

BOOK REVIEW

ULRICH SEEGER, *Wörterbuch Palästinensisch—Deutsch In Zusammenarbeit mit Rāmi il-‘Arabi, Latīfe Abu l-‘Asal und Taḥsīn ‘Alāwīnihi*. Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2022. 1348 pages. €189.00 hardback. ISBN: 978-3-447-11841-5.

This is an accumulative dictionary of the Palestinian dialect that compiles work from a substantial number of existing sources, and supplements these with insights from the compiler and three informants. It primarily uses Bauer (1957, 1898), Bargūṭī, Halloun (2011, 2019), Elihai (2010–2011), Barthélemy (1939–69 and its Supplement, Denizeau, 1960) and the works of Butros (1964, 1873). The dictionary is clearly the result of extremely hard work and puts collected knowledge in a single volume. However, it is not the reliable source we need. The work, while useful, must be used with some caution as it enters errors into the record. This review will focus on issues around loan words, particularly Ottoman Turkish and modern Hebrew, that have ramifications for the use value of the overall project.

Before narrowing in on loan words, it is also worth noting the limits to the scope of the project, which repeats limits of the sources used. Overall, the entries in the dictionary represent what I estimate as less than 40% of Palestinian dialect varieties, so it cannot be understood as a complete source. The compilation also makes little use of proverbs relating to daily life and hundreds of idiomatic forms connected with the parts of the body, of animals, birds, the four seasons etc. These have proven essential to other dictionary projects and to understanding dialects generally. The work also misses several more recent sources.

Oversights on foreign loan words seem related to missing relevant bibliographic sources, for example *Italian words in Palestinian Arabic* (Halloun, 2020), which includes hundreds of Italian words used daily in Palestinian dialects (PD) and shows that no Italian words entered into PD directly, but rather entered through Ottoman Turkish, which acted as an intermediary for Italian, Greek, French, and the Palestinian dialects. The dictionary further misses the 2021 edition of *Practical Dictionary* (Halloun) which added 150 pages including missing words in the previous edition, corrections, idiomatic forms and many proverbs useful for students in their first step of learning the dialect; and also *A collection of Arabic Idioms-Palestinian Dialect* (Berman, 2021), which includes hundreds of idiomatic forms used in the dialect. The compilation also sadly neglects many dissertations written by PhD students in Palestinian universities dealing with the lexicography of the Palestinian dialects.

The dictionary also includes sources that it perhaps should not. For example, English loan words from Butros’ ‘English loanwords in the colloquial Arabic of Palestine’. These words are not used *at all* in the Palestinian dialect. It seems that they were used in the past among a limited educated group of Palestinians in Jordan. We do not use in the standard dialect of Palestine words such as: *uniform, utility, warehouse, windshield, washing machine, hay fever, hands up, identity, headlight, high jump, loud-speaker, supplementary, infection*, etc.

As a non-native speaker of the dialect with limited access to native speakers, the compiler had a strong dependency on his informants, and copied information from the previous work without criticism. Unfortunately some serious mistakes resulted.

For example the word *hašīr* (1283) means ‘dry grass’ in Palestinian dialect, the dictionary renders the meaning as ‘dense ground cover, that one cannot see the earth’. The entry also misses common idioms that use the expression, i.e.: *zayy n-nār fī l-hašīr* ‘like fire in dry grass’, or quickly spread rumors and news; as well as *ard hašīr* ‘uncultivated land’.

It is clear that the dictionary is a work in progress. This is evident when comparing the online 2015 version with the present volume. I draw on the earlier source here to show some of the problems with the compilation, which seems to have been often unchecked so that new entries were not compared with earlier similar ones leading to repetition and some contradictory entries. Here are a few examples:

TRS and TRYs

The word *trīs* ‘shutter’ appears twice in his dictionary. In one entry the compiler writes the explanations given by his informants: ‘window without glass made out of lamella made of opaque plastic which can be opened group-wise’ (143). The word appears a second time as ‘shutter’ (146) as compiled from Halloun (2019). The word comes from the Hebrew תריס, but is referred to in the first instance as ‘hebr.’ and in the second as ‘neuhebr.’.

dīpō and dabbūya

The compiler did not see that relation between *dīpō* and *dabbūya*. Both forms are the ottamanized French *dépôt* that entered PD through the Ottoman language and not directly from French. The word means: ‘military storage for weapons and headquarter in the Ottoman period’. The online dictionary gives:

dipō: Warenhaus (frz. *dépôt*) AJB2,98,-8 (Butros, Albert Jamil) (365)

The word is registered under the root DBW and given the meaning of ‘warehouse’ borrowing the etymology from Butros, who incorrectly attributes the word directly to French. The French word is also copied without l’accent circonflexe over the ‘o’ (*dépôt*). The more recently compiled dictionary gives:

DBY: *dabbūya*: militärisches Waffenlager und Hauptquartier in osmanischer Zeit (osm.-türk.debüy,frz. *dépôt*) MH2,336,7. (65) ‘military storage for weapons and headquarter in the Ottoman period’

There is no note to indicate that *dipō* and *dabbūya* are the same word. The new meaning and its etymology are taken from Halloun (2019), and the French word appears with the right orthography.

mafraga and mafrika

The two forms represent the modern Hebrew מברגה ‘electric screwdriver’, derived from בורג originally, and the Ottoman word بوجو ‘screw’. The text in the dictionary is as follows:

FRĜY *mafragā* Akkuschauber (hebr. 609) (מברגה)

MFRKY Z *mafrika*, *mafrikā* Elektroschauber (neuhebr. מברגה) MH2,780,16;804,8 (1186)

The same word appears under two roots: FRĜY and MFRKY and these are given two different etymologies, one from hebr. and one from neuhebr. The meaning of the

first is given as ‘cordless screwdriver’, and the second as ‘electric screwdriver’. There is no indication that these are in fact the same word. No mention is made that the word takes on a foreign pronunciation.

’FND and ’FNDM

The two forms *afandi* and *afandim* are borrowed in PD from Ottoman Turkish. Both mean ‘master’, or ‘lord’. While *afandim* can mean ‘yes Sir! What do you want from me? What can I do for you?’ The explanation is taken from Bauer and registered under two roots:

’FND *Z afandi, affandi* / -yye Herr (als Titel von Beamten, wird dem Namen nachgestellt) LB5,154,-17;GD3,8,9, *Z Aristocrat* MP2,233,-2 (türk. *efendi*, griech. *αφέντης*)

’FNDM *Z afandim!* zu Befehl!, ja, bitte! (Antwort auf einen Anruf) LB5,154,-10 (türk. *efendim*)

The word *afandim* is also taken from Bauer and was given the root ’FNDM, with only the meaning ‘zu Befehl’, ‘at your command’. So both words were taken from Bauer, but separated. The compiler did not notice that the *-m* is the possessive pronoun to mean ‘my’, although it was noted by Bauer in the source text. In addition, an important word is missing in the entry: *اف* *afaf*, an abbreviation of *effendi*, which appears frequently in the courts records in the Ottoman era.

SBDĠ and SBYDĠ

The word *sbidāġ* appears under two roots in the dictionary. The first root is SBDĠ and is given the meaning ‘chalk’. The second is under SBYDĠ and is given the meaning ‘make up powder’, ‘white lead’ as we see:

SBDĠ *Z sbidāġ* Schlämmkreide LB5,259,39 (nach AB mittelpers. *spēdag*) (522)

SBYDĠ *Z sbidāġ, sbidāġe* weißes Schminkpulver, Bleiweiß ſB,80,5 (pers. *sapedāġ*, mittelpers. *spēdag*, sanskr. *śveta*) (526)

There is no indication that the words are in fact the same word, or that the word appears twice. The second entry has an enlarged etymology, but the words are given different meanings. The explanation of Bauer here seems to have been accepted. The word *سیداج* has, across all periods, meant ‘white lead’ and is used as make up by Palestinian women.

?SWG and ?SG

In the online dictionary the entry pr ?SWG is as follows (21)

?SWG *Z asūġ* (Koll.), n.u. -i schwedisch; Schwede LB5,269,39 *Z blād il-asūġ* Schweden LB5,269,40,42,2

In the volume under review (19) the following is given:

?SG *Z Asūġ* Schweden (türk. *İsveç*, ital. *Svezia*) MH1,328,28;MH2,42,20
Z asūġi schwedisch; Schwede MH21-

The same word appears under two roots. The online dictionary has only ?SWG but the present volume also includes ?SG (but without referring to the connection between the two). In the earlier version the word is considered an adjective, while later editions indicate that the word is a noun. The later version gives two separate

meanings for the words: Swedish or Sweden. The earlier version gives no etymology while the latter takes its etymology from Halloun (2019).

There are many other inconsistencies of this nature, among them KRTS and KRTYS (1063), 'WŞ and 'ŞŞ (42,22), KRS (1067), *ḥamama pl ḥamamōt* (286), BBRWN and BARBWN (48, 62).

Not only does the dictionary make mistakes in sloppy copying, but it also introduces errors when it comes to Hebrew words entering Arabic (and from some other languages). Some Hebrew words enter the dialect through Arabic speakers hired as day labourers on Hebrew-speaking work sites. These are rendered in the dictionary with orthographical mistakes?

פניקה should be פניקה (118)	nūn not the waw
חורשה should be חורשה (242)	hē. not aleph
חתם should be חתם or חותם (307)	mem at the end
קטן should be קטן 1058. (1058)	nūn at the end
ש"ב should be ש"ב (674)	abbreviation sign

Additionally, *aḥīran* (11), *dabbābe barr-ma'īyye* (66), as well as *šī'ir 'āṭifi* (819) are all incorrect. This seems to have been copied from Halloun (2011), errors that were corrected in Halloun (2020, 261 and 236).

The dictionary also has some issues in rendering classical or literary Arabic terms. Though these are not many in the work, and are drawn from few sources, entries contain mistakes such as:

batīšōn.

The word is translated as 'kleine Bohrmaschine', which means 'small drill' (50), but the term actually means 'electric hammer', 'rotary drill', or 'hammer drill'. This mistake seems to stem from a misunderstanding of the Arabic description in the Etymological Lexicon (91), an an erroneous focus on the term *diminutive suffix*:

باتيشون: باتيشون ج باتيشونات *batīšōn pl batīšōnāt*: جهاز كهربائي صغير للحفر. من العبرية: פטיש (باتيش), أي المطرقة، ولا حقة التصغير العبرية -ן (-ون). دخلت عن طريق العمال العرب
electric hammer

Translation:

bātīšōn: a small electric hammer for digging. from Hebrew פטיש with the diminutive suffix -ן. The word Entered the dialect through the Arab workers

Yahwa

The word in the dictionary is rendered thus:

YHWY Z *yahwa* Zeugen Jehovas (hebr. יהוה) MH2,874,-1 (1345)

It is wrongly translated as Jehovah's Witnesses. The word *yahwa* is known and used in PD dialect only through the term *šuhūd yahawa* 'the witnesses of *yahwa*'.

يهوه: يهوه (yahwa)، من المصطلح 'شهود يهوه، ويهوه: اسم من أسماء الله في التوراة יהוה (يهوه): طائفة مسيحية ينتقل أفرادها من بيت إلى آخر لشرح الكتاب المقدس. لا يؤمن أفرادها بالثالوث أو بشفاعة القديسين ومعتقدات مسيحية جوهريّة|

The absence of idioms is unfortunate, as these function as important parts of daily life and conversation in Palestinian dialects. This dictionary gives ‘samples’ of some but the compiler misses at least half of the idiomatic phrases and most of the Palestinian proverbs (some 5000).

The dictionary often does not mark the relation between denominal verbs and the noun from which they are derived, mainly in foreign words borrowed in the dialect. It seems that the phenomenon is ignored, and as a result, two roots are often registered for one word. The Palestinian dialect, as other Arabic dialects, borrowed mainly nouns necessary for communication from other languages, but once the noun is accepted and settled in the dialect, a new verb is created from it. As we see in the following example:

ʔFYN and ʔFYWN

The entries are rendered thus (25):

ʔFYN *afyan* / *yʔafyin* (Q.I) wütend werden/sein ‘being/ becoming angry’

ʔFYWN *afyōn*, *Z afyūn* LB5,224,-33;MH1,240-26, *fjōn* Opium (griech. ὀπιον)

The relation between the two words is not noted, and they are classified under two different roots, only one of which is given an etymology. Even the given etymology is not quite correct; opium is a Greek word but it enter the Palestinian dialect through Ottoman Turkish. It also seems clear that *ʔafyan* افيرن has been registered with the help of his informants as ‘to become angry’, but in fact it means basically ‘to behave like one who consumes a lot of opium’.

Similarly, metathesis duplication does not seem to have been taken into account; words are recorded under different roots without reference to the relation between them (i.e. *mtakke* / -āt Aschenbecher >tkk on 153 and *mkatte* / -āt Aschenbecher > ktt on 1056).

Given these inconsistencies, the work should be reviewed with the assistance of Palestinian scholars or Palestinian PhD students working on dictionary and language compilation. This is indeed a growing field, with students currently in Heidelberg, Munich, and Berlin. Such a review would also help bring the work up-to-date, as its reliance on Bauer, which was compiled decades ago, leaves many entries outdated. A list of abbreviations would have revealed some of the inconsistencies. Ultimately what the dictionary needs, is to adopt the approach of Hans Werber, where Arabic words are introduced by roots while foreign words are written exactly as they are and not reduced to a root system. Here variation in pronunciation across areas can also be noted, and should be, but which clearly link different pronunciations to a single word.

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