Arab-Berber contacts in the Middle Ages and ancient Arabic dialects: new evidence from an old Ibāḍite religious text

Vermondo Brugnatelli

The modern Berber languages of North Africa contain a quantity of borrowings from Arabic, as a result of substantial contacts over many centuries. The analysis of these data provides a rich source of information for studies on linguistic contact from a typological point of view as well as for research on the early history of the Arabic dialects in a diachronic perspective. This field of research has not yet been methodically investigated – though some studies already exist, concerning general issues (Chaker 1984; van den Boogert and Kossmann 1997; Ameur 2011) as well as some specific linguistic areas: Tuareg (Pellat 1962; Prasse 1986; Brugnatelli 1995), Jerba (Brugnatelli 2002), Rif (Kossmann 2009), Mauritania (Taine-Cheikh 2008). The study of ancient sources might enhance the historical research, inasmuch as it would provide evidence much older than contemporary languages, which have been known only since a couple of centuries at most. Unfortunately, the number of ancient Berber texts published so far is small and limited to Morocco (van den Boogert 1997), but our knowledge of old Eastern Berber is improving thanks to new texts from the Ibāḍite area (Southern Tunisia, Northern Libya, Eastern Algeria).

1. The ancient text

One century ago, Motylinsky (1907) announced the discovery of a substantial commentary in Medieval Berber on the *Mudawwana*, a

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compendium of Ibāḍite jurisprudence by Abū Ġānim Bišr b. Ġānim al-Ḫurāsānī and offered 16 short excerpts of it. The untimely death of the French scholar prevented any further publication on the "*Moudaououana d'Ibn R'anem*"[1] and the whereabouts of the sources he was working with have remained unknown for a long time. After a long pause, some manuscripts have been newly (re-)discovered and some more information has been published by Ould-Braham (2008 and 2009), U-Madi (n.d.) and Brugnatelli (2010 and 2011)[2].

The linguistic material contained in the *Mudawwana* allows for a preliminary research on some aspects of language contact between Berber and Arabic in the Middle Ages. The date of composition of this text is not known but it most probably goes back to a very early period – at an undetermined time between the 10th and 15th centuries. According to the first lines of a hand-written glossary of ancient words extracted from this text (Bossoutrot 1900), the author was a certain Abū Zakarīyaʾ al-ʾIfrānī who is unknown from other sources, while the glossary was established by order of the sheikh "Messaoud ben Salah ben Abd el Ala", whom Ould Braham (2008: 56, 58) identifies with Masʿūd b. Ṣāliḥ al-Ṣamumnī, a sheikh who ruled in Djerba during the 16th century. If its language was so

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1   This is the title Motylinski consistently used in his works (1905: 146 and 1907: 68 and 69). Other designations are "commentaire de la *Medawana* d'Ibn Ghanem" (Bossoutrot 1900: 489) and "*Modawana* d'Ibn Ghanem" (R. Basset 1907: 540). The catalogue of the National Library in Tunis wrongly records a manuscript of this text under another author, Abdallāh b. ʿUmar b. Ġānim. On the contrary, both Ould-Braham (2008 and 2009) and U Madi (n.d.) refer to the author by his *kunya* Abū Ġānim instead of his *nasab* Ibn Ġānim.

2   The manuscript I use for my analyses is the longest one, bearing the title *Kitāb al-Barbariyya*. It is located in the National Library of Tunis (black and white photographs, Ms.Or. 2550). A microfilmed copy is also kept in the University Library of Aix-en-Provence (n° 125.3-6 in the catalogue of Stroomer and Peyron 2003).

archaic that a glossary was needed to explain the meaning of many vocables, the text must have been composed at a much earlier date[3].

A short poem quoted in the manuscript (f. 278a, l. 10-13) mentions a Hārūn ibn Yūnus who probably coincides with Abū Mūsā Hārūn ibn Yūnus al-Izāyī of the Kutāma tribe of the Masalta, the "supreme shaykh" (*šayḫ al mašāyiḫ*) at the time of the Fatimid Mahdi (beginning of the 10th century), and this establishes a *terminus post quem* for the composition of the text.

Some philological considerations too, such as the spelling of [g], with <ǧ> and not with <q>, point to a period prior to the Hilālī invasion or very close to it[4]. Bossoutrot (1900: 489) suggests that the *Mudawwana* was composed "some time before the 9th Century AH", without telling where this information comes from.

2. Contact phenomena: borrowings

The evidence which permits to detect contact phenomena lies chiefly in the numerous Arabic loanwords found in the manuscript. They are especially frequent in the field of religion, even if some native vocabulary (sometimes

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3   It should be noted, though, that the colophon of a manuscript studied by U Madi (n. d.: 4) states that it was copied in 1208 AH (1794 AD) by a secretary (*kātib*) of Masʿūd b. al-Ḥāǧǧ Ṣāliḥ b. Sulaymān b. al-Ḥāǧǧ ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm b. al-Ḥāǧǧ Idrīs b. al-Ḥāǧǧ Abū l-Qāsim b. al-Murābiṭ ʿAbd al-ʿAlâ b. Yūnis b. Mūsâ b. Yaḫlif b. Sufyān al-Maʿqilī. The sheikh named in Bossoutrot's glossary seems more likely to correspond to this individual than to the ruler of the 16th century.

4   In my transcription, I always transcribe <ǧ> with ǧ, since in many cases it is impossible to determine whether it represents [ǧ] or [g]. Moreover, when I do not quote other authors, I tend to use for Berber the standard orthography of Kabyle (whenever appropriate), which differs in some points from the standard transcription of Arabic: < c > stays for < š >, < γ > for < ġ >, < x > for < ḫ >, < ɛ > for < ʿ > (moreover, vowel length is not marked, and < e > renders [ə]). This is intended to help the reader discern what I consider Berber or Arabic in this composite text (in the examples, the two languages will also be differentiated by means of **boldface** vs. regular letters).

of Latin origin) is still preserved. According to the time of the borrowing, loanwords are more or less adapted to Berber phonology and morphology.

In some cases, above all in everyday vocabulary, borrowings tend to reflect a spoken variety of Arabic rather than the literary language, and this reveals some early features of North African dialects.

An interesting remark concerns the names of the Arabs and of their language, which are not expressed by means of borrowings (Arabic endonyms), but through a xenonym formerly widespread among the Byzantines and in Europe: *aseryin*, pl. *iseryinen* "Saracen, Arab"; *taseryint* "the Arabic language". In present-day Berber we still find these terms in the easternmost oases of Augila (*ašeryîn*) and Siwa (*aṣeryên*)[5]. In the manuscript, *aseryin* is used not only as a noun (many quotations are preceded by *yenwa useryin* "an Arab said", or *nnan iseryinen* "the Arabs say") but also as an attribute, as we can see in the opposition: *yur aseryin / yur aεeğmi* "Arab, i.e. Islamic, lunar month" *vs.* "non-Arab, i.e. indigenous, North African, Julian month" (f. 244b, l. 12).

Both languages, Berber and Arabic, are referred to in the following passage: *ula t_taseryint ağğ_eğğull ula t_tamaziyt* [= *ula d taseryint ay yeğğull ula d tamaziyt*] "whether he took an oath in Arabic or in Berber" (f. 133b, l. 6).

2.1. Borrowings in the domain of religion

The vast quantity of borrowings in the spiritual and religious domain is not surprising. It is a well known fact that even the Tuareg lexicon, which is the least affected by Arabic influence, displays the highest rate of loanwords in this domain[6]. In any case, the great antiquity of this texts is also proved by the preservation of a rich indigenous lexicon, not yet supplanted by Arabic, in the spiritual and religious sphere. A number of these terms are the remnants of an older Christian vocabulary containing also Latin

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5   From Coptic *sarakēn-os* according to Vycichl (2005: 192).

6   See Chaker (1984) and the short discussion in Brugnatelli (1995: 64).

borrowings, sometimes of Greek or Hebrew origin. Some examples of this pre-Arabic religious lexicon: *Yuc* and *Bab-enney* "God, Allāh" along with *ababay*, pl. *ibabayyen* "(a) god, deity" (Brugnatelli 2010); *aykuzen* "*Islām*"; *anǧlusen* "*malāʾika*, angels" (< Latin < Greek); *adaymun*, pl. *idaymunen* "*aš-šayṭān*, the devil" (< Latin < Greek); *tira* "the Book, the *Qurʾān*" (Ar. gloss: *al-kitāb, ay al-Qurʾān*, f. 300b, l. 8); *iser* "*nabīʾ*, *rasūl*, prophet, messenger"; the daily prayers: *tizzarnin* "*ẓuhr*, noon prayer", *tuqzin* "*ʿaṣr*, afternoon prayer" *tin wuččū* "*maġrib*, evening prayer", *tin yiḍes* "*ʿišāʾ*, night prayer", *tin wezečča* "*ṣubḥ*, dawn prayer"[7]; *tifellas* "people of the book" (Ar. glosses: *ahl al-ǧizya wa al-ʿahd*, f. 299b, l. 12; *ahl kitāb yaʾtūna al-ǧizya*, f. 299b, l. 12); *imusnawen* "*fuqahāʾ*, experts in Islamic Law"; *tafeṣka*, pl. *tifeṣkawin* "*ʿīd*, religious feast" (< Latin < Hebrew); *tir meǧǧut* and *abekkaḍu* (< Latin) "sin"; *taǧerzawt* "*nadam*, repentance"; *amerkiḍu* "*ʾaǧr*, recompense, reward" (< Latin); *aymir* "*ḥudūd*, ordinances prescribed by God"; *uluf* "*ṭalāq*, repudiation, divorce" ; *amaṯus* "the *walī*, a male relative of the bride"; *ekeseṯ* "to inherit"; *tamzilt* "*kaffāra*, expiation (of crime, sin)"; *tiɣri* "*qirāʾa*, recitation"; *asireḏ* and *asineǧ* "*ġusl, wuḍūʾ*, ablution"[8]; *tazduǧi* "*ṭahāra*, purification", and so on.

Among the Arabic loanwords, various degrees of integration in the language can be observed. Due to the mixed nature of the text, which often combines Berber and Arabic, even within a single utterance[9], in many cases

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7   On the names of the Islamic prayers, see the remarks of van den Boogert and Kossmann (1997: 319-321). The last term confirms the use of a calque for the prayer of dawn, since *azečča* probably had the primary meaning of "dawn". Interestingly, the gloss in f. 191b, l. 13 translates *tin wezečča* with *ṣalāt al-ṣubḥ* and not with *faǧr*.

8   The specific value of these terms is described in the following passage: *al-wuḍūʾ al-ʾaʿlâ **d asineǧ** wa al-wuḍūʾ al-ʾasfal **d asireḏ*** "The ablution of the upper parts is *asineǧ*, that of the nether parts is *asireḏ*"(f. 6a, l. 3-4).

9   An example of this mixed code: *Enwan: tebḏa tẓalliṯ eḏ wuẓum: taẓalliṯ wel teṣṣeḥḥ **ʾillā ʿalâ wuḍūʾ**, es yiluctuyen zeddiyeṯ eḏ wemkan zeddiṯ eḏ elebden zeddiṯ; uẓum, netta, iṣeḥḥ s weḏmawen-din elkul yesliḏ iṯaf n waman* "they said: prayer and fasting are different: a prayer is not valid **without an ablution**, with clean dresses, a clean place, a clean body; as to fasting, it is valid under the same conditions, apart from entering of water" (f. 71a, ll. 3-5). The short Arabic

it is difficult to realise whether a term is a borrowing or a purely Arabic word inserted in the sentence, as can be seen in the following example:

f. 2a, l. 21-22

f. 2b, l. 1-2
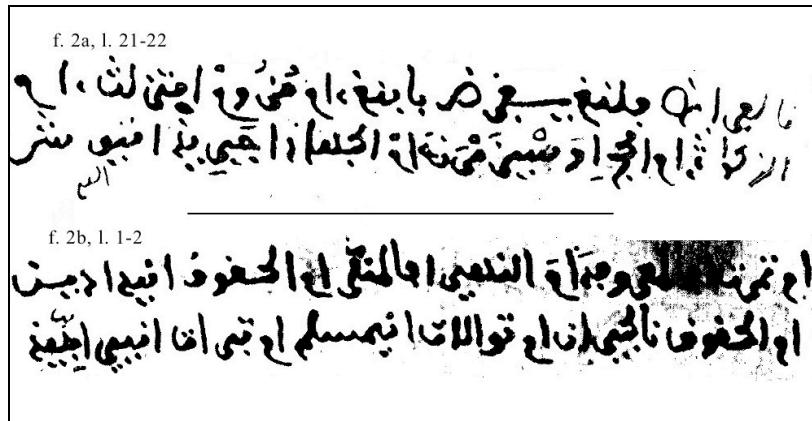
*(n) elferayḍ fell-aneɣ yefreḍ Bab-enneɣ, amm_uẓum, am teẕalliṭ, am **az-zakā**, am elḥeǧǧ i w'as-izemren, am elǧehaḍ eǧǧ_ebriḍ en Yuc, am temmert n elmeɛruf, am ennehi af elmenker, am eleḥquq en yedaddayen, am eleḥquq en elǧiran, am twalaṭ en yemeslem am tebra't en yir eǧǧiḍ*

"(of) the obligations God imposed upon us, like fast, prayer, **alms**, the pilgrimage for him who can afford it, striving in the way of God, the promotion of Virtue and the prevention of Vice, the rights of parents, the rights of the neighbours, closeness to muslims and distance towards the infidels..." (f. 2a, l. 21-f. 2b, l. 2).

In the whole passage, replete with slightly Berberised loanwords, it seems that only *az-zakā* is an Arabic word written out in the traditional way, with *tā' marbūṭa* and a "quiescent" *waw*,[10] while in other occurrences, like *ezzeka-s* "his alms" (f. 53a, l. 5) and *ezzeka-nsen* "their alms" (f. 54b,

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insert (here in boldface) could be easily expressed with a Berber phrase (namely: *as s usireḍ*) and the reason of this phenomenon is unclear.

10 I.e. a *waw* letter written out instead of *'alif* as a mark of long *ā* before *tā' marbūṭa* (mark of feminine). This orthographic feature typically affects some words in the domain of religion, such as *zakātun* "alms" or *ṣalātun* "prayer".

l. 5) the word is undoubtedly considered a Berber one, provided with possessive affixes and lacking *tāʾ marbūṭa*; as a consequence, it is highly probable that even in the given example the word is a loanword (probably to be read *ezzeka*[11]), although the writing reflects the traditional Arabic orthography.

The suggestion that the vocabulary related to religion is the domain where the earliest borrowings entered the language, is supported by the consideration of the terms used for the cardinal directions: three out of four are still expressed by Berber words: *aneḏfir* "north", *mineǧ* "east", *tezzaṯ* "west", while *elqibelt* "south" takes it name from the *qibla*, the "direction of the prayer".

2.2. Berberised borrowings

The most "Berberised" borrowings in the field of religion are probably also the earliest ones. Some of them have already been examined by van den Boogert and Kossmann (1997) : *uẓum* "fast" (and *ẓum* "to fast"), *ẓall* "to pray" (with a purely Berber verbal noun *taẓalliṯ*, pl. *tiẓilla* "prayer"), *tamezǧiḏa*, pl. *timezǧiḏawin* "mosque" (< Ar. *masǧid*[12]).

Another loanword belonging to the same group is *tazenna*, from the Arabic *sunna* "the tradition (of the Prophet or of his companions)". As a matter of fact, this word, very frequent in a text of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), is fully Berberised with the feminine prefix *t(a)-* and a final *-a* instead of the morpheme *-eṯ* which usually corresponds to *tāʾ marbūṭa* in later borrowings. The voicing of non-emphatic *s > z* is noteworthy since it

11 The vocalisation of most of these borrowings is only conjectural, since vowels are seldom marked, and even in the presence of vocalisation, *fatḥa* may transcribe [a] as well as [ə].

12 As I have already suggested elsewhere (Brugnatelli 1999: 330), the feminine form of this borrowing probably derives from its superposition to an ancient Christian word, like *taɣlisya* < Latin *ecclesia* "church, place of worship". About *taɣlisya*, still attested in toponymy, see Lewicki (1958: 428, 444) and Brugnatelli (2004: 35-36).

also appears in other Arabic borrowings in some modern Berber dialects, for instance *ezhel* "be easy" (dialect of Jerba).

This word has a Berber plural form *tizenwin*. as can be seen in the following passage where both the singular and the plural form occur:
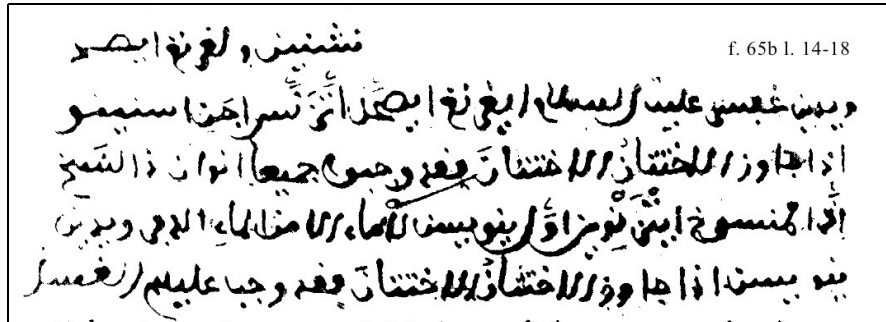
*necnin, wel ɣer-neɣ iṣeḥḥ waydin ɣeff_iser – **ʿalay-hi s-salām** – ay ɣer-neɣ iṣeḥḥ et_tzenna-s eǧǧ_ani asen-yenwa (...) Nnwan d ennasx edd elmensux i tzenwin: ewwel yenwa-yasen (...), al-deffer waydin yenwa-yasen (...)*
"as for us, we do not consider valid this about the Prophet (PBUH). What we consider valid is his *sunna* where he told them (...). They said that there is something abrogating and something abrogated in *sunnas*: at first he told them (...); after that, he told them (...)" (f. 65b, l. 14-18)

The plural form *tizenwin* from the singular *tazenna* is fully integrated in the Zanata and Eastern Berber morphology, where a tense/geminated consonant followed by a final vowel in feminine nouns is replaced, in the plural, by a simple consonant + *w*, for instance: *tareṭṭa* "stalk of a palm leaf" pl. *tireḍwin*, *tazeqqa* "room" pl. *tizeɣwin*, *tayinna* "wheel" pl. *tiyinwin*, *tinelli* "thread" pl. *tinelwin* (Djerba).

Interestingly, also some personal nouns are sometimes Berberised, in particular the names of the most often cited authors, like *Ḥaṯim* (*Ḥātim*), *U Mesɛuḏ* (*Ibn Masʿūd*), *Bu Ɣanem* (*Abu Ġānim*), *Belmuwarriǧ* (*Abū al-Muˀarriǧ*), *U Ɛebdelɛziz* (*Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz*).

Some ancient borrowings, recognizable by their Berber morphology, belong to another important domain, namely economy and trade: *aḏrim* (pl.

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iḏrimen) "money", *amenkuc* (pl. *imenkac*) meaning "*dīnār*" and *taṯeǧǧart* "*tiǧāra*, commerce". All of them have received the nominal prefix of state and display some phonetic changes typical of the oldest loanwords: *aḏrim* comes from Arabic *dirham* or, more probably, from its plural form *darāhim*, and the consonantal changes consist of the loss of the foreign sound *h* and the spirantisation of post-vocalic *d*. As for *amenkuc*, it comes from a participle *manqūš* "coined (money)" and this shift *q > k* also represents the transformation of a foreign sound (non-geminated *q*) into the most similar one in the old phonology of Berber. The spirantisation of a post-vocalic dental also takes place in *taṯeǧǧart*, which preserves the feminine gender of Arabic *tiǧāra*, marked with the Berber circumfix *ta- ... -t*.

Another foreign sound which was simply elided in the earliest borrowings is the Arabic *ʿayn* (the voiced pharyngeal fricative [ʕ]). An example is the verb *enfu* from *nafaʿa* "be useful", with a verbal noun *tineffa* corresponding to an Arabic gloss *manfaʿa* "utility" (302b, l. 16). The loss of this sound is also typical of the oldest Arabic borrowings in Tuareg, as Prasse pointed out (1986: 512).

Other borrowings which appear fully Berberised are measures, like *tabruḏi* pl. *tibruḏiwin* (f. 42a, l. 12-15) < *barūd* "unit of length, equal to 4 parasangs" or *ireḏlen* (Arabic gloss = *ʾarṭāl* f. 231a, l. 2) < *raṭl* "unit of weight and capacity", as well as some numerals.

The language of this text displays Berber numerals from one to ten ("1" *iǧǧen*, "2" *sen* , "3" *careḏ*, "4" *uqqez*, "5" *semmes*, "6" *ḏza* or *zaz*, "7" *sa*, "8" *tam*, "9" *tis*, "10" *mraw*), along with hundred(s) (*tmiḏi*, pl. *timaḏ*) and thousand(s) (*ifeḏ*, pl. *ifḏan*), but numbers and decades between 11 and 99 are always expressed with Arabic borrowings. Borrowings were also used for many fractions. Their degree of adaptation to the Berber phonology and morphology is variable: for instance, in the same passage (f. 187a, l. 19-20) one finds *errubɛ n eddiyeṯ* "1/4 of the *diya* (blood money)" but *careḏ iruban n eddiyeṯ* "3/4 of the *diya*": the singular has an Arabic form, while the plural is fully Berberised.

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2.3. Use of borrowings

In some cases, the loanword does not replace the corresponding Berber word in all instances, but exists alongside it. Many reasons may be summoned to account for this situation.

In the case of *ezzeman* "time" (*e.g.* f. 302a, l. 20 *ǧ_ezzeman* = Arabic gloss *fī zamān*), two other Berber words expressing the same concept are also used in the text, namely *tamestant* (Arab gloss: *waqt ay ʾaǧal*, f. 231a.1) and *temmirt*, plural *timmirin* (Arab gloss resp. *waqt* f. 49a.4 and *ʾawqāt* f. 54a, l. 5). Probably these words were used with slight differences in meaning ("instant", "occasion", "fixed time, deadline", etc.), but at this stage of my research I am not able to single them out with precision.

Sometimes, a chapter uses a Berber word while in another chapter the Arabic counterpart is used: in such cases, one could take into account a diachronic evolution in different phases of composition of this work. For instance, the word *asersur* meaning " *ḥuǧǧa*, proof, evidence" (Arabic gloss f. 96a, l. 12) is never used in the first book (*Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* "Article of Faith"), which seems a late addition to a text which did not originally comprise a chapter on *Tawḥīd*[13], while the late borrowing *lḥuǧǧet* is consistently used instead. One could argue that by the time of composition of this book the Berber word had already been replaced by the borrowing.

The use of an Arabic borrowing instead of a Berber word might also be related to linguistic taboo and/or socio-linguistic factors (diaphasic or diamesic variations). For example, the pan-Berber word *tameṭṭuṯ*, "woman, wife" is virtually non-existent in this text, which almost always uses the word *lɛewreṯ*, borrowed from Arabic *ʿawra*, whose basic meaning is "all that which modesty does not permit to uncover and to look at". The only instance where the word *tameṭṭuṯ* occurs is a passage quoting a popular saying, introduced by *nnan midden* "people say" (f. 238a, l. 19): *(...) amm_ani tameṭṭuṯ yifen arǧaz wel tewiḍ tmeṭṭuṯ arǧaz kayfa as-tili ?* "(...) as if (one said) that a woman is better than a man: (since) a woman cannot

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13 The original *Mudawwana*, of which this text is a commentary, did not possess a chapter on *Tawḥīd*.

reach a man, how could she prevail over him?"[14]. This circumstance points to the existence and use of the common word *tameṭṭuṭ* in everyday speech, in contrast with the learned borrowing *lɛewreṯ* which was used in formal written texts.

It is noteworthy that the plural is expressed with a Berber word, *tiseḏnan* (Arabic gloss: *al-nisāʾ*, f. 305a, l. 10), thus recreating a suppletive paradigm, typical of Berber as well as of Arabic (Brugnatelli, forthcoming). Euphemistic concern might also account for the use of *elɛeḏur* (in Bossoutrot's glossary: *al-ḥayḍ aw an-nifās* "les menstrues ou l'état de la femme qui vient d'accoucher, ou bien encore l'hémorragie qui suit l'accouchement"), from *ʿuḏr* "excuse", since menstruation and puerperium exempt from prayer[15].

In some cases, one finds the parallel borrowings of singular and plural nouns, which leads to the establishment of "foreign paradigms" as early as the age of this text. Such is the case, for instance, of *elmeɛṣiyeṯ* "sin" (f. 145b, l. 14), pl. *elemɛaṣi* (f. 15b, l. 15 ; f. 193b, l. 25), but the phenomenon is not yet so widespread as in modern dialects, where Arabic paradigms are so numerous that they tend to be incorporated in noun morphology.

2.4. Calques

The Arab-Berber contact also produced a number of calques, when Berber words came to be used in a particular meaning after an Arabic model. The most obvious example is the use of words related to slavery (*ifuynu/ifuǧnu*, often glossed: *al-ʿubūdiyya* or *al-riqq* "slavery") in order to

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14 Reading and translation are highly conjectural. One of the most problematic words is *kayfa*, which looks like the Arabic interrogative "how?", usually found only in Arabic quotes, while the Berber utterances use *mammek* (or *mamak*): see for instance **wa kayfa yūraṯu man lam yūraṯ fī kitābi 'llāhi?** *mammek ala yettukaseṯ wa we-nnettukasiṯ i tira en Bab-enney?* "how will he who is not made an heir in the Book of God become an heir?" (f. 305b, l. 3).

15 A possible cognate in modern dialects is *ʿaḏḏar* "avoir mal à l'estomac (Aïn Beïda)", Lentin (1959: 194).

express religious service, worship, as already noted in Bossoutrot's glossary: *fuyyini* "la piété, la dévotion; s'emploie quelquefois dans le sens d'esclavage, servage" (1900: 504); see for instance *lɛibadeṯ n wayt fuǧnuten* "the devotion of God's worshippers" (f. 7a, l. 21), where *lɛibadeṯ* is a loanword (from the Arabic *ʿibāda* "religious service, worship, adoration; obedience with humility or submissiveness") and *ayt fuǧnuten* is a calque (Arabic gloss: *al-ʿābidīn*, participle of *ʿabada* "serve (God), be a slave").

3. Ancient dialects of Arabic

The evidence provided by this text not only discloses a hitherto unknown ancient form of Berber but also allows some inferences about the spoken North African Arabic of the same period.

3.1. Phonetics

A loanword that frequently occurs throughout the *Mudawwana* is *lmasʾaleṯ*, "question", a borrowing still very used in many modern varieties of Berber. In Tamazight (Central Morocco) it appears as *lemsalt*, while Kabyle *tamsalt* "matter, question" shows a Berberised form of the word; Rifian *tamslayt* "ditto" (M. Lafkioui, personal communication) is even more Berberised, with a further morpheme *-ay-* added. In this ancient text, it is consistently spelt with the internal *hamza*, and probably this sound was maintained in the pronunciation. Some occurrences of the word written out with full vocalization, like <lalᵒmasᵒʾalᵒtu>[16] *la lmasʾalt-u* "nor this question either" (f. 321a, l. 10), supports this fact. If it were confirmed, this could suggest that *hamza* was preserved even in spoken Arabic for a long

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16 In this transcription, ° marks the *sukūn*, i.e. lack of a vowel after the consonant.

period since it "passed" in a borrowing which, owing to its form, cannot be ascribed to the earliest layers of Arabisation[17].

3.2. Morpho-syntax

As far as I could observe, all the Arabic passages of this text are written in literary Arabic: Qurʾānic quotations, sayings of the Prophet or of his companions, or excerpts from Ibāḍī authors. Therefore, they offer almost no hint for a study of the morpho-syntax of the spoken language. The only clear-cut clue I have found so far in the Arabic parts of the *Mudawwana* comes from a gloss: the Berber expression *a kesteɣ* "I will inherit" is translated *nariṯ* (f. 212b, l. 12) which seems a dialectal form, with the *n-*prefix for the first person of the singular which is a typical feature of the North African Arabic dialects.

The most interesting observations emerge from the passages involving numerals. In such cases, the mix of literary Arabic, spoken Arabic and Berber is frequent and it is often difficult to single out the language each phrase is supposed to be written in. For instance, in the same page (f. 42b) one finds: *xamsṭac n yum* "fifteen days" and *ʿašrīna yawman* "twenty days", the latter being a purely literary construction, while the former one is a mix of Berber (at least the preposition *n*) and spoken Arabic. As a matter of fact, many modern Arabic dialects in North Africa show a similar construction, where the influence of the Berber preposition *n* might be conjectured (Brugnatelli 1982: 49).

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17 A dubious case is that of *tabraʾt / tabrat* "distance, separation", a Berberised form of Arabic *barāʾa*. The consistent writing with internal *alif* might reflect the phonetic preservation of *hamza* as well as a *plene* writing of the vowel *a*. The final plosive *-t* instead of the spirant *-ṯ* could be due to the fact that this sound was preceded by a consonant and not by a vowel. The difference between final *-t* and *-ṯ* is not always carefully marked in the script, but cases like the one reported above (f. 2b, l. 2), where *twalaṯ* < Arabic *walāya* "closeness" clearly shows a final *-ṯ* and *tabraʾt*, in the same line, a final *-t*, seem a sign that the final sound of this word actually was a plosive.

13

The following passage depicts to what extent literary, vernacular and Berber expressions co-existed in the same sentence :

f. 57b, ll. 15-17
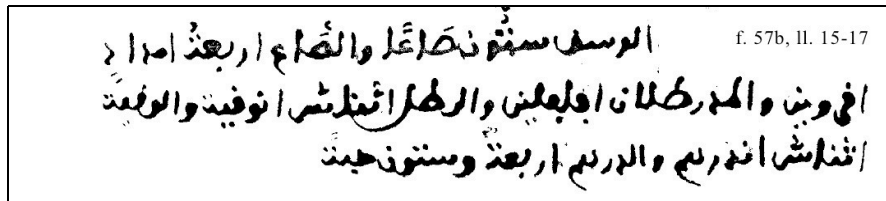
*al-wasqu sittūna ṣāʿan wa ʾṣ-ṣāʿu ʾarbaʿatu ʾamdādin **iqrawiyen** wa ʾl-muddu raṭlāni **ifelfeliyen** wa ʾr-raṭlu **eṭnāš en** wuqiyyatin wa ʾl-wuqiyyatu **eṭnāš en** dirhamin*[18] *wa ʾd-dirhamu ʾarbaʿatun wa sittūna ḥabbatan.* "The *wasq* [measurement unit of weight/capacity] corresponds to sixty *ṣāʿ*, the *ṣāʿ* to forty *mudd qarwi*, the *mudd* to two *raṭl filfili*, the *raṭl* to twelwe ounces, the ounce to twelwe *dirhams* and the *dirham* to sixty-four *ḥabb*"

Some parallel passages display different forms of the same numeral in the same context; in such cases, one of them is expressed in literary Arabic and the other one has a vernacular form:


f. 33b, l. 13-15

f. 204a, l. 10-12
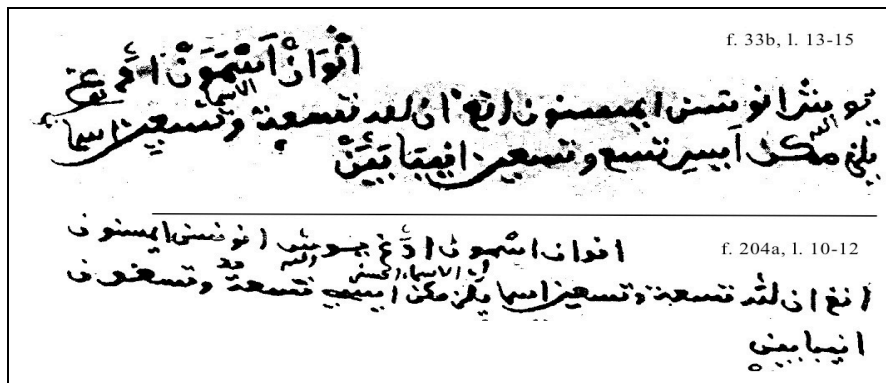
18 The genitive forms *wuqiyyatin* and *dirhamin* are conjectural: both words depend on a genitive construction typical of Berber. Classical Arabic would require the accusative, but the lack of final *alif* in *dirham* rules out this possibility (see footnote 19 below).

14

nwan: asmawen addeɣ Yuc; nwan-asen imusnawn-enney: **ʾin li-ʾllāhi** *tesɛa wtesɛin* **isman**, *yelzem-aken a yisi tesɛa wtesɛin n ibabayyen* (f. 33b, 13) // *nwan: asmawen addeɣ Yuc; nwan-asen imusnawn-enney:* **ʾin li-ʾllāhi** *tesɛa wtesɛin* **isman**, *yelzem-aken a yisi* **tisʿatun wa tisʿūna** *n ibabayyen* (f. 204a, l. 12)
"They said: the names, they are God; but our *fuqahāʾ* told them: if God has ninety-nine names, you ought to have ninety-nine gods".

In some cases, only slight graphic differences reveal the underlying vernacular form, as in the case of *ʿašrīna dīnār* "twenty dinars" (f. 55a, l. 3 and 6) lacking the "regular" final *alif* which we find in *ʿašrīna dīnāran* (l. 4)[19]. In a case like *ʿašrīna dīnār meqqurnin eṣfanin* "twenty dinars, 'big' and pure"(f. 55b, l. 3 and 6), where the counted object is followed by plural participles, it seems probable that the "Arab" orthography concealed a purely Berber construction.

It is possible that an in-depth research may reveal further peculiarities of the Arabic language found in the text, possibly as a consequence of interference with Berber. For instance, the following sentence seems influenced by a Berber linguistic environment:
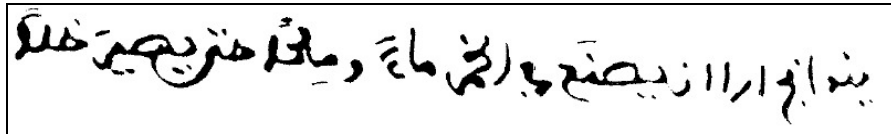
yenwa iniǧi *ʾarāʾan yaṣnaʿa fī l-ḫamri māʾan wa milḥan ḥattâ yaṣīra ḫallan*
"**a witness said**: I used to see him putting water and salt into the wine until it became vinegar" (f. 325a, l. 21).

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19 Nouns in Classical Arabic possess a declination – lost in modern dialects – and the suffix *-an* is the mark of the accusative singular, required by numerals between 11 and 99. It was usually recorded with the letter *alif*.

15

The use of *ṣanaʿa*, literally "make, produce", here with the meaning of "put", strongly recalls the use of the Berber verb *eg*, meaning both "make, do" and "put".


3.3. Lexicon

Arabic borrowings are also found in other domains of the language, not just in the lexicon related to religion. In the case of common words like *amkan*, pl. *imukan < makān* "place" or *tixyemin* (glossed *buyūtāt al-ʿarab* "tents, dwelling places of nomads": f. 131a, l. 14) < *ḫayma* "booth or tent", the origin of the borrowings is not the formal variety of the learned but, more probably, the spoken language of the time. Many of them are translated with glosses in the manuscript. One can find, for example: *ḥkan-d* "they told, reported" (Arabic gloss *rawū*, f. 10b, l. 3); *ennuqert* (Arabic gloss *fiḍḍa* "silver", *passim*), from classical Arabic *nuqra* "golden or silver ingot", modern North African dialects "somme d'argent" (Lentin 1959: 293); the preposition *bla* (from *bi-lā*) "without" is consistently used in Berber, with Arabic glosses *min ġayr* or *bi-ġayr*, and so on.

The most interesting cases of borrowings from spoken Arabic are the numerals between 11 and 99. The most unambiguous examples occur in the second ten, where I was able to find the following numbers: *eṯnac* "12" (f. 182a, l. 7), *tleṭṭac* "13" (f. 182a, l. 6), *xemsṭac* "15" (f. 21a, l. 2), *sebεeṭac* "17" (f. 306b, l. 20), *tmenṭac* "18" (f. 62b, l. 15). All of them have a dialectal form, since they display a shortened form of *ʿašr(a)* "ten", lacking both the last consonant and the initial *ʿayn*. Moreover, "13", "15", "17" and "18" show the emphatisation of *t* (and its gemination in the case of "13"). These features are part of the traits that Ferguson ascribed to an alleged "Arabic Koine" (Ferguson 1959: 626; Brugnatelli 1982: 43). This manuscript provides new evidence in favour of the antiquity of the phenomenon.

Sometimes a borrowing might retain a meaning now forgotten in the Arabic language. For example, the word *taklalt* is borrowed from the

Arabic *kalāla*, a term occurring twice in the Qurʾān (4: 12 and 176) whose meaning is still disputed. The different views and tentative explanations of this word are reviewed by Cilardo (1998 and 2005). Most researchers posit a basic meaning connected with "weariness, weakness, tiredness, fatigue" etc., and in the context of inheritance "the *de cuius* who has died leaving neither ascendants nor descendants". A different attempt aside from these interpretations, which takes into account cognates in other Semitic languages, was proposed by Powers (1986: 39-40). On the basis of a comparative investigation, he considered the word as a female kinship term "whose semantic value embraced one or more of the concepts 'bride', 'daughter-in-law', and 'sister-in-law' " (Cilardo 1998: 11).

In the manuscript, *taklalt / kalāla* is repeatedly glossed by *ʾaḫun min al-ʾummi* (that is to say, "stepbrother from the mother's side, uterine brother"). We also find the word in a masculine plural form: *iklalen = al-ʾiḫwatu min al-ʾummi* (f. 97a, l. 22). See for instance:
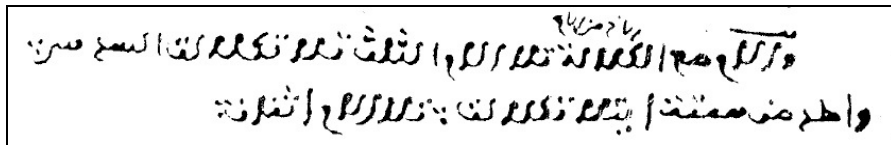
"wa l-ʾummu maʿa l-kalālati" [GLOSS *al-ʾaḫu mina l-ʾummi*]: *tela l-ʾummu eṭṭuluṯ, tela taklalt essuḏus;* **wāḥidun min sittatin** *ay tela teklalt; tela l-ʾummu ṯnāni* (sic)

" '... and the mother with the *kalāla*': **the mother** gets one third, the uterine brother gets one sixth; **one out of six** is what the uterine brother gets, while **the mother gets two** (out of six)" (f. 304b, l. 15-16).

A similar interpretation of *kalāla* as "maternal kinship (*qarābat al-umm*)", was already put forward by Ibn Qudāma (d. 620h. /1223), who thus explained a controversial passage of al-Farazdaq: "You inherited the sceptre of kingship from paternal ancestors (*ābāʾ*), not from your maternal ascendants (*ummahāt*)" (Cilardo 2005 : 57)[20]. However, Cilardo, who

20 The Arabic sentence was: *wariṯtum qanāta l-mulki lā ʿan kalālatin.*

accepts the broad meaning of "collaterals", discards this explication, considering it "nothing but a personal inference" of this author and stressing that it was an isolated view. The ancient Ibāḍite interpretation found in the manuscript shows that such a meaning was more widespread than it seemed.

Conclusions

By way of conclusion to this preliminary examination of an ancient Berber text in search for evidence concerning Arab-Berber contacts in early times, I wish to say that the results confirm what we already know about the process of Arabisation in North Africa. The influence of Arabic on Berber was already strong in the domain of religion, even if the Arabic lexicon had not yet replaced the native one in many instances where nowadays dialects are fully Arabised. The different degrees of integration of the loanwords into the Berber grammar allow us to single out the most ancient and the most recent ones.

At all events, it is important to stress the fact that at this stage the Arabic influence manifested itself in lexicon but had not yet achieved remarkable consequences on the morpho-syntax of Berber, since the nominal paradigms were not yet influenced by a massive quantity of loanwords and only few function words were of Arabic origin.

The most interesting aspect of this investigation lies, in my opinion, in the possibility of detecting clues concerning some features of old dialects of Arabic, thus contributing to the knowledge of the historical development of this language in North Africa.

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