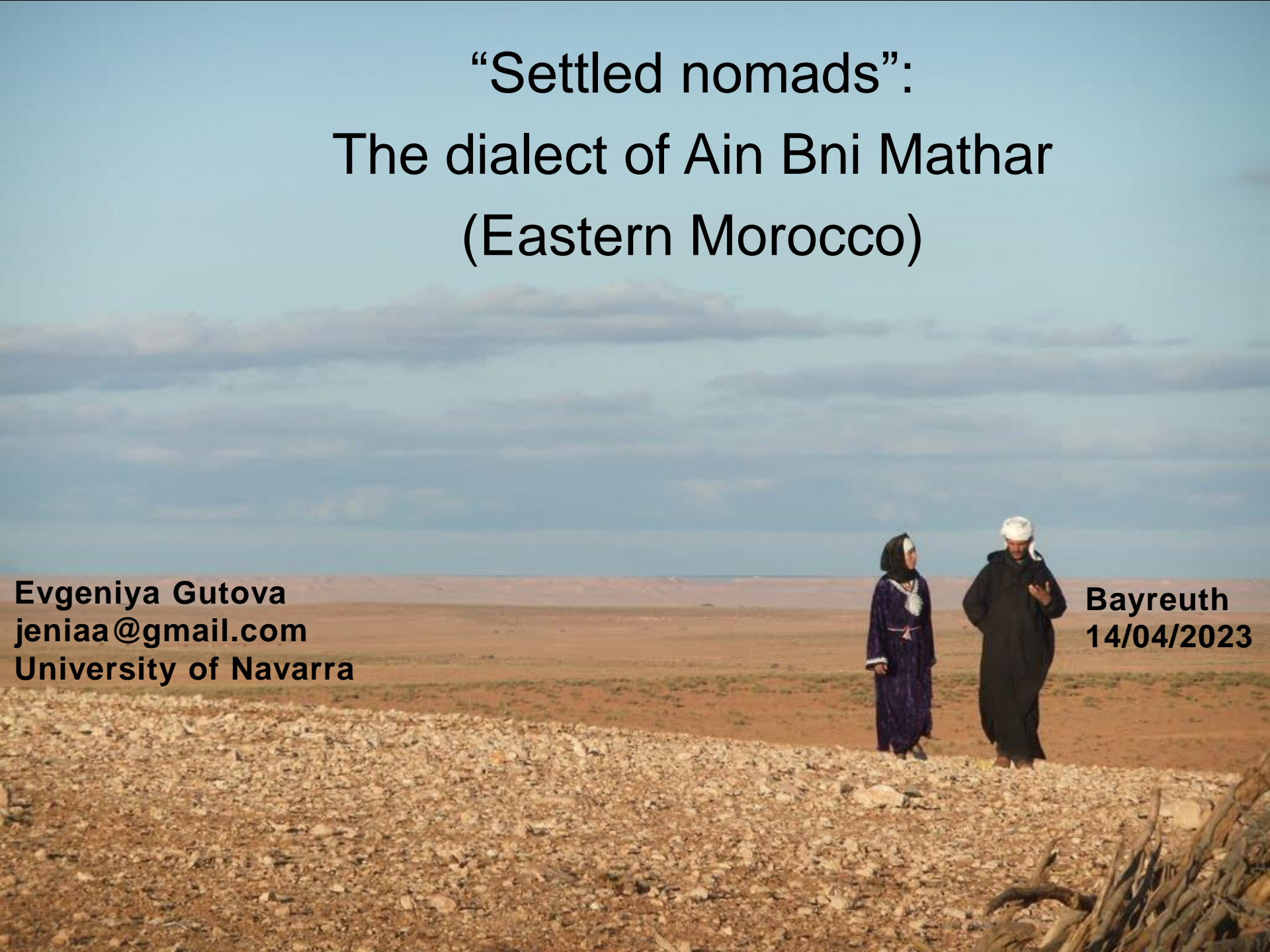


“Settled nomads”: The dialect of Ain Bni Mathar (Eastern Morocco)

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1. Introduction



Ras el-ayn
Berguent
(Bergem)

Ain Bni Mathar

- Oujda region (Eastern/Oriental region), Jerada province
- 81 km south of Oujda, 300 km north of Figuig
- 36 km from the Algerian border
- Previous names: Ras el-εayn; Berguent > Bergem
- Population: 16,289 in 2014
- Commercial hub of its region; location on a trade road (Algerians, Jews, French, Spaniards; three religions)
- A large weekly market attracts many people.



Ain Bni Mathar

- Ethnic groups: Bni Mathar, Bni Gil, Awlad Sidi Ali, Awlad Sidi Abd al-Hakim; also people from the Souss and Sahara
- Some originated from Oran in Algeria (Lazarev 2008)
- Around ABM: semi-nomadic lifestyle, mobile livestock, some cattle-breeders live in a tent (plus build a house)
- Tendency of urbanization and sedentarization
- Not a simple nomad-sedentary dichotomy (Kreuer 2019).









This presentation

- Linguistic fieldwork in Ain Beni Mathar in Nov. 2011
- Three weeks, three hosting families, three tribes
- Natural data + elicitation sessions; questionnaires (Cohen & Caubet 2000; Behnstedt: unpublished)
- Speakers from different ethnic/age groups, men/women
- Recordings: mostly with elderly women
- Transcriptions: with the help of younger speakers
- Results: notes on the dialect + transcribed texts
- Discussion: mixed speech (Eastern/Western, rural/urban?); speech of “settled nomads”.

2. Phonology



Phonology

Consonants:

- No interdentalals \underline{t} , \underline{d} (preserved more to the north)
- CA \underline{t} and $t > ts$ [t̪]: *ṭemma* ‘there’
- Affrication of /t/ is stronger than in some other dialects
- Distribution of g and q (<CA q): similar to Oujda:
 - g : *gelb* ‘heart’, *begra* ‘cow’, *gal* ‘say’, *gemra* ‘moon’
(! Awlad Sidi εabd al-Ḥakim tribe has q in these words);
 - q : *qahwa* ‘coffee’, *l-waqt* ‘time’, *qra* ‘read’, *bqa* ‘stay’
- Labialized \underline{m}^w , \underline{b}^w : *ṁṁ^wa* ‘mother’, *ḃḃ^wa* ‘father’.

Phonology

Vowels:

- Plain/stable/peripheral vowels: /a/, /u/, /i/ (with allophones)
- Unstable/central vowels:
 - the schwa /ə/ <e>: *kteb* ‘write’, *xemsa* ‘five’
 - ? *ũ* (disputable): *xũbz* ‘bread’, *dxũl* ‘enter’
 - ? *ǣ* (even more disputable)
- How many (central) vowels?

Phonology

- **Compensatory gemination**: the initial-syllable schwa is preserved, accompanied by a gemination of C2
- This phenomenon is also found in Algeria (Oranais)
(William Marçais 1902, 1908; Philippe Marçais 1957, 1977)
ne-ddebḥ-ek 'I (will) slaughter you (sg.)' (Text 1)
- Does not apply to all consonants equally?
(Does not affect initial *r* and *l* ?)



3. Morphology

Morphology

Pronouns

- Gender distinction in second person singular:
 - Independent: 2MS *nta(ya)*, 2FS *nti(ya)*
 - Suffixes: 2MS *-k*, 2FS *-ki*
- 3MS suffix (DO/kinship): *ăh* (~ *u*), 3MS:IO *l-ăh*:
žebt-ăh 'she brought him', *weld-ăh* 'his son'
- 3PL suffix: *-hem*, Bni Mathar: *-hu* (vs. WMA *-hum*):
mεa-hem/mεa-hu, *men-hem/men-hu*, *bi-hem/bi-hu*, etc.

Levelling?

Morphology

Verb conjugation

- Gender distinction 2nd person singular:
 - 2MS *šef-t* vs. 2FS *šef-t-i* 'you saw'
 - 2MS *smeε-t-ni* vs. 2FS *smeεt-i-ni* 'you heard me'
 - 2MS *(ka-)te-kteb* vs. 2FS *(ka-)t-ketb-i* 'you write'
 - 2MS *kteb!* vs. 2FS *ketb-i!* 'write!'
- Conjugation of weak verbs archaic vs. modern:
 - *kanešru* (archaic) and *kanešriw* (new) 'we buy';
 - *kanemšu* (archaic) and *kanemšiw* (new) 'we go'.

Morphology

The use of *ka-*

- *ka-* is more restricted than in WMA, but it does occur
- “Inconsistent” use? Rather, different factors/distinctions:
 - (*ra-ni*) *nekteb* (progressive) vs. *ka-nekteb* (habitual)
 - *ka-nemši u nesmeε u nekteb* ‘I go and listen and write’
- Previously not used in EMA? (not in Bezzazi 1993 corpus)
- Not common in Western Algeria, but it is found e.g. in Béchar (Souag p.c.), Oran (Mercier 1907).

Lexicon



Some special lexemes (in spite of koineization):

- *gɛed* 'sit'
- *(n)taɛ* (Genetive) 'of'
- *imta* 'when?'
- *waš(ta)* 'what?'
- *wah* 'yes'
- *mliḥ* 'good, fine, OK'
- *drwek, durk* 'now'
- *ruḥ* 'go'
- *rwaḥ* 'come'
- *n-new* 'rain'
- *ḥenna* 'grand-mother'
- *ṁũšš* 'cat'
- *zṛudiyya* 'carrot(s)'
- *kabuya* 'pumpkin' (<Hausa *kàbēwā*, Souag 2012)



4. Texts

Texts

Gender	Male	Female
Age	ca. 45	ca. 70
Literacy	Literate	Not literate
Tribe	Bni Mathar	Bni Gil
Genre	Joke	Fairy tale
Links	https://youtu.be/zVHN_CKanMo https://youtu.be/cu1aLJYZQww	
Transcription	gutova.com/Transcription_ABM.pdf gutova.com/Transcription_ABM.docx	



5. Discussion

Discussion

- Mixing varieties (but which ones?)
- Western/Eastern? Sedentary/Bedouin? Rural/urban? Hilalian/Pre-hilalian?
- Not a simple dichotomy (in lifestyle and in speech)
- Cf. Algerian Arabic spoken across the border
- Role of levelling, koineization?
- Sociolinguistic factors?



Thank you
for your attention!

