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Rural Dialect of Egyptian Arabic: An Overview

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- 1 In the last 30 years of the 19th century, European Arabists felt a need to describe and analyse the Arabic colloquials in order to use them for comparative and historical linguistic goals. It was the time when the Middle East opened for Europeans, and Egypt in particular became accessible to thousands for trade and other professions and, last but not least, research of all kinds. This is why the first comprehensive and, by contemporary standards, scientific grammar of an Arabic Colloquial appeared as a description of the colloquial of Egypt, i.e. the *Grammatik des arabischen Vulgär dialects von Ägypten* by Wilhelm Spitta-Bey (1880), the former director of the Khedivial Library in Cairo. Others soon followed and by the beginning of World War I, a considerable amount of literature on the so-called Egyptian Colloquial had appeared ¹. After World War I, the interest focused mostly on textbooks and teaching material ². Today, a host of publications on Egyptian Arabic is available and a, certainly not exhaustive, bibliography of Egyptian Arabic collected by me some years ago contains no less than 680 books and articles ³.
- 2 Most of these works claim to describe the Arabic dialect of Egypt, thus giving the impression that there is only one. In fact, they all describe a variety of the elevated colloquial of Cairo which was certainly in the 19th century, as it is today, the standard Egyptian dialect. Spitta was aware of this and readily acknowledges in his introduction that the title of his grammar *Grammatik des arabischen Vulgär dialects von Ägypten* is too unprecise, given that he describes only the language of educated Cairo, and not the many Arabic dialects spoken in the countryside outside the capital. All the early grammarians such as Spitta, Vollers, Nallino and Willmore give some hints on the peculiarities of the speech of the fellahin and Bedouins without going into any detail ⁴.
- 3 The first real account of rural Egyptian Arabic we owe to somebody else. In the early 1930s, the German anthropologist Hans Alexander Winkler did his research on the material culture of the fellahin in some thirty villages all over Egypt, and in particular in Upper Egypt. He published his findings in his monumental *Ägyptische Volkskunde* ⁵.

Winkler had a good command of both spoken and written Arabic and registered faithfully in a rather precise transcription all the terms for the tools the peasants use, in particular the parts of the plough, different kinds of sickles and hoes, harrows, pottery, parts of the oven and so on. He even collected an exhaustive list of the terms for the parts of the human body. He did not restrict himself to recording the data, but tried to describe the distribution of the dialects of the fellahin throughout Egypt in order to corroborate his ethnographic findings. The features he based his classification on were primarily lexical. He considered only one phonological feature and no morphological features at all. Nevertheless, he managed to give a basically correct and still useful first account of some very important isoglosses which separate the Arabic dialects of Egypt ⁶.

- 4 It took some thirty more years for a new attempt to be made to investigate the basic features of a group of rural Egyptian dialects and, for the first time, to publish the results in the form of maps. Fahmi Abul-Fadl, an Egyptian scholar and a student of the well-known Hans Wehr, describes in his doctoral dissertation of 1961 the speech of the fellahin of his native *Sarqiyya* province in the east of the Delta. He offers a profound phonological analysis and a series of maps together with samples of texts in transcription. As to Upper Egypt, a *Sa'îdi* grammar was published by Khalafallah in 1969, and a short account of *B'eri* Arabic was given by the present writer in 1974.
- 5 Fahmi Abul-Fadl's dissertation is the forerunner of the dialect atlas of Egypt which was planned and carried out by Peter Behnstedt and myself. After a period of field work which lasted from 1976 to 1983, a map was published in 1984 in the *Tübinger Atlas zum Vorderen Orient* (TAVO), and the atlas itself eventually appeared in 1985 together with a collection of transcribed and translated texts (1987, 1988). This atlas covers most parts of Egypt and contains 561 maps which are based on data gathered from approximately 800 villages. A comprehensive Arabic-German glossary of rural speech followed in 1994. The reverse, a German-Arabic glossary,
- 6 a comparative Grammar, and some grammars of local dialects are in preparation. We may now say, that the most important features of the rural dialects of Egypt and their distribution throughout the country are at least rudimentally known.

The main regions

Scope

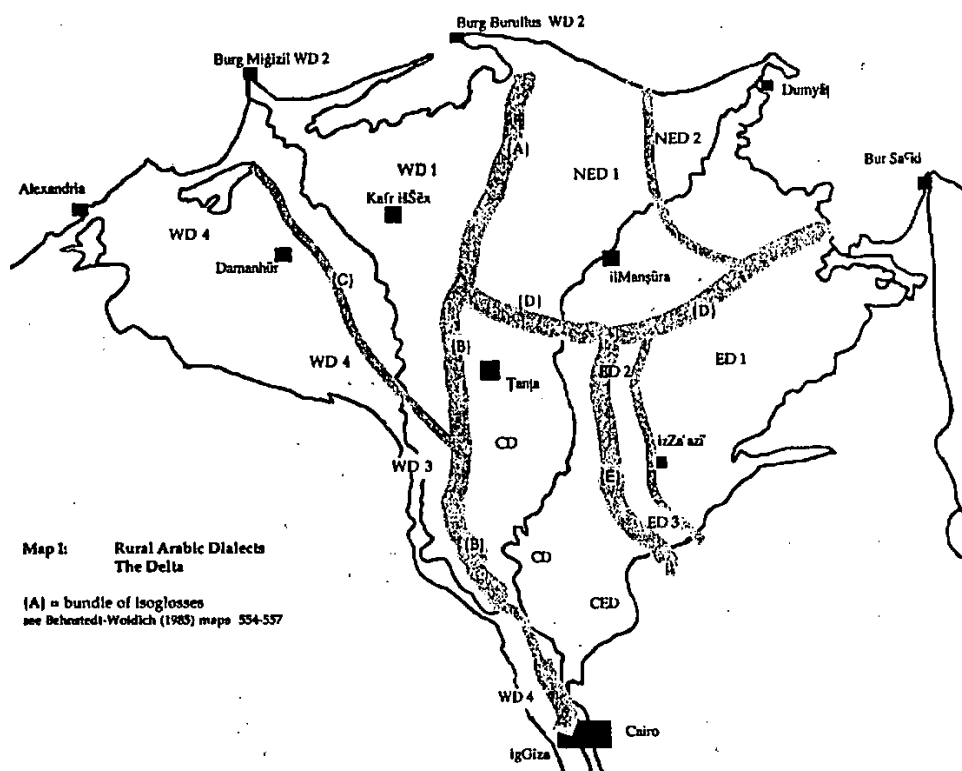
- 7 By "rural dialects" we mean the dialects of the peasants in both northern Egypt (*fallahîn*) and Upper Egypt (*sa'ayda*), as well as those of the inhabitants of the oases in the Western Desert.
- 8 We do not consider here the varieties spoken by true Bedouins who arrived recently in Egypt or still live their nomadic life style because these forms a separate subject and will be treated elsewhere. Neither shall we deal here with the dialects of some marginal paria groups such as the *Halab* and the *Nawar* in Middle and Upper Egypt of which but little is known. The speech of the *Nawar*, though basically Arabic, contains many foreign words, some apparently of Indo-Aryan origin: *mans* ~ *minis*, "man, father"; *burdi*, "brother"; *astra*, "star"; *aq*, "fire"; *dandi*, "teeth" ⁷. The *Nawar* are said to be of Gipsy origin; as to the *Halab*, Winkler assumes that they descend from Upper Egyptian peasants expelled by *'Abàbda* and *Ga'âfra* tribes from their original homelands. For them

a kind of “pig-latin” is reported: nouns are prefixed with *ma-* and suffixed with *-is*, *-âis* for instance *ma-wdân-is* (*widân*), “ear”, *muxx-âis* (*muxx*), “brain”, *me-snâb-is* (*sanab*), “moustache”⁸. Another group which will not be considered here are the 'Abâbda in the Eastern desert. They speak a Sudanese type of dialect, with *rigi'lha*, “her leg” (stress on inserted vowel) and with a stressed final vowel in *habli*, “my rope”, and *hamrâ* (f.), “red”. Their lexicon is interspersed with cushitic words: *ba'asûb*, “jackal”, *dangar*, “plain”, *kîsi*, “heel”, *helèkîb*, “young donkey”, *kakar*, “viper”⁹. Presumably they were originally speakers of a cushitic language who adopted Arabic some generations ago.

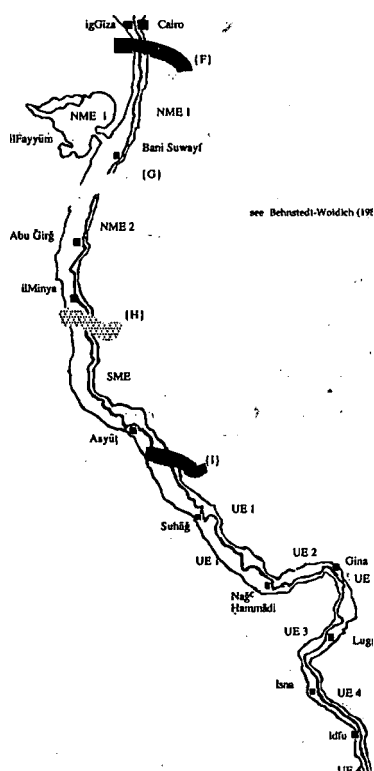
Dialect groups

- ⁹ By means of certain phonological, morphological and lexical features (isoglosses), some of which will be discussed below, we are able to distinguish the following main dialect areas in Egypt (see following page).

Nile Delta (map I)

*Western dialects (WD)***WD 1 EASTERN BIHĒRA, KR. IŠŠĒX, PARTS OF ILĠARBIYYA****WD 2 BURULLUS****WD 3 WESTERN MINUFĪYYA****WD 4 ILBIHĒRA, WESTERN MINUFĪYYA, WESTERN ĠARBIYYA AND PARTS OF NORTHERN ĠĪZA***Northeastern dialects (NED)***NED 1 IDDAQAHLIYYA, EASTERN KR. IŠŠĒX, PARTS OF ILĠARBIYYA****NED 2 MANZALA DIALECTS***Central dialects (CD)***CENTRE OF THE DELTA : ILMINUFĪYYA, ILĠARBIYYA, ILQALYUBIYYA****CED: EASTERN QALYUBIYYA, PARTS OF SOUTHERN ŠARQIYYA***Eastern dialects(ED)***ED 1 CENTRAL, NORTHERN AND EASTERN ŠARQIYYA****ED 2 NORTHERN FRONTIER AREA OF ILŠARQIYYA, PARTS OF IDDAQAHLIYYA****ED 3 SOUTHWESTERN FRONTIER AREA OF ILŠARQIYYA, SOUTHERN PARTS OF IDDAQAHLIYYA, SOUTHEASTERN PARTS OF THE CENTRE OF THE DELTA**

Nile Valley (map II)

**{H}: BUNDLE OF ISOGLOSSES***Middle Egypt**Northern (NME)***NME 1 SOUTHERN GÎZA, NORTHERN BANI SWÊF, FAYYÛM****NME 2 SOUTHERN BANI SWÊF, NORTHERN MINYA***Southern (SME) southern Minya.**Upper Egypt (UE)***UE 1 FROM ASYÛT (ABU TIĞ) TO NAG' HAMMÂDI, FURTHER ON THE EAST BANK FROM GÛS FURTHER SOUTH TO THE ALTITUDE OF ARMANT, ON THE WEST BANK FROM ILBALLÂS TO ILGURNA****UE 2 MAINLY THE GINA-BOW ON THE EAST BANK APPROXIMATELY FROM NAG' HAMMÂDI TO GÛS AND ON THE WEST BANK TO ILBALLÂS****UE3 ON THE WEST BANK FROM ILQURNA ILBI'IRÂT TO ISNA (B'ÊRI)****UE 4 ON THE WEST BANK FROM ISNA TO ĠARB ASWÂN, ON THE EAST BANK FROM THE ALTITUDE OF ARMANT TO ASWÂN***Western Desert***BAH ILBAHARIYYA, THREE VARIETIES: EAST, CENTRE, WEST FAR ALFARÂFIRA****DAX ADDÂXILA, THREE VARIETIES: EAST, CENTRE, WEST****XAR ILXÂRĠA, TWO VARIETIES: NORTH, SOUTH**

- 10 Needless to say, the geographic delimitations in this table give only an approximate idea of the situation in the core areas, i.e. the centers of each dialect region. These are relatively homogeneous, show little or no criss-crossing isoglosses, and exhibit most features of the area ¹⁰. Although the dialect groupings suggest that there are sharp distinctions between the different regions, this is only occasionally the case - as for instance the border between UE 1 and UE 3 at the west bank of *Lugsur*. In most cases, however, the transition is gradual. As is true elsewhere in the world, the majority of the dialects described here exist in a continuum and not in precisely delimited geographical areas.

- 11 The transitional areas thus show features of more than one core dialect area. Historical interpretation of their data is difficult, as these areas can go back either to internal linguistic development or to dialect mixing. Which interpretation is appropriate can only be decided by a thorough study of the region's settlement history. As we generally know very little about this, research on such settlement histories remains a desideratum.
- 12 There are relic areas with one or more features which apparently were more widespread in earlier times. These include in particular the region around *Abu Girg* in northern Middle Egypt (NME 2) ¹¹, which shows a close relationship to the northern Delta (WD 1, NED) in its verbal morphology (see features 18-b, 19, 20 below), and the region of southwestern *Sarqiyya* and southern *Daqahliyya* (ED 3), which shows the development of *k* to *c* (a unique feature for Egypt), and also has affinities with northern Middle Egyptian verbal morphology (see feature 18-c below). The coastal WD 2 (*Burullus*, *Burg Migîzil*) dialect also exhibits unique features such as retention of *q* and the diphthongs, and stress on the penultimate syllable of *darâbu*, 'they hit', which give it an extraordinary position within the Egyptian Arabic dialects.
- 13 The dialects of the four Western Oases are closely related to ME and the Delta dialects by the bukara-syndrome (feature 9 below) and by syllable structure (feature 7 below), but deviate in many other respects ¹². All are different dialects, however, which can be further divided into subdialects. There is no isogloss peculiar to the oases as a whole which would separate them from the Nile Valley. Although their isolated position at the periphery of the Egyptian mainland would make us expect them to be quite conservative, they display a variety of linguistic innovations. These are presumably to be explained by the mixing of groups speaking different dialects (or even different languages, in the case of Berber) in the oases with strange cases of dialect adaptation as a result. Indeed, many of the innovations can be explained as interdialect forms ¹³. Generally speaking, the varieties of *iIXârga* and *iIBahariyya* are closer to those of the Nile Valley than *adDâxila* and *alFarafira*, while the latter show a greater influence from dialects of the North-African type.

Bundles of isoglosses

- 14 The dialect groups listed above are delimited by bundles of isoglosses distinguishing between the features described below in D (see maps 554-559 in Behnstedt-Woidich, 1984). On maps I and II they are represented in the form of thick lines which run through certain areas ¹⁴.
- 15 In the Delta, there are several such bundles which distinguish dialectal areas. An important one runs from the east of Lake *Burullus* southwards until it reaches the western branch of the river Nile, thus separating WD from NED (A) and from CD (B). Another bundle (C), running southeast from the south of Lake *Idku* until it joins (A, B), subdivides WD into an eastern and a western group, WD 1 and WD 4 respectively. NED and ED are separated by a bundle (D) which stretches from the Manzala-region southwest to the eastern branch of the Nile (see map 557) ¹⁵. Bundle (E), finally, forms the boundary between ED and CD/CED (see map 555) in the eastern part of the Delta.
- 16 In the Nile Valley, there are two regions through which a considerable number of isoglosses run (see maps 554 and 559). The first {F} covers the southern part of the

province of *igGîza*, which is traditionally seen as the old frontier between Lower and Upper Egypt ¹⁶. The other large bundle of isoglosses (1) runs immediately to the south of *Asyût* and marks a part of Upper Egypt which was not densely populated in the Middle Ages (see map 553) and which was settled by bedouins from the west ¹⁷. Not surprisingly, the dialects spoken there (UE 1, UE 3) show strong bedouin substrate. We can thus distinguish two major linguistic areas: Middle Egyptian (ME) from the outskirts of *igGîza* to *Abu Tîg* (some 25 km south of *Asyût*) and Upper Egyptian (UE) proper from *Abu Tîg* to *Aswân*. Both isogloss bundles coincide with characteristic ethnographic borderlines found by Winkler (1936) (see below). Another larger bundle (H) in the Nile Valley separates the northern part of Middle Egypt (NME) from the southern part (SME) (around *ilMinya*, see map 558). A fourth (G) separates the *Fayyum* and northern B. Swayf areas (NME 1) from the southern B. Swayf area (NME 2) in northern Middle Egypt, with a transitional area around the town of B. Swayf (see map 558).

- ¹⁷ As to the relevance of the bundles ¹⁸, (1,17) south of *Asyût* seems to be the most important with 17 features from the selection in D (see below). Nearly as strong is (F, 13) south of *igGîza* which separates Middle Egypt from the Delta. In the Delta, (D, 11) and (E, 12) we see that the east (isSarqiyya) differs quite a lot from the centre and the north east. Even stronger is (G, 13), which divides northern Middle Egypt into two regions (NME 1 and NME 2). (H, 10) separates the northern part of Middle Egypt (NME) from the southern part (SME) in the *ilMinya* region, (B, 9) marks the border area between WD and CD in the south of the Delta. Less marked are the lines separating WD from NED (A, 5) and WD 1 from the western group WD 4 (C, 3). Adducing more features would certainly not change this general picture.

A selection of the most important isoglosses delimiting the dialect areas

- ¹⁸ The most important linguistic variables used to delimit the dialect groups are the following:

Phonological features

1) g/ğ(*ğ)

- ¹⁹ What we hear in Cairo as *g* [g] as in *gamal* “camel” (class. *ğ*) is pronounced as an affricate *ğ* or *dj* in Upper Egypt and the eastern Delta, as *d* [d] in many villages between *Asyût* and *Gina*, as a sibilant *z* in the western part of the Delta, in the oases of *ilBahariyya* (but more prepalatal in *ilBawîti*), and in *alFarâfira* (maps 10-14). Going southwards from *igGîza*, the *ğ*-region starts some kilometers after the town B. Swayf with the villages of *Tansa* and B. 'Atiyya [G]. In the northern Nile Valley and the Delta, the distribution of *g/ğ* forms a characteristic image with *g* covering an area which extends from south of B. Swayf, *igGîza* following the eastern branch of the Nile in a broad strip to *idDumyât*. The Delta is thus divided into three areas: the centre CD and north-east NED (with *g*), the east ED with *ğ* and the west WD (with *ğ ~ ž*). The bundles involved are {A, B} and {D, E}.
- ²⁰ The *g*-area follows the eastern branch of the Nile, i.e. the ancient trade route from Cairo to *Dumyât* ¹⁹. Its shape suggests that it is either an innovational area with *g*

spreading from Cairo along the trade route, or a relic area, where *g*, supported by the trade route, was able to resist the influence of bedouin *ǧ*. For a discussion see below. See further feature 2.

2) /g (*q)

- 21 *q is pronounced as a glottal stop ' or *g* [g] ('*alb* - *galb*, “heart”), although a realization as *q* [q] is still retained systematically in *Burg Burullus* and *Burg Migîzil* at the extreme ends of the Delta and in the oases of *alFarâfira*. In *ilXârğa* and eastern *Dâxila* *q* and *g* occur in an irregular distribution side by side in different roots (see maps 6-8)²⁰.
- 22 In the Delta and in the Nile Valley, the variables 1 and 2 are related to each other by implication: the reflex *g* of *q implies the reflex *ǧ* of *ǧ, and vice versa. On the other hand, the reflex ' or *q* of *q implies *g* for *ǧ²¹. Consequently, the distribution of /g here shows the same geographical pattern as that of *g/ǧ* (see map 15 and {A,B,D,E, G}) and is to be explained on the same historical grounds.

3) Secondary emphasis

- 23 The western (WD) and eastern parts (ED) of the Delta show a characteristic pharyngealization of *r* (*r*) and *m* (*m*) {A, B, D, E}: *farxa*, “chicken” *firâx*, “chickens”, *kamân*, “too”, *gumâš*, “cloth” (comp. *Cairo farxa*, *firâx*, *kamân*, 'umâš. see map 34). This is due to the impact of bedouins who settled in the area.

4) Vowels

- 24 *ā*: in the eastern part of the Delta, *ā* is split into clearly marked allophones with a strongly backed [a:] in emphatic environments [ifra:x], “chickens”, and a fronted [e:] or even [e:] elsewhere ([be:b] {E}), the same is true in the south of *ilXârğa*. Moving southwards in the Nile valley, *ā* gradually loses its inclination towards [a:] so common in Cairo in non-emphatic environments, becoming more open as in [ba:b] in the *Sohâg* region.
- 25 *ē* and *ō*: both tend to be diphthongized as [e:], [o:] in the Nile valley south of the town Of *ilMinya* {H}: *bēt* [be:'t] “house”, *yōm* [jo:'m] “day”.

5) Diphthongs

- 26 The diphthongs *ay* and *aw* are changed to *ē* and *ô* respectively as in Cairo *b ē t*, “house”, *môt*, “death”. They are retained - at least in certain contexts - in *Kr. iššēx* along the western branch of the Nile, in *Burg Burullus* and *Baltîm* and in certain relic areas in the Delta (i. e. the north eastern and the north western parts of the centre): e. g. *bayt*, *mawt*. For the whole region of B. Swayf and *Fayyûm* (NME 1) {F, G}, and for *alFarâfira* and *adDâxila*, the diphthongs are also characteristic (see maps 1,2).
- 27 The reduction of *ay* to *a* before a cluster of two consonants is a shibboleth for NME 1 dialects: *ma'alalahš* “never mind!” (< **ma'alayhš*, cf. *Cairo ma'alešš*), *itnan ginayh*, “two pounds” (< **itnayn ginayh*)²². Due to morphophonological changes by suffixation in many of these areas, the diphthongs alternate with other vowels, for example (western *adDâxila*): *bayt*, “house”, versus *bitē*, “my house”, and *bîtihôm*, “their house”; (*Burg*

Migîzil) *fawq*, “above”, versus *fûqi*, “above me”, and *fuqna*, “above us”²³. This is not the case in the *Fayyûm* and *B. Swayf* areas, where diphthongs remain stable in these cases.

6) Pausal forms

- 28 A feature typical for rural dialects is pausal *Imàla* of -a which varies between [e], [i] and [ih] (see map 35): *kalba*, “bitch” [kelbe], [kelbih]. A pausal [e] is present in northern *B. Swayf* even in emphatic environments: *batta* (batte), “duck”.
- 29 Pausal lowering for ê, î, û takes place in the Manzala region of the Delta (NED 2): *bèt* [be:t], “house”, *fallahîn* [fellehe:n], “farmers”, *sû'* [so:], “market”.

7) Deletion of *i* and *u*

- 30 This very important morphophonological feature is considered to be a distinguishing mark of the neo-Arabic language type. In Egypt, unstressed *i* and *u* in open intermediate syllables are elided in the following environments (see maps 62-66):

(a)	vCC_Cv	yiktib + u	> <i>yiktibu</i> ~ <i>yîkitbu</i>	“they write”
		yudrub + u	> <i>yudrubu</i>	“they hit”
(b)	-vC_Cv	misik + it	> <i>miskit</i>	“she took”
		wihîš + a	> <i>wihîša</i>	“ugly” (f.)
(c)	-C_Cv	māsik + a	> <i>māska</i> ~ <i>maska</i>	“she is holding”

- 31 (a) implies (b) and (c), (b) implies (c). Regions with (a, b, c) are the *Šarqiyya* dialects (ED 1) (D, E) and most dialects south of *Asyût* {I}, starting from *Abu Tîg* some 25 km to the south of *Asyût* (UE 1,3,4, less so in UE 2). In the same dialects, *i* in pretonic unstressed syllables is elided (as in *hinàk*, “there”, which becomes *ihnàk*, see map 68).
- 32 (b) and (c) apply without (a) in the centre of the Delta (CD, ED 3), Cairo, and Middle Egypt between *ilMinya* and *Asyût* (SME): *miskit*, *māska* ~ *maska*, *yiktîbu* ~ *yiktibu* {H,I}.
- 33 (c) applies without (a) or (b) in a closed region which begins with northern Middle Egypt in the south and includes the whole west and north east of the Delta (WD, NED, NME) {B, D} (see map 64) as well as in the oases *ilBahariyya* and *ilXàrga*: *yiktîbu* ~ *yiktibu*, *misikit*, *wihîša*, “ugly” (f.)²⁴.
- 34 There is no elision of *i* or *u* at all in the oases of *alFaràfira* and *adDàxila*: *kàmil+a* > *kàmila*, “complete” (f.), *yâkulô*, “they eat”.

8) Insertion of *i*

- 35 Elision of *i* in environment (a) of [7] results in a cluster of three consonants which is resolved by the insertion of *i* before the second consonant from the right (ED 1, UE): *yiktib+u* > *yiktbu* / *yikitbu*, “they write” (see map 56). Elision of *i* in (a) -vCC_Cv thus implies insertion in -vC_CCv {D, E, I}.

9) Bukara-syndrome

- 36 Insertion of a vowel in clusters -Crv is a hallmark of NME {F, H} and oases dialects. The inserted vowel has the same quality as the vowel following *r*: *midara*, “winnowing fork”, *midere* (in pausa), *midiriti*, “my winnowing fork” (see map 47).

10) Shortening of long vowels before two consonants

- 37 This is typical for the Delta with some exceptions for *the Šarqiyya* (ED, see map 74): *bàb+ha* > *babha*, “her door” {D, E}. In the Nile Valley vowel length is retained {F}: *bâbha*.

11) Stress pattern

- 38 The most important variable is the position of stress in words which contain a consonant cluster. It falls either on the vowel following the cluster, as in *madrâsa*, or on the vowel preceding it, as in *mâdrasa*. The first pattern, a salient feature of Cairo Arabic, dominates the Delta with some exceptions in the *Šarqiyya* and NED 2 {D, E}, the second the Nile Valley to the south of *igGîza* ({F}, see map 59).
- 39 In the oases *adDâxila*, *alFarâfira* and western *Bahariyya*, we find a western (North-African) stress pattern as in *libân / libàn*, “milk” (*alFarâfira*, *adDâxila*), *widin*, “ear” (western *Bahariyya*).

Morphological features

12) Demonstr. -t -n etc

- 40 This variable divides the Delta in a western and an eastern part with -t prevailing in the west and -n in the east: *dahuwwat*, *dahuwwan* (see map 148) {A}. In the Nile Valley we find mostly -ti as in *huwwati*, “he”, *hiyyati*, “she” (NME 1) {F} without lengthening of the final vowel. Further south, lengthening takes place: *huwwâti*, *hiyyâti* (SME) {G}.

13) Genitive particle

- 41 Besides *bità'*, which covers all Egypt up to *Asyût* and is used in all superregional varieties, there are some other particles of this kind (see map 189): *šuġl* ²⁵ between *Asyût* and *Nag' Hammàdi* (UE 1) as in *ilbagara šuġulti*, “my cow” {I}; *ihnîn* from *Nag' Hammàdi* to *Lugsur* (UE 3) and *allîl* – *allèl*, further to the south.

14) *sarab / sirib*

- 42 The distribution of the *a*- and the *i*-type of the first measure verbs provides us with a clear-cut isogloss in the Delta (see map 196). The western part (WD) prefers the *a*-type with certain roots, whereas the *i*-type is common in the eastern and central parts: *šarab*, *faham*, *rakab*, *sama'*, etc., versus *širib*, *fihim*, *rikib*, *simi'*, in NED, ED, CD, CED {A, B}.
- 43 In the Nile Valley between *Asyût* and *Nag' Hammàdi* (UE 1) the *i*-type receives stress on the final syllable due to the impact of sedentarized bedouins, thus yielding *šrib* ~ *išrib*, “he drank” (see maps 190-94) {I}. On the west bank of *Lugsur* (UE 3) stress falls on the inserted vowel: *išrib*.

15) 3. sg. f. perf. *at* or *-it* as a suffix

- 44 The centre (CD), the west (WD) and the north east (NED) of the Delta only show *-it* for the 3.sg.f. perf. of strong verbs: *darabit*, “she hit”, *libsit*, “she put on”. The *Šarqiyya* dialects (ED) in contrast, show a vowel harmonic distribution of *-it* with *i*-bases and *-at* with *a*-bases: *darabat*, but *libsit* (D, E). The same distribution can be seen in the UE 1 and UE 2 dialects south of *Asyût* (I). UE 3 on the west bank of *Lugsur* only has *-at*: *durubat*, *libsat* (see map 203).

16) 3. sg. f. perf. weak verb

- 45 The 3.sg.f. perf. of the final weak verb has *-at* (as in *banat*, “she built”) in most rural districts, in contrast to *banit* in Cairo (see maps 286, 287) and some smaller areas of the Nile Valley.

17) 1.sg. and pl. imperfect

- 46 There are three different types of paradigms (see map 210):

(a) <i>aktib</i>	(b) <i>aktib</i>	(c) <i>niktib</i>	“I Write”
<i>niktib</i>	<i>niktibu</i>	<i>niktibu</i>	“we Write”

- 47 The original system (a) developed into (c) by paradigmatic levelling. In Egypt, (a) is the common type in the Delta and is characteristic for the centre (Cairo, CD), the east (ED) and the north east (NED) {B, C}, as well as for Middle Egypt (NME, SME). (c) dominates the west of the Delta (WD 4) and the Nile Valley from *Asyût* southwards as far as *Nağ’ Hammâdi* (UE 1) and the west bank of *Lugsur* (UE 3) (11). Paradigm (b) seems to stand halfway between (a) and (c), and indeed, we always find it in areas which lie between (a) and (c) {C}. In the Delta, for instance, the area with (b), i. e. the WD 1 dialects, forms a bridge between the west (c) and the north east (a). In this way, (a), (b) and (c) represent what is called a terrace landscape (see map 211) where (b) can either be seen as the intermediate stage of an internal development of paradigm (a) to (c) via (b), or as the result of dialect contact. Since the existence of (c) in Egypt presumably goes back to the impact of sedentarized Bedouins returning from North Africa, the latter explanation is more likely.

18) Measures IIa and IIi

- 48 Here the morphological distribution of /a/ and /i/ in the last syllable of the verbal base (d, g) must be distinguished from the phonological one (a, b, c, e, f, see map 226) ²⁶.
- 49 measure II. perf., imperf.
- (a) *kassar*, *yikassar* ; *kallim*, *yikallim*
 - (b) *kassar*, *yikassar*; *killim*, *yikillim*; *'allim*, *yi'allim*
 - (c) *kassar*, *yikassar*; *kallam*, *yikallam*
 - (d) *kassar*, *yikassir* ; *kallam*, *yikallim* (morphological)

- 50 measure III. Perf., imperf.
- (e) sâfir, yisâfir
 - (f) sâfar, yisâfar
 - (g) sâfar, yisâfir (morphological)
- 51 (a), with *a* in a backing environment and *i* in a fronting one, is standard for Cairo, the west (WD 3,4) and the centre of the Delta (CD) {C, E, F}.
- 52 In (b) not only the vowel of the last syllable follows the rule but the first vowel as well: *killim*, *yikillim*, “he spoke”, but *'allim*, *yi'allim*, “he taught”. This pattern we find at the periphery of the Delta, i.e. far in the north (WD 1, NED 1) {C, D} and again in the south between *ilFasn* and *Abu Girg*, in the middle of an area which belongs to the NME 2 dialects. We find a similar distribution of the vowels in *ilBahariyya* and *alFaràfira* oases. The geographical division of this feature into several unrelated peripheral areas makes it likely that (b) is a relic feature.
- 53 (c) invariably displays an *a* in the last syllable and is characteristic for the whole region south of *igGiza*, i. e. *ilFayyum*, *B. Swayf* to *ilFasn*, and again from the south of *Abu Girg* to *ilMinya* {F, H}. In the Delta we find (c) in an area forming a narrow strip between the inner *Sarqiyya* and the centre of the Delta (ED 3, CED) {E}. Again, the geographical division suggests that (c) is a relic feature, too.
- 54 (a), (b) and (c), all imply (e), i. e. in all these areas measure III is formed with an *i* in the last syllable: *sàfir*, *yisàfir*, “he traveled”. The only exception is in the southern area of the oasis *ilXàrga* which has an *a* both in measure II and III: (c) *kallam*, *yikallam* and (f) *sàfar*, *yisàfar*.
- 55 In (d) and (g), the final vowel is morphologically determined, i.e. *a* in the perfect, *i* in the imperfect: *kallam*, *yikallim* and *sàfar*, *yisàfir*, (d) covers all the Nile Valley south of *ilMinya* (SME, UE) {I}, the eastern Delta (ED 1, 2) {D, E} and the oases of *adDàxila* and central *Xàrga*. (d) implies (g) and vice versa.
- 56 Measures t-II (V) (see map 237) and t-III (VI) (see map 240) can be derived by adding a prefix *it-* to measures II and III respectively. Dialects without a morphological distribution of the vowels in II (a, b, c) do not change these when the prefix *it-* is added in either the perfect or the imperfect. t-II and t-III are derived thus directly from II and III: *it+kallim* > *itkallim*, *yitkalîm*. *il+ 'àbil* > *it'àbil*, *yit'àbil*.
- 57 Dialects with a morphological distribution of the vowels as in (d, g), however, invariably have a in the last syllable of the imperfect of t-II and t-III and i in measure II and III: *it+kallam* > *itkallam*, *yitkallam* (II: *yikallim*); *it+gâbal* > *itgâbal*, *yitgâbal* (III: *yigâbil*).

19) Measure t-I prefix (VII) (see map 242)

- 58 The prefix of the passive of measure I is *it-* or *in-*: *gasal*, “he washed” > *itgasal* - *ingasal*, “he was washed”. *it-* is productive in Cairo and in nearly the entire Nile Valley except for the regions between *ilFasn* and *Abu Girg* and *Nag' Hammàdi* and *Gina* where *il* (<*in-) occurs. In the Delta, *in-* is productive in the *Sarqiyya* (ED) (D, E) and parts of the *Bihèra*, northwestern *Minufiyya*, and northern *Giza* (WD 4 and their periphery) {B}. All these regions have been influenced by Bedouins (see feature (3) above which shows nearly the same pattern).

20) Measure t-l. perf., imperf. (see map 244)

- 59 Types: (a) *misik* - *itmasak*. (b) *misik* - *itmisik*, “he was seized”.
- 60 1. The perfect of measure t-I derives from both the a-type and the i-type of the perfect of measure I through the addition of the prefix *it-* (or *in-*, see 19): *it+gasal* > *itgasal*, “he was washed”. In most areas, the i-type is treated like an a-type and receives a: (a) *it+misik* > *itmasak*. This is the case in Cairo, the centre and the east of the Delta (ED, CD, see map 248) {B, D, F}, in the Nile Valley (except between *ilFasn* and *Abu Girg*), and in the oases of *adDàxila* and *ilXàrga*.
- 61 2. The a-type and the i-type retain their vowels as in (b) in the western and the northeastern parts of the Delta (WD, NED) (B, D), the Nile Valley between *ilFasn* and *Abu Girg*, and the oases of *ilBahariyya* and *alFarâfira*: (*misik*) *it+misik* > *itmisik*, “he was seized”, (*darab*) *it+darab* > *iddarab*, “he was hit”.
- 62 3. With type (b), the imperfect always shows the same vowels as the perfect: *yitmisik*, *yiddarab*. With type (a), the vowels of perfect and imperfect differ: either the last a of the perfect becomes fin the imperfect (as in (a) *itmasak*, *yitrnasik*), or both the final and the penultimate a become i as in (p) *itmasak*, *yitmisik*. (a) is characteristic of the *Šarqiyya* (ED) {D, E} and southern Middle Egypt from *ilMinya* to *Asyût* (SME) {H, I}. (a) can further be found in the area between *Nag ' Hammàdi* and *Gina*, and from *Idfu* on southwards (UE 4). (p) is the norm for Cairo and the centre of the Delta {A, B, D, E}, and northern Middle Egypt from *igGiza* to *ilMinya* {F} apart from the region between *ilFašn* and *Abu Girg* (see maps 244, 245, 252).

21) *gêt~gît*

- 63 The perfect of *gih*, *gà*, etc. follows either the a-type or the i-type of the weak verb (see map 305); 1. sg. perf, *gêt* or *gît*, “I came”. The variable presents a clear isogloss separating Cairo and the Delta (with *gêt*) from the Nile Valley from *igGiza* on southwards (with *gît*) {F}.
- 64 Parallel to the *gêt ~ gît* isogloss are those of the plurals *bàb*. *Ibwâb ~ bibàn*; *fàs*, *fùs* / *fisàn* (see map 347) {F}.

22) Present marker

- 65 *bi* - is the dominant present marker throughout the Delta and northern Middle Egypt (NME 1) as far as *ilFašn* {G}. Further south a variety of markers are in use which are apparently derived from *'ammàl*. These include *amma-* (NME 2. SME), *'amma-* (UE 1) (I), *'a-* (UE 3), *imm-*, *um-* (*ilXàrga*, *ilBahariyya*), *ba-* (UE 1, UE 4) and less frequently *'ama-*, *'am-*, *ma'-*, *ma-* (see map 219 f. for more detail).

23) Negation of participles

- 66 From *ilMinya* southwards, participles and even nouns can be negated with *ma-... -s*, as in *ma-gadirs*, “he is not able”; in the north only *miš* is possible, i.e. *miš gàdir* (see map 316) {H}.

Lexical features

24) “here”

- 67 *hina* covers the Delta and the Nile Valley as far as Asyût (I). From Asyût to Aswân *ihnà* [*ihnih* in pause] prevails. Less common forms are *hèna* (DE 3), *hàna*, *hunî* [*adDàxila*], and *hawn* (*alFarâfira*) (see map 174).

25) “when ?”

- 68 Forms which go back to **aymatà* cover the whole Delta and northern Middle Egypt (NME): *imta* (Delta), *aynta* ~ *aymta* (NME 1) {G}, *èmta* (NME 2). Further south *meta* is the most common {H}, and forms such as *mita*, *matin* can be found sporadically in southern Upper Egypt. In the eastern Delta and *ilXârga*, *imta* is more often than not replaced by the newly formed *wagtè* ~ *waktè*, “which time?” (seemaps 185, 186).

26) “where?”

- 69 *fèn* (*fayn* where diphthongs still exist) is the common form all over the Delta and the northern Nile Valley as far as the region south of Asyût, sometimes in shortened forms such as *fa* (see maps 183,184). From this region on *wèn* is used {I} except in the areas between *Nag' Hammàdi* and *Lugsur*, and *Isna* and *Aswân*, where *fèn* shows up again.

27) “how?”

- 70 The Delta, Cairo, *igGiza* and the northern part of *B. Swayf* are covered by *izzayy* - *izzây*, a back formation of *izzayyak* (< **išzayyak*). Forms derived from **kayf* and revealing Bedouin influence begin as far north as the *Fayyum* and *Beni Swayf* areas with *kif* (besides *izzayy*) {G}. Further to the south we find *kîf* and *kèf*, and from Asyût on, *kèf*- *kè* (see map 187) (I). South of Asyût, we sometimes find *kè* being used as a preposition: *hamra kè ššây*, “red as tea” (UE 3) {I}.

28) “now”

- 71 Items denoting “now” are generally derived from **waqt*, “time”, with a prefixed demonstrative *di*. *dilwa't* ~ *dilwa'ti* is the usual form in Cairo and the central Delta, while *dilwagt(i)*, *dilwaxt* cover the eastern and the western parts. The *-ti* in *dilwa'ti* can be related to a demonstrative element common in many pronominals and adverbials: *dilgèti*, *dahuwwâti*, *ikdèti*, *ba'ati*, *ilwa't(i)* without *di* occurs in the north eastern part of the Delta.
- 72 In the Nile Valley, in particular south of Asyût, a host of phonologically changed, reduced, or otherwise reshaped forms of **dilwaqt* occur (see maps 180,181). Among others we find: *dilwaxt* (NME 2, SME) (G, I). *dilwak* (UE 2). *dilwaxît*. *dilwakît* (UE 1, 2), *lakîti* (UE 1) *dilgê(ti)* (UE 3), *dôk*, *dak*, *dalag* (UE 4), and *dolag* (Assuan), see further Behnstedt-Woidich (1994) sub *wqt*. The fricative *x* (< **q,k*) in place of the expected glottal stop in *dilwaxti* etc. may occur even in regions where **q* was generally replaced by a glottal stop, as in the *B. Swayf area* (NME 1). Whether this is a relic form or an innovation by spreading is uncertain.

- 73 Forms deviating from the general scheme are: *halwagit* which is recorded for some villages in the *Šarqiyya* (see map 179), and derivatives of 'an such as *dilwân*. “now”, and *lillân*, “until now” which occur in some places south of *Asyût*.

29) “yesterday”

- 74 *imbàrih* (reduced from **yôm imbàrih* < **yôm inbàrih* < **yôm ilbàrih*, compare 'amⁿawwil, “last year”) covers most of the Delta except the western part (WD 4) where *ilbàrih* prevails (B), *imbàrih* is common between *Suhâg* and *Lugsur* and as *ambàrih* south of *Lugsur* (UE 4) (see map 403).
- 75 Middle Egypt from *B. Swayf* and *Fayyum* to *Suhâg* is dominated by 'asiyya, originally “eve”, but here “yesterday” by semantic extension (G). In the *Fayyum* and *B. Swayf* areas, both *imbàrih* and 'asiyya occur side by side.

30) “good”

- 76 *kawîs* is limited to the east of the Delta (ED 1) {D, E} whereas the diminutive *kuwayyis* covers the Delta and the northern *B. Swayf* area. *milîh* [G], and further south, *malîh* (SME) {H} dominates as far as *Asyût*, South of *Asyût* (UE 1,2,3) *zên* is common together with its counterpart *sen*, “bad” (I). These both reveal a bedouin influence. The area south of *Lugsur* (UE 4) prefers *sabi* for “good” (see map 398).

31) “piece”

- 77 To the common northern word *hitta* for “piece” corresponds *dinsa* - *dansa* south of *Asyût* (DE, see map 396) {I}. In some places in Upper Egypt we find *hitta* (*Idfu* region.UE 4), in others *gut'a* or *habâbi*.

32) “chicken”

- 78 A clear-cut isogloss runs immediately south of the city of *igGîza* {F} with *farxa*, “chicken”, in the north and *farrûga* - *farruğa* in the south. In the south *farxa* means “young pigeon” which is *zağlûl* in the north (see map 429).

33) “egg”

- 79 *bêda* is generally used for “egg” throughout the Delta except in the west (WD 4), where *dahya* is found (see map 432) {B,C}. There, as in many dialects influenced by bedouins, *bêda* is a taboo word meaning “testicle” (see map 435). Both words occur in the *Fayyûm* and *B. Swayf* areas whereas south of *B. Swayf* to *ilMinya* *bêda* prevails again {G, H}. Between *ilMinya* and *Asyût*, again, *dahya* is common. South of *Asyût* {I}, *bêda* is often replaced by new words derived from roots meaning “to roll” such as *kahrûta*, *kahrèti*, *dahrûg*, *dahrûdi*, *ğahrûti* (see maps 433,434).

34) “frog”

- 80 The common word for “frog” is *dufda'a* in the Delta except the *Sarqiyya*, where it is *gufda* 'a. Forms derived from *dufda'a* are also used throughout the Nile Valley down to its most southern part (UE 4); *dubda'a* in the *Fayyûm* and *B. Swêf* areas {F} to *ilMinya* {H};

from there to *Lugsur*, *du'dufa* and *du'udfa* are common. South of *Lugsur* mainly words of onomatopoeic origin are found: *ga'ôra*, *ğarôra*, *ga'rûra*, *ğa'rôna*, *ga'û'a*, *ga'ôya*, *gu'wayya*. These remind us of the coptic *krogr*, from which *bagarôra* (*ilBahariyya*), *bagarûr* (*alFarâfira*), *buglul*, *baglûl*, *biglâl*, *buglôl* (*adDâxila*) are certainly derived in combination with the article *pe-* (see map 440,441). Other words for “frog” are *laglôg* (*ilXârga*, *Barîs*) and *ğifda'a* (*ilXârğā* town).

35) “shadoof”

- 81 The name for this irrigation tool has to be studied in combination with the word for the pole from which the bucket hangs (see map 527). Throughout the Delta and Northern Middle Egypt *šadûf* is used for the tool. *Šayyâla*, *'irg*, *zâna* and other words are used for the pole in the Delta, while *'ûd* is found in the *B. Swayf* area {G}. From *ilMinya* (SME) {H} on, *'ûd* denotes the implement as a whole as well as the pole. *'ûd* is thus clearly a *pars pro toto* form, - as indeed is *sadûf*, which originally means “basket” and is used in this latter meaning in the oases. Baskets were used in place of the modern buckets in earlier times.

36) “yoke”

- 82 The common word for “yoke” in the Delta is *nâf*. Northern Middle Egypt from *igGîza* {F} to approximately *Biba* {G} (NME 1) has *dand* while further to the south only *karab* is used (see map 502).

37) “ploughshare”

- 83 In the Delta and northern Middle Egypt as far as approximately *Abu Girg*, the word for “ploughshare” is *silâh*; further to the south *sikka* is used (see map 482).

38) “house”

- 84 There are two words for house, *bêt* and *dâr* (see map 456). In the north *dâr* means the traditional farmer's house built of mud brick while *bêt* is used for a modern house of burned brick, *bêt* is used for both types of houses in the south, while *dâr* is not used at all. As in (37), the isogloss runs approximately through the area of *Abu Girg*.

39) “stable”

- 85 For “stable”, the northern word is *zirîba* in contrast to southern *hôs* (see map 462). The isogloss runs directly behind *igGîza* {F}, *hôs* “stable” is also used in the Delta, however, namely in a small area at the northern end of the Rosetta branch of River Nile (WDL).

40) “hoe”

- 86 The characteristic northern word for “hoe” is *fâs*, whereas in the south *tûrya* is used (see map 5211.). The isogloss runs somewhere through the south of *igGîza*. *fâs* in the south means “axe”, for which the north has *balta* {F}.

41) “duck”

- 87 In the Delta, only *batta* is used. *bahha* is found in the northern part of *B. Swayf* from *igGîza* on, and in the *Fayyûm* for the local variety of duck (see map 436). From *B. Swayf* {G} to *Suhâg*, *bihha* is used and further to the south we find *buhha*.

Syntactical features

42) Circumstantial clauses

- 88 One of the rare syntactical variables involves the structure of the circumstantial clause {I}: the type *wi humma mašyîn*, “as they were going” shows up south of *Asyût* as *humma w mašyîn*, i. e. with the same structure as in some syro-lebanese dialects.

Dialect geography and human geography

- 89 Now we have examined a variety of linguistic features separating the various Egyptian dialects, it is time to consider the extent to which these dialectological facts coincide with other facts of human geography. That is to say, whether the regions marked by these isoglossic bundles coincide with those of anthropological features of material and spiritual culture, and the role played by other phenomena - such as trade routes and religious affiliations - in the spreading of linguistic features.

Material and spiritual culture

- 90 Winkler [1936] p. 455 concludes that the dialect borders coincide only to some extent with those of material and spiritual culture. According to him, the prominent border of material culture south of *Asyût* is only paralleled by a weakly marked linguistic border. This does not correspond to the findings of the dialect atlas. Winkler distinguishes only two main dialects, A and B, and does so primarily on the basis of a single variable, i.e. *q ~ ' ~ g (see feature 2), and some lexical features. This is why he places the main boundary between dialects in the Nile Valley south of *B. Swayf*. Using many more morphological and lexical variables, and taking a much broader approach, the dialect atlas instead places the most important bundle of isoglosses south of *Asyût* {I}, which closely coincides with the most significant division of material culture, South of *Asyût* we find (Winkler, p. 454):
- the bell-shaped oven (*furn*) with two chambers (north of *Asyût* it is of cubic shape);
 - loaf-shaped bread (*'eš šamsi*) (north of *Asyût* unleavened bread is used);
 - a two-fingered rake for the threshing-floor (*midra*) (north of *Asyût* it has five fingers),
 - the use of a handmill (*rahâya*) fixed into an earthenware tub (north of *Asyût* it is placed on a woven mat);
 - a wicker work seat for the threshing-carriage (*nôrag*) (north of *Asyût*, a wooden chair);
 - that people claim to see a palm-tree in the full moon. .
- 91 Moreover, the very important isoglossic bundle {F} south of *igGîza* also coincides with a significant cultural boundary as well. Seen from the north (see Winkler, *loc. cit.*), this marks the point at which the use of the *battâna* / *battâma* (a tool used to make earthen

walls), and the two handled plough stops, and the point at which people begin to say that the corona of the moon has the form of a bowl.

- 92 Bundle {G} which divides the dialects of northern Middle Egypt into NME 1 and NME 2 (south of *B. Swayf*) is paralleled by the cultural border where the half-circle shaped sickle of the Delta stops. Farther to the south sickles are hook shaped (see Winkler, 1936, plate 56).
- 93 In the Delta, only one feature is known to coincide with linguistic border: the *šarqiyya* which is sharply separated from the rest of the Delta by the bundles {D} and {E}, is also marked by a different type of plough ²⁷.

Trade routes

- 94 - The most conspicuous example of the impact of a trade route on the distribution of a linguistic variable is that of the reflexes of *q and *ğ - see map 15; feature (1) and (2)-, i.e. /g and g/ğ respectively in the Delta. The picture shown by the map is a dynamic one and can be seen -scenario [1]- as the spreading of the Cairene features /g along the medieval trade route from Cairo to *Dumyât* ²⁸ in a corridor through a region with g/ğ ²⁹. But we can imagine yet another scenario [2]: the resistance of /g to the impact of bedouinized dialects with g/ğ from western and eastern parts of the Delta, with /g being backed by the existence of this trade route and its Cairene influence. In this way, the bedouinized dialects were possibly prevented from covering the Delta entirely.
- 95 [1] starts from the assumption that the Delta had g/ğ and /g spread from Cairo along the trade route, whereas [2] starts from /g (or q/g) in the Delta and its partial replacement by g/ğ due to Bedouin influence outside the area along the trade route. Scenario [2] is certainly supported by the existence of the relic area WD 2 at the periphery of the Delta (Mediterranean littoral) - with q and g. An early spread of q and g from a capital (*al-Fustât*) along the branches of the Nile to the littoral of the Mediterranean and the important harbors Alexandria, Rosetta and Damiette would further correspond to what we know of the Arabic settlement history in North Africa after the conquest in the 7th century ³⁰. The corridor-like form of the distribution of /g - g/ğ corresponds further to the distribution of another feature of bedouinized speech, i.e. secondary emphasis (map 34). Other maps can be interpreted in the same way: *dukhum* ~ *dukham* (map 166), *masak* ~ *misik* (map 194), *yuhrut* ~ *yihrit* (map 216), prefix measure *Vll in-* ~ *it-* (map 242). *'akl* ~ *wakl* (map 267).
- 96 In order to decide which of the two scenarios is more likely, we need a more detailed knowledge of the region's settlement history. The existence of this corridor makes clear that the pronunciation g (*ğ) must be an old one in any case. If we assume scenario [1], we have to conclude that it harks back at least to the late Middle Ages when this trade route between Cairo and *Dumyât* was active. Since Alexandria regained its economic importance and the old trade route was reactivated, only at the beginning of the 19th century, a change of ġ to g in the 18th century as proposed by H. Blanc ³¹, can hardly explain today's geographical distribution of g (*ğ). If Cairo had had ġ in the late Middle Ages, this would have spread along the trade route, not g. By the same token, scenario [2] presupposes g at an even earlier stage, presumably immediately following the conquest. Either way, g in this area must be a relic.
- 97 - On the east bank of Middle Egypt, there is no transit traffic at all. We find here the genitive exponent *šugl* much further north than on the west bank, where the standard

form *bità'* follows the highway far to the south, see map 189 in Woidich-Behnstedt(1980) p. 183.

- 98 - In the western Delta, the common word for a water jar used for transport is *zal'a* (see map 443 and Woidich-Behnstedt, 1980, p. 182, map 5). Along the route Alexandria-Cairo (*ittarî' izzirà'i*), however, we find the standard *ballàs* progressing southwards into the region with *zal'a*.

Religion and dialect

- 99 It is not uncommon in the Middle East for religious groups to differ with regard to dialects. These differences go back to the different geographic origins of the respective groups. In Upper Egypt, on the west bank of *Lugsur* some 5 km south of *ilGurna*, there is a Coptic village, '*izbat ilBasîli*, situated in an otherwise Muslim environment. It belongs to a nearby, now deserted, monastery. The dialect spoken in *ilBasîli* is the same as that spoken on the east bank (UE 1). An explanation for this may be that the surrounding muslims - in contrast with the Coptic population-mixed with bedouins and in this way developed the UE 3 dialect. The Copts thus preserved their original colloquial. An argument against this scenario might be that place names with '*izba* are in general of recent origin dating from the 19th c. ³². Therefore '*izbat ilBasîli* may be too young a foundation for the development described above. An alternative explanation, therefore, is that Copts from the east bank were transplanted to the west bank not too long ago in order to serve the monastery. Whatever is true, those scenarios make clear that dialect divergences do not depend on the religion itself so much as on the history of settlement.

Sedentarization of Bedouins

- 100 The presence and settlement of Bedouins ³³ in Egypt since the Arabic Conquest (and perhaps before) is of paramount importance for our understanding of the linguistic history of Egyptian Arabic (see the discussion of trade routes above). Bedouinization can be detected by certain linguistic features, be they in their original or an adapted (inter-dialect) form ³⁴. For example:

Phonological features

- 101 *g* for **q*; strong secondary emphasis (*farxa firàx*, *kamân*, *gumàš*, see feature [3]); glottalized pronunciation of *r*, stress patterns: Maghrebinian patterns in *adDâxila* and *alFaràfira* (*libân ~ libân*, see feature [11]); stress on the possessive suffix 1.sg. -*î*, -*nî'*, stress on article; stress on the in-prefix in *indarab* (in certain villages in ED); *gàhawa*-syndrome (in UE 3 *nâxala*, "palm tree". '*ala mâhalak*, "slow down!"); elision of front vowels after -CC-(see feature [7,8]); vowel alternations [*masak+at> misikat*, *balah+a > bilaha*];

Morphological features

- 102 fem. pl. *intin* - *intan*, *hinna*; -*kin* ~ *kan*, -*hin* - *han*, *yimšan*, *rayhât*, etc.; verbal measures II and III show morphological distribution (see feature [18]); paradigmatic levelling in the

imperfect *niktib-niktibu* (see feature [17]); perfect types *šrib, išrib*; plural types *šnatt*, “bags” and *bnitta*, “girls”;

Lexical features

- 103 *kèf/kíf* for *izzayy*, “how?” (see feature [27]); *zèn*, “good” and *šên*, “bad”; from Asyût on, Arabic metaphors are used for the “pin” of the plough (Griessaule): *muftâh*, ‘iyâr, *xabur*, *watad*, *witt*, *gîfil*, *dul*’, instead of *balanġa* ~ *bilinġa* (apparently a latin loan) in the Delta, and *bagrum* ~ *baġrûm* in Middle Egypt (probably coptic) - see Riad (1961) map (a) on p. 252 and map 483 in Behnstedt-Woidich (1985); also the replacement of the taboo word *bèd*, “eggs” (testicles) by *dahya* (western Delta, see map 435) or a word derived from a root meaning “to roll”, such as *kahrûti*, *dahrûg* (south of Asyût, see feature [33]).
- 104 Another feature related to the settlement of Bedouins are certain types of place name. Toponyms starting with *Nazlit...* (*Nazlit* ‘Abille, etc.), for instance, probably correspond to the recent arrival of groups of Arabs. Nearly all of them appear in Middle Egypt and might be connected with the *Ġuhayna-tribe* ³⁵. Others are those combined with *Naġ’* (*Naġ’ Hammâdi* etc.), which are concentrated in the provinces of *Suhâġ* and *Asyût* ³⁶. Combinations with *Awlâd...* (*Awlâd Badr*, etc.) mainly appear in the eastern Delta and at the east bank between *Asyût* and *Suhâġ*. They point to Bedouin settlement ³⁷, as do toponyms starting with *Banî...* (*Banî* ‘Adi etc.). These mainly occur in Middle Egypt and to the south as far as *Suhâġ*, but also in some cases in the eastern Delta ³⁸. Toponyms with *Zâwiya...* occur in the western part of the Delta and further south exclusively on the west bank of the Nile Valley as far as Qena. This suggests the settlement of Arabs of Libyan origin ³⁹. Plurals of personal names such as *al-Fa’âlîl*, *al-Fa’alîl*, *al-Fulânât* [*ilMahamîd*, *il’Atiyyât*] -again a type of toponym which can be ascribed to Bedouins- are common in the eastern part of the Delta and in southern Upper Egypt ⁴⁰. With all necessary reservations in mind, we may state broadly that bedouin place names concentrate in areas such as the western and eastern fringes of the Delta and (the area) south of *Asyût*, where the varieties of Egyptian Arabic are spoken show greater or lesser evidence for the impact of Bedouin dialects, be they of western or of eastern type.
- 105 Another hint of Bedouin origin, i.e. oral history, has unfortunately not been investigated systematically. The *B’èri* speakers (UE 3) on the west bank of *Lugsur* trace themselves back to the well-known *alFazâra* tribe (EI II, s.v.) which has always been present in Egypt, Libya, and Chad areas ⁴¹. As they tell us, they came to Upper Egypt from the west following the droppings (*ba’ar*) of their camels and guided by their ancestor *Hasan ilFazâri*. By the same token, many of the inhabitants of the oases report that they arrived there as Bedouins, partly from the west and partly from the Nile Valley ⁴².
- 106 Needless to say, much more systematic research is needed on both the toponyms themselves and the history of Bedouin settlement in general ⁴³. A factor which has to be taken into account here is the density of the population in Upper Egypt through the Middle Ages. Map 553 (based on Halm (1982)) shows that this area was sparsely populated south of *Asyût*, a fact which certainly facilitated the settlement of the Bedouins there in great numbers ⁴⁴.

Future activities

- 107 The dialect atlas such as it is now offers but a rough collection of the linguistic material and a preliminary overview of the Egyptian rural dialects. It has its deficiencies: even with data collection, it was not possible to keep the parameters of the informants stable. So the sources are somewhat divergent. And it has of course its lacunae: the southern part of Upper Egypt between *Idfu* and Aswân, the *Ababde*, the Manzala-region certainly need more research. But, nevertheless, it gives us an idea of the kind of variables which occur and shows us the areas in which the main bundles of isoglosses delimit certain dialect groups. For further research with more refined methods of sampling, which should lead eventually to regional atlases, these areas deserve a closer look.
- 108 Another important desideratum is describing the main areas by exemplary reference grammars. The (present) writer hopes to present in the near future some local grammars of this kind on *B'èri* (UE 3) and the Oases, as well as a comparative grammar of the rural dialects of Egypt, partly based on as yet unpublished material. And last, but not least, the whole atlas should be redrawn in a more consistent manner than it is now. The computer should make this possible.
- 109 As to the historical interpretation of the linguistic facts, we are in desperate need of a history of settlement in the Nile Valley based not only on medieval writers but also on Ottoman sources and data from later centuries.

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NOTES

1. See Vollers, 1890, Nallino, 1900, Willmore, 1905, and the dictionary by Spiro, 1895.
2. See for instance Gairdner, 1926, Elder, 1927, Mitchell, 1962, Salib, 1981.
3. See Woidich, 1989a.
4. That the Cairo Arabic of the 19th century showed many features which today are considered rural is a different issue, see Woidich, 1995.
5. Winkler, 1936, and for the village *Kimân* near *Guff* in Upper Egypt, see Winkler, 1934.
6. Tomiche, 1962, is dedicated to the same topic, but does not go beyond Winkler, 1936.
7. See Winkler, 1936, p. 391, and the word list p. 343-338, and Littmann, 1920.
8. See Winkler, 1936, p. 388, 391, and personal communication by Georg Krotkoff.
9. Winkler, 1936, p. 382 f., Vycichl, 1953.
10. For more details, see Behnstedt-Woidich, 1985 ff, vol. I. See in particular the introductions to the areas in Behnstedt-Woidich, 1987, 1988, and EI VIII s. v. *al-Sa'îd* (Dialects).
11. See Behnstedt, 1979.
12. See Behnstedt-Woidich, 1982.
13. See Behnstedt-Woidich, 1982, and Woidich, 1993.
14. The letters marking the bundles are written between {} brackets. The features mentioned here and involved among others in the formation of the bundles are the following: (A)= 1,3,12,14,20; (B)=1,3,7,14,17,19,20,29,33; (C)=17,18,33; (D)=1,3,7,8,10,11,15,18,19,20,30; (E)=1,3,4,7,8,10,11,15,16,19,20,30; (F) = 5, 9,10,11,12,18, 20,21, 32,34,36,39,40; (G) =1,5,12,22,25,17,28,29,30,33,35,36,41; (H)=4,7,9,18,20,23,25,30,33,35; (I)=7,8,13,14,15,17,18,20,22,24,27,28,30,31,33,34,42.
15. The numbers of the maps refer to Behnstedt-Woidich, 1985, Vol. 2.

16. Already *isSa'âra*, some 25 km to the south of *igGiza*, shows all traits of an NME 1 dialect.
17. The *Hawwâra* are attested there from the 14th c. on, see EI III p. 299b.
18. It is not the place here to go into the problems of weighting the isoglosses, i.e. the question as to whether we should give one isogloss more importance than the other. Here all features are given the same value and only the number of isoglosses is taken into account.
19. For the distribution of trade posts along this line, see map 551 and Behnstedt, 1980, p. 65.
20. *q* is pronounced glottalized in *ilXârga*.
21. This is not true for the oases, *since alFarâfira* oasis has *q* but *z*.
22. See Woidich, 1991, p. 1643ff. . .
23. See Behnstedt, 1979, p. 122ff.
24. These are “parlers non différentiels” in another sense than in the Syro-Lebanese area since both *i* and *a* are here retained and not elided.
25. Spitta, 1880, §7a p. 25.
26. See Woidich, 1989.
27. See Riad, 1961.
28. For the concentration of trade posts along the *Dumyât*-branch of the Nile in the late Middle Ages see map 551 (based on map 4 of Labib, 1965).
29. So the traditional interpretation, see Behnstedt, 1978, p. 65, Behnstedt-Woidich, 1984, 1, p. 31f.
30. See as a summary Singer, 1994.
31. See Blanc, 1981.
32. See Björnesjö, 1994.
33. Some data on bedouin settlement (state 1884) are to be found in Hartmann, 1900, p. 220-222.
34. See Woidich-Behnstedt, 1980, p. 182, Woidich, 1997.
35. See Björnesjö, 1994, p. 32a.
36. See Woidich-Behnstedt, 1980, p. 181 f and map 4 p. 187; Björnesjö, 1994, p. 32b, is more hesitant in this case.
37. See Björnesjö, 1994, p. 33a.
38. See Björnesjö, 1994, p. 33ab.
39. See Björnesjö, 1994, p. 34a.
40. See Woidich-Behnstedt, 1980, p. 181.
41. The *Fazara* tribe, a fraction of the *Dubyân* and belonging to the Qaysites, is well-known in Egyptian and Sudanese history, see MacMichael, 1922, p. 144 f. p. 293; Kippel, 1911, p. 557. The *Fazàra* have been present there throughout the Middle Ages. For an account of Bedouin stems in Upper Egypt in the XIVth century, see further Garcin, 1976. p. 359ff.
42. See Woidich, 1995.
43. For the problems which such a research is confronted with, see the introduction to Björnesjö, 1994.
44. See Behnstedt-Woidich, 1985, vol. I, p. 26.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Bédouins, langue dialectale, linguistique, langue arabe

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