

ELIZABETH M. BERGMAN. **Spoken Sudanese Arabic: Grammar, Dialogues, and Glossary.** 2002. Springfield, VA.: Dunwoody Press. Pp. xix, 393.

This is another most welcome volume in the Dunwoody Press Publications of the African Language Project, directed by Chester Hedgepeth of the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, which has already yielded Philip J. Jaggar's Hausa Newspaper Reader (1996), Antonia Schleicher's Yoruba Newspaper's Reader, and David R. Woods' Lingala Parallel Texts (2002). The author reveals in the preface that this book was written for students who wish to acquire Sudanese Colloquial Arabic (SCA) and have already some familiarity with Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and "at least one other variety of spoken Arabic" (p. viii). However, this would be a fairly easy challenge for someone who had studied Chadian, Nigerian, or Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA), and much more difficult if the colloquial undertaken were Moroccan, Algerian, or Tunisian for reasons too well known to discuss here. I think either of the aforementioned desiderata would be a satisfactory prerequisite to be able to use this tome with maximum anticipated results.

The work is divided into three parts. Part I presents a fairly comprehensive overview of the grammar of SCA, offering some comparisons with MSA. Part II contains texts recorded by native speakers from Khartoum-Omdurman or those which "were broadcast by the Sudanese media" (p. ix). They are transcribed phonemically and are also given in vocalized Arabic script (which was unnecessary, in my opinion, since spoken fluency in SCA is the goal of the student); however, it remains unclear why the author felt compelled to transcribe these texts with the details of all the hesitations and "slips of tongue" (sic) (*ibid.*). In my view, these could have been excised, since they contribute little to helping students attain proficiency in SCA. Moreover, one easily becomes frustrated when reading these hesitations and slips, which are often quite numerous (e.g., p. 254). The texts also contain an English translation and a glossary. For those not conversant with SCA

and the Sudan, the author wisely decided to provide linguistic and cultural notes, which are invaluable aids to facilitating student achievement of fluency in the dialect and intimate familiarity with many aspects of Sudanese culture. For example, the notes to Selection 9 (p. 139, note 4) give important information about variation in SCA, such as the commonly heard assimilated forms of the second person masculine singular pronoun: ʔitt(a), and ʔabahān ~ ʔabahāt 'parents' (p. 139, note 2).

Turning to the 27 selections themselves, they are unquestionably interesting subject matter. The topics include getting to know the Sudanese people, the Sudanese educational system, the electoral constitution and the Islamic front, the economic blockade of the Sudan, marriage customs, folk music, etc. The transcriptions and vocabulary items are accurate, with only that rare inconsistency or typographical error. For instance, we note haajj vs. haaj 'pilgrim' as an example of the former, and samha 'nice' for samha, or three d's in "address" as examples of the latter (p. 18).

The grammatical notes are nicely executed and offer professional insight into all manner of SCA data. The English translations are also well done, although one does encounter the occasional sentence fragment; e.g., "One I did in Virginia, at an organization, people whose name is John Snow" (p. 319). However, this style is acceptable in SCA and is but part of a larger discourse.

Let me now take up a few specific details. One difference between SCA and ECA is the way in which bardu 'still; also' is used. (Bergman transcribes with a final long vowel which I do not believe is correct; p. 165, p. 367). The author notes: "The suffixed pronoun allows the speaker to give the referent of the suffixed pronoun greater prominence than is possible using /barduu/" (p. 165, note 3). In checking Martin Hinds and El-Said Badawi's A Dictionary of Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1986:66), there is only the invariable bardu and a variant bardak. It is the latter form which I remember hearing more in Alexandria than in Cairo, and this possible

isogloss between these two major cities is worthy of a serious investigation.

The glossary of linguistic terminology is by and large excellent (pp. iii-v). The term pharyngeal is defined as a sound “made with the pharynx” (p. iv). This should be changed to read “in the pharynx.”

There are three errors in the utilitarian bibliography (pp. xvi-xvii). The monograph by W. J. Crewe appeared in a Seminar series of the University of Khartoum (the -ar was left off the word “Seminar”). The book by Alan S. Laye, Chadian and Sudanese Arabic in the Light of Comparative Arabic Dialectology, The Hague: Mouton, 1976) was written by Alan S. Kaye, which contains an exhaustive bibliography up to its date of publication (both of the aforementioned references are on p. xvi). Finally, Hans Wehr’s A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic was edited by J Milton Cowan (there is an erroneous period after the name Milton, p. xvii).

One of the most important features of SCA that makes it different from most other Arabic sedentary dialects is the so-called “homophony” of the definite article and the definite relative pronoun, as is described by Bergman (p. 56). Rather than explain this phenomenon via homophony, I believe the al- is, in fact, the same prefix in both cases. This means, in essence, that alkitaab alkabiir is to be translated ‘the big book’ as well as ‘the book which is big’. The identical meanings of both of these English phrases point to one and only one deep structure (so to speak) in SCA.

The volume ends with a brief SCA-English glossary (pp. 365-393). There is that infrequent printing error (barduu is spelled in Arabic script with an initial daal, p. 367), but nothing of a serious nature. There are some striking differences between SCA and ECA: bitaaʃ has a plural in -iin and -aat, and not a broken plural bituuʃ (p. 368); ‘black’ is ʔaswad (p. 365) as in MSA, and not ʔiswid as in ECA; xalwa is a Koran school in SCA (p. 372) (in MSA it means a ‘secluded room’

and also the ‘religious assembly hall of the Druzes’; ECA uses kuttaab); SCA ‘trees’ is šidar (šadara ‘tree’), with a daal (paralleling Upper Egyptian ECA dialects); SCA ‘mosque’ is masiid (p. 386), which reflects a yaaʔ pronunciation of the jjim); many n’s assimilate, such as bitt ‘daughter, girl’ (p. 368), exactly as in Hebrew bat (cf. MSA and ECA bint); and the SCA root for ‘to want’ is dyr (similarly in Chadian and Nigerian dialects).

This is a very impressive tome, and Bergman deserves the praise and thanks of the entire field of Arabic dialectology. We need volumes like these for other lesser known Arabic dialects, such as Algerian, Chadian, and Mauritanian Arabic.

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