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Axel Fleisch (University of Helsinki & University of South Africa, Pretoria/Tshwane)

The volume *Berber in Contact. Linguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives* contains most of the papers—a total of fifteen, ten of which are in French, the rest in English—that were presented at an international conference with the same title held in Milan in January 2008. The topic of language contact with regard to Berber is of obvious significance both from the angle of scholars interested in the study of Berber languages and cultures, as well as for linguists who are more concerned with the cross-linguistic study of language contact.

The Berber languages represent a particularly fruitful field in this respect for a number of reasons. Their long history of language and cultural contact with varying neighbours spans millennia reaching from ancient contact situations with Egyptian, Punic, Greek and Latin to the current situation in which the presence of Arabic and a number of European and African languages creates an often complex and multi-layered contact scenario. The book edited by Lafkioui and Brugnatelli is accordingly broad in scope. The task is massive, and obviously no single volume can hope to cover this huge field of interest. Notwithstanding the impossibility of full coverage, the initiative is absolutely noteworthy. For a number of years, different scholars working on African (and other) languages have pointed out how important an improved understanding of contact is for the reconstruction of language history (Dixon 1997; Dixon & Aikhenvald 2001; for more specific discussion of African languages in this regard cf. Dimmendaal 2001; Heine & Kuteva 2001; Nicolaï 2009). Especially for those language areas for which there is a substantial philological tradition, historical linguistic work was often biased toward language divergence (cf. various contributions in Nicolaï & Comrie 2008). The domain of Berber language studies is one such area. While it is true that the comparative method is our most reliable tool for the reconstruction of language history, its strict application has had its limitations. While important advances have been made in the comparative linguistic study of Berber (cf. Kossmann 1999; Naït-Zerrad 1997, 1999, 2002), an important facet remains to be explained. It appears to be notoriously difficult to identify clear isoglosses or distributions of shared innovations on the Berber language map. Such a situation often arises when there are substantial and long-lasting contacts, and communication networks exist between different varieties belonging to a language family with close internal ties. The communication networks must have been in constant flux, with changing constellations over the long period of several millennia since the family had split from an earlier shared ancestor.

Historical linguists whose reconstructions focus on genetic relationship among languages need to differentiate carefully between cognates, i.e. shared inherited forms, and those items similar in sound and meaning that are transmitted horizontally, i.e. through contact. While they have usually focused on the former, I deem it very legitimate, and indeed necessary, to assign a much bigger role to language contact in language history. Under the assumption that language contact must have played a substantial role in Berber language history, what kind of linguistic and cultural history would we be describing if contact phenomena were simply regarded as a contaminating or distorting factor in the “proper” (i.e. genetic) language history?

In this regard, the volume edited by Lafkioui and Brugnatelli is a noteworthy contribution to an improved understanding of the significance of language contact for Berber. The task is huge. That is because of an important difference between historical reconstruction relying exclusively on the strict application of the comparative method, and the historiography of historical sociolinguistic

settings and processes. While the former is obviously regular to a considerable degree and represents a technique purely based on language data, the latter deals with the intersection of language and several other domains. This has led to the necessarily broad scope of the volume reviewed here. The editors have chosen the following selection in order to represent the broad scope of current work on Berber in contact.

A first section containing eight articles deals with ‘linguistics’, and a second section consisting of seven articles with ‘sociolinguistics’. In the linguistics section, papers focus on specific aspects of language structure and the evidence for contact between languages. These articles are often strongly descriptive and contain interesting language data. In some cases, the approach is more philological (Naït-Zerrad on older texts containing evidence for the contact history of specific Berber terms; Taïfi on the significance for borrowing in Berber poetry), in others it is more field-linguistic in style. This is the case for the well-founded contribution by Taine-Cheikh, which is particularly rich in linguistic information on both Zenaga and Hassaniyya from Mauritania, and Bennis’ investigation of loanword usage among speakers of different communities in the Béni-Mellal region. In a more cross-linguistic, but also mainly linguistic contribution, Ameur discusses contact evidence in the numeral system and number nouns across different Berber varieties.

Some of the articles try to deal rather conclusively with a specific, very clearly delimited topic, while others give remarkable evidence for a much broader research question and are thus somewhat more programmatic. Kossmann’s contribution is an example of the former: a well-written and concise paper on collective and unity nouns and their expression by the use of noun gender morphological markers—a phenomenon that is wide-spread (although far from omnipresent!) among Berber varieties. Kossmann argues convincingly that the distinction between collective and unity nouns in Berber was calqued from Arabic. It is thus not directly inherited from an Afroasiatic ancestor language, but more recently introduced into Berber through contact with Arabic. In contrast, Brugnatelli’s contribution sketches a more ambitious hypothesis concerning the existence of the initial stages of an Ibadite koiné—probably rather restricted specifically to the domain of Ibadite discourse—on the basis of evidence taken from texts originating from Mzab, Jerba and Jebel Nefusa. While necessarily sketchy, this hypothesis is extremely interesting because it addresses the question of linguistic strata that are constituted by means of communicative networks which cross-cut dialect communities and go beyond a more traditional, predominantly geographically-minded understanding of speaker communities and language distributions. In a similar vein, the contribution by de Felipe on medieval contact between Berber and Arabic on the Iberian peninsula as evidenced by Arabic texts argues in favour of an historically thick description of linguistic settings in connection with more purely linguistic evidence. In a very convincing way, this makes clear why research on language contact is necessarily a multidisciplinary task, relying on a fairly broad array of various research strategies and methods.

This requirement is taken into account in the volume by including, in section 2, a broad array of articles with a more sociolinguistic stance, although the borderline between both sections is not always easy to draw, and in my view the choice of this distinction as a structuring device in the volume is not necessarily very helpful. In a certain sense, this second section is perhaps internally more coherent, although some of the articles presented under the heading ‘sociolinguistics’ are actually very strong linguistic (rather than sociologically- or anthropologically-driven) contributions. Two contributions deal explicitly with code-switching, Tiziri and Mettouchi. While this phenomenon seems to fall into the realm of sociolinguistics, in particular Mettouchi’s article makes a stronger linguistic than sociologically relevant claim. The author provides very carefully collected and rigorously processed empirical linguistic data on code-switching between Kabyle and French. Her central claim is that “*the language that provides the highest number of words in the conversation is not necessarily the structurally dominant language in codeswitching* (p. 187).” An interesting implication for the debate on language purism is the fact that massive use of lexical

items from another language is not per se indicative of language decay, instability and the imminent danger of total collapse/loss of the variety under question.

The remaining articles of section 2 deal with topics that are more clearly sociolinguistic in that they illustrate different aspects of language use and language attitude. This concerns e.g. the articles by El Mountassir on Berber in urban contexts (here: Tashelhit in Agadir), or Jolivet's contribution on language attitude among Tamashek speakers in Niger, but also Salhi's contribution that examines briefly sociolinguistic components relevant for literature in Kabylia. This is completed by two articles on language contact and digital discourse, one by El Aissati, the other by one of the co-editors, Lafkioui. Apart from the fact that they raise awareness about Dutch being added to the array of languages in contact with Berber, the inclusion of both El Aissati's and Lafkioui's articles adds an important angle: the study of Berber speakers living in communities outside the Maghreb, and their linguistic behaviour using new media transcending localized communication.

Above I have pointed out how important this increase in the amount of work on Berber language contact is. While in this sense the volume is a welcome addition to the body of available research literature, the huge scope also leads to a problem: how can thematic coherence among a selection of papers be achieved that are meant to represent such a broad range of current research topics within Berber contact studies. This is indeed a major challenge, and the authors have opted for a broad scope. Hoping that the Milan conference was not a one-time event, but rather the beginning of an increased interest in Berber contact studies, in a next step it would be extremely interesting to dedicate more attention to significant aspects that have been outlined, each in a small subset of articles in the volume.

If the study of "Berber in contact" is to be a substantial and distinctive field of research, essentially different from the study of language contact situations elsewhere, it should be expected to show specific properties. It would have been very enlightening to point these characteristics out more explicitly. A number of articles in the volume seem at first sight not to have too much in common—other than the fact that they deal with some or other Berber variety in some kind of language contact situation. Yet, there might indeed emerge an inner logic and possibly a theoretically valid commonality to what is outlined throughout the book. I can see one possible arena in the field of "non-localized speech communities" and the "resilience" of communities using Berber varieties over the past millennia. Interestingly, this research agenda binds together articles whose topics are as different in terms of time-depth and methodological approach as Brugnatelli's hypothesized Ibadite koiné and Lafkioui's digital discourse.

It appears to me that the stronger articles in the volume in some way or another address or contribute to exactly this question: How is massive asymmetric language contact negotiated by speaker communities, even if these transcend local dialect groups or language communities with a distinctive areal distribution, while at the same time maintaining one's language—a variety of Berber, in the present cases.

Summing up, the volume with its fifteen articles provides an interesting overview of current work on language contact and its impact on the language situation of Berber. It constitutes a valuable contribution to our understanding of specific details in various subfields, ranging from literature and sociology to aspects of language structure and typology. The book, which appeared within a reasonable time after the conference (which is good, despite some editorial flaws), represents a panorama, rather than a theoretically-motivated volume. Whether this is a disadvantage is for the reader to decide. The contributors are among the leading scholars in Berber studies with an interest in language contact. As an overview over contemporary research on contact-related phenomena in Berber, it certainly fills a notorious gap.

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