

## Book Review

**Maarten Kossmann. 2013.** *A grammatical sketch of Ghadames Berber (Libya)*. (Berber Studies, 40.) Cologne: Köppe Verlag, 200pp. Hardcover ISBN 978-3-89645-940-4

Reviewed by **Jeffrey Heath**, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI, USA,  
E-mail: schweinehaxen@hotmail.com

DOI 10.1515/jall-2016-0005

This is a welcome reorganization and reanalysis of Ghadames Berber (GhB) materials left chiefly by Jacques Lanfry, a missionary linguist, who collected data prior to 1945. Kossmann expertly distills the primary material into a convenient one-stop descriptive source. GhB is controversial in comparative Berber linguistics, and I will emphasize historical matters.

Kossmann’s main transcriptional adjustment is to reinterpret Lanfry’s “wildly vacillating notations of vowel length” (18) as accent on full (“plain”) vowels {**i e a o u**}. He confesses that “little is known” about the accentual system (18). Lanfry’s cases of double accent like **énér** ‘oil lamp’ remain unexplained.

This issue reappears where the locative “clitic” results in contrasts like **táli** ‘room’ versus locative **táli** ‘in the room’ (104). Elsewhere the locative is realized segmentally as = (**y**)**i**. Perhaps **táli** is really **talí** < /**táli**=**yi**/ parallel to e.g. locative **almudú** ‘in a mosque’ from **almúdu** ‘mosque’ (104). In locative **əllóléb** ‘in a box’ (really **əllóləb** ?) from **əllóləb** ‘box’, Kossmann questionably classifies the locative as an infix. Historically, it probably originated as umlaut but was reinterpreted as an incipient nominal ablaut, modeled on verbs which have some **ǎ** → **e** shifts in final syllables (64). This is supported by cases where final-syllable **ə** shifts to **i** (106). **ǎ** → **e** (low) and **ə** → **i** (high) are lengthening processes but respect vowel-height harmony.

Negative **ak** and **wǎl** are both clause-initial, but **wǎl** occurs in subordinated and adjoined clauses. It is also regular in prohibitives, e.g. ‘don’t say that!’, compare Spanish *no digas eso!*. Oddly, GhB **wǎl əqqár sa!** ‘do not say like that!’ has a morphologically positive imperfective imperative verb form, although negative imperative forms are available (177–80).

The GhB ablauted future occurs only after particle **d**. This subjunctive-like combination occurs in wishes and as complement of ‘want’ and ‘can’. Elsewhere the “future” conveys uncertainty, while the imperfective conveys (future) certainty, at least in relatives (171), perhaps also in main clauses (Kossmann 2000).

**d**, like other preverbal elements, attracts second-position clitics, in which case **d** is realized as  $\emptyset$ . Therefore either overt **d** or clitic preposing with no audible attractor would make the future verb form predictable. Given its non-existent functional load, it is unsurprising that for most verb classes it is homophonous with another ablauted stem.

In many verb classes, aorist and perfective are ablaut mirror images. Ablaut rules overlay H[igh] and/or L[ow] vowel-height or sequences thereof, preserving length. For example, {HL} aorists often go with {LH} perfectives, and vice-versa. The future is the joker in the deck. Depending on verb class, it is identical to the aorist, or to the perfective, but not to both. Its fickle alliances are explained by its preference for initial H (short **ə** or full **u**), so it usually aligns with whichever of the other two stems has an H-initial overlay. ‘Roast’ has {LH} aorist **ǎknəf** and {HL} perfective **ǎknǎf** (64), so the future is identical to the perfective. ‘Pray’, on the other hand, has {H} aorist **əmud** and {LH} perfective **ǎmud**, so here the future is identical to—you guessed it—the aorist (67).

In a few classes, futures are distinct from both aorists and perfectives. One is trisyllabics with final CCVC, as in {H} aorist **əssəkkər**, {LHL} perfective **ǎssəkkǎr**, and {HL} future **əssǎkkǎr** for ‘raise’ (83). In vowel-final bisyllabics, future and perfective share {HL} overlay but diverge in conditions for deleting the final vowel, except when a pronominal suffix follows. For example, ‘wear’ has {LH} aorist **-ǎls** (presuffixal plural **-ǎlsi-**), {HL} perfective **-ǎlso** (presuffixal singular **-ǎlse-** or plural **-ǎlso-**), and {HL} future **-ǎls** (presuffixal plural **-ǎlso-**) (85).

Pronominal affixes for most indicative stems (including aorist and perfective) have suffix only (1Sg), prefix only (1Pl, 3MaSg, 3FeSg), or prefix plus suffix (2Sg and all 2Pl and 3Pl forms). For some classes, the future follows suit, but for others it conspicuously lacks the usual 1Sg and 2Sg suffixes. 1Sg  $\emptyset$ -Vb- $\emptyset$  and 2Sg **t**-Vb- $\emptyset$  are still distinguished by the 2Sg prefix, but the absence of a 2Sg suffix creates another homophony, with 3FeSg **t**-Vb- $\emptyset$ . (Compare Arabic imperfectives with 2MaSg = 3FeSg **t**-Vb.)

Kossmann (2000) argues that a GhB-type future verb (distinct from aorist and perfective, and without pronominal suffixes) is reconstructible for Proto-Berber, and may be related to ancient Semitic prefix-only verb paradigms. Some other eastern Berber languages have forms related to the GhB future, or at least vestiges of a related **u/a** (i. e. H/L) alternation. Kossmann also argues that particle **\*ad** and the future form were originally autonomous. The particle later formed tight collocations with the future in GhB and other eastern Berber, but with the aorist elsewhere in Berber. This seems unlikely for various reasons, including the weak morphological distinctiveness of a free-standing future vis-à-vis other stems, and the fact that neither the future verb form nor a reflex of **\*ad** is attested except in future collocations. If there is no way to account for the GhB

future as an innovation, it is best reconstructed in strict collocation with \***ad**, subsequently replaced except in eastern Berber by the aorist.

The GhB “injunctive” is a first- or third-person exhortation, with suffix **-(n)et-** between stem and pronominal suffix: **ākfi-net-āŋ** ‘may I give’ (85, cf. 91–93). Cognate suffixes are Tuareg **-et** and Tashelhiyt **-it**, which however follow rather than precede pronominal suffixes. Kossmann (2001) gives us three caskets to choose from: a) GhB is conservative, while Tuareg and Tashelhiyt have reordered the suffixes; b) Tuareg and Tashelhiyt are conservative, while GhB has inverted the suffixes by a process akin to infixation; or c) Proto-Berber added its injunctive suffix to the pronominally unsuffixed future paradigm (see above). A problem with (a) is that Tuareg and Tashelhiyt are widely separated genetically; one with (b) is that there is no good evidence for infixation in GhB (see above on the locative “infix”); a glaring one with (c) is that the verb stem in the GhB injunctive has aorist rather than future vocalism. I pick the silver casket (b), with the provisos that the suffixal reordering in GhB was made possible by the ambiguous zero-suffix 3Sg and 1Pl forms ending in **\*-∅-et** → **\*-et-∅**, and that the **n** in **-(n)et-** reflects resegmentation from 3MaPl **\*-ān-et**, extended as **\*-net-∅** especially after stem-final vowel as in ‘give’ above.

A minor quibble is Kossmann’s practice of transcribing preverbal clitics as proclitic to the verb rather than as enclitics to the preverbal attractor. I suggest revising **anno tān = ənn = i-ǧó-n** ... ‘who has put them ...?’ (133) and **i = t = idd = t-əkf-ət** ‘will you give it to me?’ (131) as **anno = tān = ənn = i ǧó-n** ... and **∅ = i = t = idd t-əkf-ət**, the latter with future **∅ < /d/** as the attractor.

GhB has a special place in comparative Berber, and we owe Kossmann a round of applause for making the data accessible and for defining the controversial historical issues that they bear on.

## References

- Kossmann, Maarten. 2000. Le futur à Ghadamès et l’origine de la conjugaison verbale en berbère. In: Salem Chaker & Andrzej Zaborski (eds.), *Études berbères et chamito-sémitiques: Mélanges offerts à Karl-G. Prasse*, 237–55. Paris & Louvain: Peeters.
- Kossmann, Maarten. 2001. “Les désinences modales en berbère.” *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 74. 25–39.