1. *bima innu ihna bmawsim 'zzatūn ibtiqdari tišraḥīli šan qatf 'zzatūn bišūra bašīta?*
- B: 2. *ā, bakēna lamma nrūḥ šazzatūn zmān nifriš tiḥt 'zzatūn šarāšif aw nāylūn mišān wiḥna nuxruḥ 'zzatūn, nuxurḥu mišān mā yitbaštariš. 3. nimsik furraš furraš, wilwāḥad yuḡrud wyinzil šala ššarāšif illi fardinha. 4. wṭabšan lamma nxalliš xilāl innhār bitšabba bišwalāt wkānu yiḡamfu šind ahli li-annu šindhum saḥāt ikbire. 5. whunāka 'nburrū yašni nṭallif ilaxḍar laršēf lašal willi la-zzīt lašal šabīn mā yixalšu mawsim 'zzatūn.*
- A: 6. *whaḍāka kīf niršaḥu? fi mašāšir šadīti lyūm.*
- B: 7. *laʔbakat ʔarikit 'rrašif ḡiddan ḡiddan ḥilwi wbadēša yašni bidaʔiyyi. 8. nistašmil idīna iktīr ḥabbi ḥabbi, fi nistašmil ya ḥḡār ḥīci šabšar zayy 'ššuwwān 'ššḡir indukk fiha aw mdakka mdakka xašab barḍu šabīn mā tiftāḥ ilḥabbe. 9. wnibka ḥaṭṭīn iṭwāš fihin mayyi willā ṭšūti winḥut ilišī niršaḥu fihin mišān mā yiswadiš. 10. wbašdēn lamma biddna nuxḍu nšanšu nistašmil illamūn, nistašmil ilmīlḥ kul ḥāy lšumūr. 11. whaḍāk lazzit yuxḍū šalšaššāra, lšaššāra... bakat fi šaššāra fi lbalad kadīmi yuxḍūha illi yiḍimnū yinsilu šanno nās illi yiḍimnū šanušš šaḥušša yašni ida šimil 'zzatūn šašar tanakāt xamse lalli ḍāmīn wxamsi ʔilna.*
- A: 12. *ʔayyib uxra suʔāl. barḍu ihna bmwasim ašrās. šraḥīli yumha baṭṭallaš lemuzīn wmaršidīs biṭlašu wbirkabu. 13. wbašūf yašni manāḍīr ḡarībi wšaḡībi wzamamīr wḥaflāt wdēḡi wḡanāni biššiyāra wyašni iši muṭaṭwir yašni iši toxnoloḡi azyad HḥitbathūtiH xallīna nkūl fi maḡāl inti baqitiš fiḥ. inti nxalakti winta?*
- B: 14. *sant ilxamse warbšēn.*
- A: 15. *yašni kulli... ta tḡawwazti...*
- B: 16. *tisša wsittēn... sabšēn.*
- A: 17. *tisša, tisša wsittīn. btiḡdari tišraḥīli kīf kunti tiṭlaši? šalimuzīn?... bakaš limuzīn?*
- B: 18. *la. la. wala limuzīn wala išē.*
- A: 19. *šraḥīli kīf xaṭabti... tḡawwazti.*
- B: 20. *ḥitta ilšarīs li šindo sayyāra wala zīni wala išī, ihna ayyāmha kant... stīšīn šind sīdak istišīn wfiha volsvaḡin istišīn, yašni maf šaʔiliyyi wšafārna fiha. 21. ī kanu marrāt mā niṭlašif fi lbadli lbīḍa, nḡayyir infaššil fušṭān aw ṭakīm rasmi ida ddīnya šatawiyyi aw šēf miš muhimm w-tiṭlaš fi ḥāḍa l-fuṣṭān mišant da trūḥ šala l-utīl. 22. wiḍḍahāb illi bilabbisha iyyā yūmit ilxuṭbe tibka lilit issahra labisto bass lamma tīḡi trūḥ šahr ilšasal illi binsammī tišlaḥu nišan ma yišriš sirḡāt itxalli bas 'ddible yašni fi idha mišān ilišāra, wiḍa ilšarīs bisūk ṭabšan hu illi bišūk 'ššayyāra wbwīšal iluīl, ayyām ma ihna kunna ḥaḡzīn fi ṭabariyya kant iddīnya šatawiyye.*

- A: 1. Since we are in the olive picking season, can you explain to me about picking the olives in a simple way?
- B: 2. Yes, when we went to pick olives in the past, we would put mattresses or plastic sheets under the olive trees because when we harvested the olives, we harvested them so that they would not scatter. 3. We caught branch after branch, and each one was picked and fell on the mattresses that we had put (under the trees). 4. And of course, while we were completing the harvesting towards the end of the daylight hours, the harvest was collected into sacks that people collected at my family's house because there they had large yards. 5. And there we would separate, chose, the olives into two types: the first type is the green olives and the second type is the black olives, and we put it aside until they would finish the season of the olive harvesting and that was the way we harvested the olives.
- A: 6. And how would you harvest the olives? Because today there are modern squeezers...
- B: 7. No, the method of harvesting was very, very beautiful, and also simple. 8. We used our hands a lot, pit by pit, for this we did use stones, this like, pointed, like small narrow, narrow stones and also wood, leaves, until the pit split into two parts. 9. We took buckets with plenty of water or whatever else and we put the harvest in there so that it did not turn into black. 10. And then, when we wanted to, we put it into jars using lemon, we used the salt, and everything. 11. And so we took the olives to the press, the press. There was a press in the old country, a old one. Some trusted people took the olives there for fifty percent, for example if the olives would give ten tanks [of oil], five were for them and five for us.
- A: 12. Okay! Another question. Today we are also in the wedding season. Today I see people traveling and riding limousines and Mercedeses. 13. I see wonderful and strange visions, klaxons and parties and DJs and songs in the cars, i.e. something more modern, technological and developed, let's say, in a way that you haven't experienced. In what year were you born?
- B: 14. In forty-five.
- A: 15. So, tell me... until you married...
- B: 16. Sixty-nine, seventy-nine.
- A: 17. Nine, sixty-nine. Can you tell me how you went out to the wedding party? In a limousine? There was no limousine...
- B: 18. No, no. No limousine at all.
- A: 19. Tell me how you got engaged and married.
- B: 20. And even the groom who had a car would not decorate it and not do all kinds of things. Back then, there was a car in your grandfather's family, a Volkswagen station wagon, and we used to travel in it. 21. And we (the brides) did not always appear in a white suit, we used to go to the seamstress to have a dress or a suit made, no matter if it was summer or winter, and we would go to the hotel in that dress and not a white suit. 22. And the gold he had given her the day of

the engagement, she would keep wearing the evening of the party, but when she would go on the honeymoon, as we call it, she would take it off, so that it wouldn't get stolen. She would leave only the ring on her hand, as a sign, and if the groom drives, then he is the one who drives the car to the hotel. Back then, we were guests in Tiberias and the season was cold.

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