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Typology of Eastern Medieval Berber

Abstract: The discovery of a long text in medieval Berber provides the opportunity to gain a deeper insight into the typological features of an old variety of Berber. Some of these are presented and briefly discussed here. Besides a number of features typical of the Eastern Berber varieties, many archaic features emerge, and this may contribute to advancing our understanding of the diachronic evolution of the Berber languages.

Keywords: Ancient Berber, classification, grammar, negation, deictics, numerals

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1 Introduction¹

An ancient Berber text, composed in Medieval times and still preserved within some manuscripts, was discovered at the end of the 19th century by the French commandant Francis Rebillet (1848–1923) and some samples of it (16 sentences) were transcribed and published by Motylinski (1907). The latter intended to prepare a full edition of the complete text, but died shortly after the publication of his preliminary account, and the whereabouts of the manuscripts remained unknown for a long time. Recently, a number of them have been located and the

¹ In this paper, Arabic is written according to standard transcription rules, while Berber is written using standard Kabyle orthography where appropriate. The differences between these two systems are as follows: the Berber <c> stays for the Arabic <š>, <y> for <ġ>, <x> for <ħ>, <e> for <ʿ>. What I transcribe <ġ> may correspond to either [ġ] or [g]. In addition, the interdental fricatives [θ] and [ð] are represented by <ʃ> and <ɖ>, and schwa [ə] is represented by <e>, while <°> renders the *sukūn* (lack of vowel) of the Arabic writing system. Capital letters represent consonants surmounted by *šadda* (mark of tension/lengthening). The abbreviations used in the examples can be found in the list of abbreviations at the end of the article. A sign equal separates clitics, while the underscore signals the presence of *sandhi* phenomena. For the sake of concision, only the most relevant features are singled out; as a consequence I have included no indication of gender, number, state and person and few of tense.

substantial amount of text now available for analysis is likely to yield important new important insights into an ancient stage of the Berber language.²

The text, comprising 16 ‘books’, is the Berber commentary on a religious treatise, the *Mudawwana* (‘Compilation’ of Ibāḍīte jurisprudence) written in Arabic by Abū Ġānim Bišr b. Ġānim al-Ḥurāsānī. Two reproductions of the longest manuscript, bearing the title *Kitāb al-Barbariyya* ‘Book of the Berber language’, are held at the National Library of Tunis (b/w photographs: Ms.Or. 2550) and at the University Library of Aix-en-Provence (microfilms: n° 125.3–6 in the catalogue of Stroomer & Peyron 2003). The *Kitāb al-Barbariyya* consists of 898 pages and contains 14 ‘books’. The two remaining ‘books’, totalling about 140 pages, are preserved in other manuscripts that are being studied by U-Madi and Ould-Braham. With over one thousand pages, this commentary is one of the longest texts – if not the longest – in Berber written literature.

2 Classification

Judging from the data contained in the text, the language of the manuscripts does not correspond to any modern variety of Berber, even though it shares many features with some of the present-day Eastern dialects. The manuscript was found in Jerba (Tunisia), but the author’s name, recorded in a glossary compiled in the 18th century, is Abū Zakarīya’ Yaḥya al-Yafranī (Bossoutrot 1900: 489), which means that he was probably born (or lived) in Yefren, a town on the Eastern outskirts of the Jabal Nafūsa, Libya (in Berber: *Adrar n Infusen*), where Berber is still spoken today. Unfortunately, the language of this area is little known, given that the existing studies on Nafūsī mostly concern the variety spoken in the central area of Jadu. As far as we know, what sets the language of Yefren apart from the other Nafūsī varieties, making it closer to the nearby languages of Zuara and Jerba is its greater proportion of “Zanata” features.³

² For a more thorough presentation of the text and of the manuscripts see Ould-Braham (2008 and 2009), U-Madi (n.d) and Brugnatelli (forthcoming); a preliminary analysis of its grammatical features may be found in Brugnatelli (2011a and 2013). The quotations here refer to the pagination of the Tunis manuscript.

³ Among the main features the language of Yefren shares with these dialects, in contrast with Nafūsī, are the maintenance of different forms for free state vs. annexed state (lost in Nafūsī) and the loss of the initial vowel of nouns when followed by one consonant. In addition, the lexicon contains many typically Zanata words, such as *uc* ‘give’ or *atef* ‘enter’ (Nafūsī resp. *efk* and *ekem*).

Motylinski (1897: 248) attempted to assess the level of comprehension of the text displayed by members of the different Berber-speaking Ibāḍite communities in Tunisia, Libya and Algeria and concluded:

j'ai pu m'assurer que le berbère des manuscrits, à peu près inintelligibles pour les Abadhites de Djerba, était mieux compris par les indigènes originaires du Djebel-Nefousa et du M'zab. Il semble avoir appartenu à une langue intermédiaire entre les dialectes du bord de la mer et ceux de l'extrême Sahara, Tamazir't du Djebel-Nefousa, Chaouia de l'Aurais, Zenatia des K'sours et du M'zab.

As a matter of fact, the language displays some features of Nafūsī but also shares many isoglosses with other Eastern Berber varieties (Brugnatelli 2008: 47).

2.1 Features shared with present-day Nafūsī and Yafranī languages

The most typical traits of the Nafūsī language shared by the ancient text are the forms of some personal pronouns, such as the suffixed pronoun *-cek* for the second masculine singular:

- (1) *eḏḏeryey=cek a bab=enney seḡḡ_seknen en idaymunen*
 I ask shelter=you oh lord=our from=suggestions of demons
 'I ask you shelter, God, from the suggestions of the devil'

[f. 15b, ll. 8–9]

This form contrasts with nearly all the other Eastern Berber dialects, which have the pronoun forms: *-ek* (Jerba), *-(i)k* (Douiret, Sened, Sokna), *-ku* (Augila) or *-c* (Mzab). Only El-Fogaha shares this feature with Nafūsī (Paradisi 1961: 123–124).

Another pronoun that corresponds to a typical Nafūsī form is the independent pronoun of the third person singular *nīt*, *niyeṭ* (Nafūsī: *nīt*), which also occurs in the language of the manuscript, along with the pan-Berber *netta*.

However, there is one prominent phonetic feature that sharply differentiates the language of the old text from Nafūsī, namely the partial spirantisation of non-emphatic plosives, especially dentals – whereas Nafūsī is one of the so-called “strong” dialects of Berber in which plosives do not undergo spirantisation. In general, the language of the manuscript follows the same rules that nowadays apply to the language of Jerba: spirantisation takes place after a vowel but not after a consonant nor at the beginning of a word. This behavior, which recalls the rules of Northeastern Semitic *begadkefat* (Vycichl 1975), may lead to different forms of the same word in different contexts, notably when a “mobile” *schwa*

changes position after the addition of an affix: *elkeswet* ‘a dress’, but *elkesewt-is* ‘his dress’ (f.152b, l. 13 and 17). Spirantisation coupled with the preservation of certain “phonological” schwas keeps the predicative particle *d* (another element that has almost been lost in Nafūsi but is still preserved in Yefren) distinct from the preposition/subjunction *ed* ‘with, and’, just as in Jerba and unlike in most other Berber languages, in which the particles have become identical.

A partial spirantisation, seemingly not conditioned by the phonetic context but little investigated to date, also occurs in other Tunisian Berber languages, such as Tamazret and Douiret.

The domain of negation offers a tempting, though somewhat hypothetical, comparison with the language of Yefren. Specifically, a peculiar element of the language of the manuscript is a negative particle *min* that has very few cognates in the other Berber languages. David Cohen (1971/72: 124) discovered a reference by Yehūda Ibn Quraysh of Tahert (9th–10th centuries) to an identical negator in ancient Berber. He compared it to *min* in Northern Tuareg, which nowadays functions as a preposition/subjunction meaning ‘without’. For instance:

- (2) *essâneɣ awa ira Bedé min é hi yennu haret*
 I know what he wants Bedé NEG AOR to me says anything
 ‘I know what B. wants without him telling me anything’

The language of Yefren possesses a unique negative particle *mi* which has no known cognates in any part of the Berber domain. It is used as a prefix in both verbal and nominal sentences, and does not require suffixed elements – while Nafūsi uses the circumfix *wel- . . . -c*. The use of *mi* is illustrated in the following two lines from a modern Yafranī poem:

- (3a) *mi nejjmey a t=zrey*
 NEG I can AOR it=I see
 ‘I cannot see it’
- (3b) *mi diy=es mant iteggad f Libya am Imaziyen*
 NEG in=it who he worries over Libya as Berbers
 ‘There is nobody who worries about Libya as the Berbers do’

A connection with the negative particle found in the old text might possibly explain the presence of this negator, which is completely isolated among the Berber languages. It should be noted, however, that the use of *min* in Old Berber is different from both the Tuareg and the Yafranī usages (as will be shown below, in section 4.1).

2.2 Variation in the language of the manuscripts

A puzzling feature of the language of these manuscripts is the frequent use of different forms with the same meaning in one and the same context. Each of these variants is typical of a different linguistic tradition. This happens at a phonetic level as well as in morphosyntax and lexicon. For instance, when the nasal *n* and the semivowel *w* meet, different kinds of assimilation take place. From a Berber root *nw* meaning ‘boil, cook’, one finds forms with *nw* (or *n^w*?) and with *mm* (in all likelihood *mm^w*):

- (4a) *aman ḡḡ_en^wa* *weslay*
 water in=it was cooked meat
 ‘water in which meat has been cooked’ [f. 10a, l. 7]

but:

- (4b) *aman ḡḡ_emm^wneṭ* *tilitin*
 water in=they were cooked vegetables
 ‘water in which vegetables have been cooked’ [f. 10a, l. 12]

Likewise, the kinship term ‘brother’ appears as: *ewwa* in f. 106a, l. 5, but as *umma-s* just a few lines below (f. 106b, l. 15). For the sake of comparison, it is worth noting that the common Berber word ‘(my) brother’, resulting from **aw+ma* (‘son of my mother’), in the Eastern dialects takes the forms: *ewwa* (Jerba), *iwwa* (Mzab), *emm^wa* (Zuara), *úmā* (Augila), *amm^wa* (Siwa).⁴

Another case of different forms resulting from different phonetic changes is the verb ‘bury’, which appears both in the pan-Berber form *emḍel* and in a peculiar form *enḃel* characterized by an uncommon reciprocal assimilation. The latter is a unique innovation of Northern Tuareg shared only by Jerbi, possibly via a Hawwāra substratum (Vycichl 1990, Brugnatelli 2009: 367).

A clear-cut case of variation in morphosyntax is noticeable in the expression ‘she will be forbidden to him’ which is repeated four times in f. 106a, l. 17–20 and appears under three different forms: *teḥram yef=netta* (l. 17), *teḥram yef=niṭ* (l. 18 and 19), *teḥram fell=as* (l. 20). The last-mentioned construction is the most widespread in Berber, consisting of a clitic pronoun attached to the particular form of the preposition ‘over’ used with pronouns; in contrast, the first two constructions feature the form of the preposition typically used with nouns, followed by an

⁴ Nafūsi *rummu* should not be considered here, given that its first constituent is another word, a cognate of *tarwa*, PL *ara*, which means ‘offspring, son’.

“independent pronoun” under one of two forms: *netta* (pan-Berber) and *niṭ* (Nafūsi form).

In the domain of verbs, one finds three alternative forms: *yettudukel*, *yettudakel* and *yettewdukel* for ‘it is agreed, an agreement exists’ in lines 18–20 of f. 112a.

A tentative explanation for this variance is that written literature may have adopted a sort of *koine* containing different forms that would be more easily understood over a wide area.⁵ Whatever the reason, this makes it difficult to define a reasonably consistent linguistic typology for the language contained in the manuscripts and should be taken into account before attempting any overall evaluation of it.

3 Archaisms

Numerous features, at all levels of analysis, are clearly archaic. As far as phonetics is concerned, little may be ascertained from written records. The most remarkable peculiarity is the aforementioned partial spirantisation of plosives. The stage represented by the old text is intermediate between a (possibly earlier) stage that had only plosives and a later stage with almost complete spirantisation, as in Kabyle or Tarifit.

Another archaic trait is the preservation of a fourth vocalic phoneme besides the three basic ones of Northern Berber: a “short” vowel, likely to have been pronounced as a schwa. This feature is still preserved in the language of Jerba (Brugnatelli 2001: 176–178) and probably also in other Eastern Berber varieties.⁶

Some evidence – although requiring further confirmation – implies an archaic phonetic trait, consisting of the preservation of a glottal phoneme ^ʔ, i.e. [ʔ]. The existence of this sound seems indisputable in cases of Arabic borrowings written out with full vocalization, such as <lal^omas^{oʔ}al^otu> *la lmas^ʔalt=u* ‘nor this question either’ (f. 321a, l.10), but no certain evidence has been put forward to date concerning indigenous vocabulary. To date Zenaga is the only Berber language known to have retained this sound.

⁵ See Brugnatelli (2008). Ould-Braham (2008: 68) states: “à la base le texte berbère de la *Mudawwana* recourt à plusieurs parlers et non, comme l’on serait tenté de le croire, à une *koïnè* purement et simplement”.

⁶ This fact has not yet been sufficiently singled out and investigated. For an overview of the current level of understanding, see Prasse (1975: 217) for Nafūsi, Mitchell (2007: 6–7) for Zuara and Paesano (2000: 41–42) for Tamazrett.

3.1 Archaisms in grammar

As might be expected, the domain of morphosyntax displays numerous archaic features, of which only a selection of the most interesting are examined here.

As far as nouns are concerned, the language of this text provides valuable material regarding the contrast of two “states” marked by different initial sounds – a morphosyntactic category that has disappeared from contemporary Nafūsi but is still preserved in Jerba, Southern Tunisia, Zuara and Yefren. The most interesting data concern the apparent lack of state markers in given contexts, e.g. in some constructions with numerals, and the possible identity of the deictic particles *wa* and *a*, which are connected with the origin of state. These features will be discussed more thoroughly in sections 4.2 and 4.3 below.

Regarding verbs, one archaic feature is the preservation of full-fledged participle paradigms: positive and negative, singular and plural, with the exception of feminine forms, which have not been detected to date. Nowadays participles have virtually disappeared from Eastern Berber and are preserved only in Mzab. An example from the old text:

- (5) *testanef seğğ lewqaş yeğrenin yel lewqaş*
 she resumes from sets be defined\PL.PTCP to sets
we=nmuyrar
 not=be defined\NEG.PTCP
 ‘she resumes (calculating alms tax) from defined sets (*waqaş*: unit of
 income) to undefined ones’ [f. 60a, l. 1]

Moreover, the old language preserves a series of verbs in which a *-t* ending alternates with a vowel. In all the modern languages except Tuareg only lexicalized relics are preserved.⁷ See for instance *emmet* ‘to die’, 3rd masculine singular *yemmut*, 3rd plural *mman* ‘he is/they are dead’; *ekset* ‘inherit’ but *amekkasu* ‘heir’.

3.2 Archaisms in lexicon

A noteworthy feature of the text under scrutiny is an archaic lexicon, with a number of lexemes which nowadays are lost or rare, e.g. *eđyur* ‘be near’ (no

⁷ Concerning this feature, see Basset (1929: xviii–xix), Prasse (1973: 73–74) and Brugnatelli (2011a: 32–34).

known cognates), *ayeggal* ‘black’ (only in the dialect of the Ouargla oasis; in Tuareg ‘brown’).

Many archaisms are attested in the domain of religion, in which the ancient Berber lexicon has been replaced by Arabic terms.⁸ In addition, roots and lexemes that are unknown or rare in modern Berber languages are particularly conspicuous in the domain of abstract ideas, in which the modern languages have adopted many terms from Arabic or European languages. For instance: *buḍey* ‘to own’ and *taḍekkuṭ* ‘property’; *ezley* ‘be complete’; *ewrin* ‘elsewhere’; *tasekrawt* ‘righteousness’, *tefruyi* ‘injustice, tyranny’ and *anefruy* ‘unjust ruler, tyrant’; *aḡḡaḍ* ‘redundancy’.

However, an archaic lexicon is also to be found in the domain of concrete notions. See for instance: *tilitin* ‘grass, plants’, *asaččin* ‘heart’, *timalayin* ‘bellies’, *takurzayt/takurzuyt* ‘turban’, *aluctu* ‘dress’, *tayzeft* ‘sword’.

4 Selected samples

In order to illustrate the typology of Ancient Berber, I shall give here some insights into three domains that display interesting differences vis-à-vis modern Berber: the negation system, some deictic particles involved in the development of noun “states” and some peculiarities of the syntax of numerals.

4.1 Negation

A negative particle *wel*⁹ is used with verbs, which take a negative form whenever possible but do not usually add a postponed particle, unlike most of the modern dialects spoken in Tunisia and Libya. A suffix *-c* or *-cra* after the verb is also attested, but only in rare cases, such as *wel yetrus=c* ‘he will not come down’ (f. 283b, l. 7).

Examples of positive and negative utterances:

- (6a) *zdeyen* *illaln=ensen*
 they inhabit\PFV properties=their
- (6b) *wel zdiyen* *illaln=ensen*
 NEG they inhabit\NEG.PFV properties=their
 ‘They live/do not live within their own properties’ [f. 131a, l. 10 and 11]

⁸ For a list of such terms, see Brugnatelli (2013: 274–275).

⁹ Sometimes the particle appears as *we-* with assimilation and tension/lengthening of the following consonant.

Negative verb stems are attested in both the perfective and the imperfective, confirming that this is in an ancient feature and that the languages which have no negative imperfective have probably lost it over time (Kossmann 1989, Brugnatelli 2002). See for instance the contrast between *yettay* <yTay^o> ‘he takes’ and *wel yettiy* <wal^oyTiy^o> ‘he does not take’ (f. 11a, l. 1). The particle *wel* is also used in most nominal sentences with an “existential” meaning, usually introduced by a preposition:

- (7) *wel ġar=asen tiysawin*
 NEG between=them inheritance
 (‘there is no inheritance between them = they cannot inherit from one another’) [f. 388b, l. 8]

The negative particle used in nominal sentences with copulative meaning is *liḍ*. This particle is used in much the same way as the positive predicative *d*, with the following noun in the “free state”. It may also occur in cleft sentences, as in the following example:

- (8) *ma liḍ iser aġġ_etteġġen aḍin?*
 INT NEG Prophet DEIC=doing this
 ‘wasn’t it the Prophet who used to do this?’ [72b, l. 15–16]

Liḍ can also link two sentences:

- (9) *ayu=y=aḍan iġġen yessekker tazallit amm_aġġ_as=ġġan tweġrawt=enney liḍ
 mamak etteġġen yemxalfen ttadnen s mennaw*
 ‘This single call summons to prayer, as our community does, **not** as the dissidents do, who make more calls’ [f. 21a, l. 20]

Another negative particle, hitherto almost unknown, is *min*. The glossary published by Bossoutrot (1900: 504) contains a succinct description in Arabic: “*min* serves as a negator with the same meaning as Arabic *lā*”. However, this definition is inadequate, given that the particle *min* only shares a small number of usages with the Arabic *lā*. In the text, it is used as a holophrastic negation, both as an answer to a yes/no question (its positive counterpart ‘yes’ is another otherwise unattested word: *maysir*) and in interrogative clauses such as: *ma . . . ney min?* ‘is it the case that . . . or not?’, a construction that matches Arabic ‘*a . . . am lā?*’. Two examples:

- (10a) *netta yettsen=iṭ?* *min wel tett=yettsin* *cra*
 he he takes=her? no NEG₁ her=he takes\NEG.IPFV NEG₂
 ‘Does he marry her? No, he does not marry her’ [f. 110b, l. 5]
- (10b) *ma yeğğur* *wuḏum qbel teḏri n uyur ney min?*
 INT is permitted fast before sight of moon or not
 ‘Is it permitted or not to fast before the appearance of the moon (of
 Ramadan)?’ [f. 76b, l. 6]

The particle *min* is never used in any other type of negative sentence, and is therefore difficult to compare with the other Berber negators mentioned above, in particular with the Yefren negator *mi*.

The Ancient Berber system of negation includes another element that has almost no cognates in modern Berber languages: the exceptive particle ^ʔ*as*.¹⁰ It is often used in combination with the general negator *wel* and the resulting construction is: *wel . . . ʔas* ‘not . . . except’ (compare Arabic *lā . . . illā*).

- (11) *wel teṣṣiḏen ʔas iḏ imdan eḏ wass yemdan*
 NEG she counts except night being full and day being full
 (Ar.) *lā taʕuddu illā l=layla l=kāmila wa n=nahāra l=kāmila*
 ‘she will calculate but a full night and a full day’ [f. 151a, l. 11]

The most likely cognate of the particle ^ʔ*as* is the Zenaga *äš* (‘sauf, excepté, si ce n’est’: Taine-Cheikh 2011: 545–546). Unlike the latter, which is only used with nouns or pronouns while another particle, *mäššār*, is preferred before a subordinate, the Ancient Berber ^ʔ*as* was used in all possible contexts. See for instance: *mağğ_eks a yesmeṭer, wel yeyis wel fell=as cra; enwan wel yelli ʔas yesmeṭer* ‘if he wants, he will bequeath (it), if he does not want, there is nothing upon (against) him; (some jurists) said: there is no other (option) but to bequeath’ (f. 83b, l. 8).

Another particle which closely resembles ^ʔ*as* is the Tuareg *yas* ‘only’. If this were a cognate, one should take into account the loss of the initial *y-* (possibly replaced by [ʔ]) as is often the case with certain prepositions that occur in the old text both with and without this initial sound: *yef/af* ‘on, over’ and *yel/al* ‘unto, towards’. But this would rule out the relationship with the Zenaga *äš* which lacks the [ʔ] sound – while possessing the aforementioned prepositions under the forms *oʔf* and *äʔr*, respectively.

¹⁰ I write out this particle with an initial laryngeal because, unlike *ass* ‘day’, it is consistently spelled with a *hamza* preceding *alif* and the possibility that this sound was preserved in Ancient Berber may not be excluded (see above). However it is also possible that the particle was simply pronounced *as*.

4.2 Deictic particles and state of nouns

Every Berber language tends to have a peculiar system of deictic elements, which differently combines items taken from a common inventory of basic particles. The traditional descriptions loosely classify them as “pronouns”, although these elements feature in many different parts of speech. Nowadays it is widely accepted that deictic particles played a role in the origin of the so called “states” of nouns. The morphology of Berber nouns easily fits into the African typologies taken into consideration by Greenberg (1978: 61ff.) when describing the diachronic process he termed “the cycle of the definite article”.

In fact, all scholars agree that the initial sounds of nouns that characterize free or annexed states proceed from the agglutination of former deictic elements, namely the masculine *wa* (PL *wi*) and the feminine *ta* (PL *ti*), and possibly also an unmarked element *a-*, according to some theories.¹¹ It is my own opinion that *wa-* and *a-*, which nowadays are separate elements within Tuareg grammar, ultimately derive from one and the same particle *wa*. Medieval Berber corroborates this view, as may be seen in the following passage:

- (12) *teħram* *yef=netta wa yla dadd=is – s=in dey nettat yeħram fell=as werbib=is*
 ‘He will be forbidden [from wedding] **the one** his father wed – whence she
 will be forbidden too [from wedding] her stepson’ [f. 106b l. 20–21]¹²

Here it is indisputable that the deictic *wa* ‘one (who)’ has a feminine referent and governs a feminine verbal form (*teħram* ‘she is forbidden’) as well as a following anaphoric pronoun (*nettāt* ‘she’). The Ancient Berber text bears witness to a stage when a split between the masculine *wa* and the “neutral” *a* was still in progress and not yet completed. In modern Tuareg, the system is basically tripartite: *a* (unspecified), *wa* (masculine), *ta* (feminine): “Placés devant *a*, les indices de genre *w*, pour le masculin, et *t*, pour le féminin, permettent de préciser le genre du référent: *wa* ‘celui’, *ta* ‘celle’” (Galand 2010: 100).

Some vestiges of the former state of affairs are still detectable in a number of cases in which pronouns and particles built on *wa-* appear to be “neutral” in gender and sometimes also in “definiteness”. Among these (more thoroughly listed in Brugnatelli 2006: 66–68), we may cite the Ouargli *wasi/mmʷasi* ‘someone who’:

¹¹ Galand (2010: 130–135) summarises the main hypotheses put forward to explain diachronically the birth of noun states.

¹² This passage is the explanation of *Quran* 4:22: *wa lā tankihū mā nakaħa ʔābāʔu-kum mina n-nisāʔi*, literally: ‘and do not wed what your fathers wed among the women’.

- (13) *tella mm^wasi tettaḥ buya=s tella mm^wasi tettaḥ*
 she is DEIC she goes friends=her she is DEIC she goes
n=nemnadir
 to=party
 ‘some women visit their friends, some go to parties’ [Delheure 1988: 142]

A similar state of affairs is recorded in 18th’s century’s Moroccan texts by Mḥmmd Awzal: “The masculine pronominal base *wa* is used in the expression *wa n* ‘like, such as, similar to’, lit. ‘that belonging to’, irrespective of the gender of the noun to which it refers, e.g. *ssliet wa n tisnt* ‘a commodity such as salt’” (Boogert 1997: 260–261). This feature is still living in Moroccan Berber.

Another characteristic feature in the domain of deictics is the creation of new demonstratives through the expansion of a deictic base combined with a frozen form of the verb *isi* ‘to be’.¹³ Thus, for instance: M *wisi* ‘whoever’, PL *wisin*, F *tisi* (from *wa/ta* + *yisi*, PL *isin*). These demonstratives often precede a subordinate (“relative”) clause, and, in this case, the verb – ultimately governed by an auxiliary verb, and not by a deictic (“antécédent”) – is normally conjugated, unlike the usual “relatives”, which typically feature participles:

- (14) *wisi yessareḍ izumal=is iḡḡeṭ tikkelt*
 the one he washes private parts=his one time
 ‘whoever washes his private parts (only) once’ [f. 7b, l. 16]

A comparison may be made with the pronoun *wasi* ‘whoever’ in Mزاب and Ouargla, which also does not require a participle when followed by a relative.¹⁴

Another interesting feature of Medieval Berber is the existence of states not only in nouns and pronouns but also in another particle, which probably comes from a deictic element, namely the conjunction *i* ‘when, whenever’, as may be seen from the following sentence, in which it appears as *wi* (annexed state) after *eḍ* ‘with, and’:

- (15) *yisi careḍ timmirin a wel teḡḡur di=sneṭ tzallit: i tettaley tfuyt eḍ wi tettaṇ eḍ*
wi tebda ammas en weḡenna
 ‘there are three moments in which prayer is not permitted: **when** the sun
 arises, **when** it sets and **when** it stops high in the sky’ [f. 34b, l. 12–14]

¹³ The verb *isi*, which occurs frequently in the manuscript, is nowadays only used in Jerba and Zuara and only in the past tense (Brugnatelli 2010/2011: 86; 2011b: 230). Sporadic occurrences are also found in Nafūsi.

¹⁴ On the contrary, *wasa* ‘whoever’ in Augila, whose final *-a* may be a further agglutinated deictic particle, is followed by a participle.

The deictic origin may be observed in the expression *elḥal i tettan tfuyt* ‘at the moment **that** the sun sets’ (f. 31a, l. 1–2).

4.3 Morphosyntax of numerals

The old text also attests an archaic typology of the morphosyntax of numerals. Indeed, the most frequent construction of the first ten numerals used to count masculine objects is quite peculiar to the text and unattested elsewhere among Berber languages. The numeral is followed by the singular noun devoid of the initial sounds, that is to say, the “state” prefixes (ancient “deictics”). For instance: *sen yil* ‘two cubits’, *careḍ lyem* ‘three camels’, *uqgez yur* ‘four months’, *semmes ḍrim* ‘five dirhams’, *mraw menkuc* ‘ten dinars’.

Such a construction points to an ancient stage during which the initial sounds still represented a sort of article which a noun determined by a numeral could do without.¹⁵ Such forms are also to be found in another construction, namely after a prefix *ir*, f. *tir*, meaning ‘bad, evil’. In this case, feminine nouns are also devoid of “articles”: *tir dekkuṭ* ‘unlawful possession’ (vs. *taḍekkuṭ* ‘possession’); *tir meḡḡuṭ* ‘illicit sexual intercourse’ (vs. *tameḡḡuṭ* ‘action; mating’).¹⁶

Another feature worth mentioning comes from the domain of numerals. When a numeral is determined and the meaning is ‘each of *n*’, it may be prefixed by the same initial sounds used with nouns. In this case it is also followed by an anaphoric suffix *-in*. So, for instance the numerals *sen*, F *sent* ‘two’ become *i=sn=in*, F *ti=sent=in* ‘both’; *careḍ*, F *careṭṭ* ‘three’ become *e=yarḍ=in*, F *te=yarḍ=in* ‘each of three’, ‘all three (of a specified item)’ and so on.

(16) *mak we llin isnin . . . ; maḡḡ_ella yecmeḡ wel yelli bab-is . . . ; maḡḡ_ella bab=is wel yelli yecmeḡ . . . ; maḡ llan isnin . . .*

‘if **both** are absent . . . ; if the slave is there but not his master . . . ; if the master is there but not his slave . . . ; if **both** are there . . .’ [f. 308b, l. 12 ss.]

Only a few remnants of this construction are still in use in modern languages – namely *isnin* in Aurès, eastern Kabyle and Zuara.¹⁷ Nowadays only Tuareg (*əssənən*, F *əssənātīn* ‘both’, *əkkərḍən*, F *əkkərḍātīn* ‘each of three’, etc.) and Mzab

¹⁵ Another noteworthy feature is the singular form of the counted object, unattested elsewhere.

¹⁶ Similar constructions with the noun devoid of “state” prefix in modern languages are regarded as “compound names” in Basset (1940: 201).

¹⁷ For a general overview, see Basset (1946). For occurrences in Zuara and in Kabyle, see Mitchell (2009: 284), and Gutova (2011), respectively.

(*ay sennin*, *ay sennetin* ‘both’, *ay carḍin*, *ay careḍtin*, ‘each of three’, etc.) preserve similar living patterns.

These features of nominal morphology provide a valuable piece of evidence for a former archaic typology that was quite different from present-day Berber.

Abbreviations

AOR	aurist particle	NEG.PFV	negative perfective
DEIC	deictic particle	NEG.PTCP	negative participle
INT	interrogative particle	PFV	perfective
NEG	negation, negative particle	PL.PTCP	plural participle
NEG.IPFV	negative imperfective		

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