

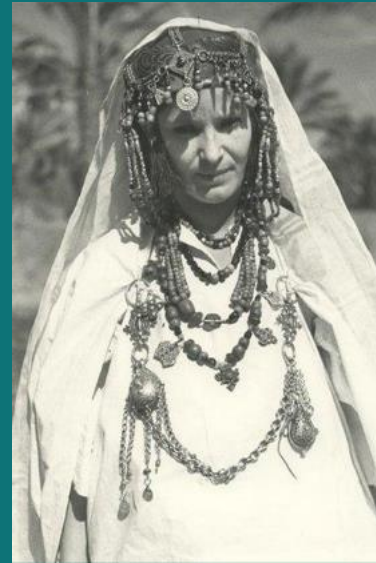
Judeo-Berber/(T)amazigh(t):

What we know and what we don't

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Judeo- Berber

- Introduction
 - Nomenclature
 - Regional variation
 - Distinctive features
 - Writing systems
 - Sociolinguistic variation
 - Documentation
 - Conclusions
- 

Who are the Berber Jews?



Berber Jews

Two possibilities:

- came from Israel and assimilated with the Berbers
- are Berbers who converted to Judaism
- “Judaized Berbers” theory (beginning of the 20th c)
- closely linked with the French colonialism
- Nahum Slouschz 1909

Judaized Berbers?

- Two major postulates:
 - numerous Berber tribes adhered to Judaism before the Arabic invasion (8th century);
 - Maghrebian Jews partly descend from these Berber proselytes: they are Berbers converted to Judaism
- There are no (historical, archeological, linguistic, or onomastic) arguments that corroborate or refute this theory, so it is speculative
(Hirshberg 1963, Taïeb 2004, Beider 2017)

DNA

- Recent studies on mtDNA (from mother to children) dismiss the Judaized Berbers theory
- Behar et al. 2008: Jews from North Africa lack typically North African mtDNAs, which means they did not mix with the local population.

Antiquity

- Jews settled in Maghreb since at least 3rd c. BCE
- Some claim that the female military leader, Dihya, aka Al-Kahina, 7th c, was a Berber Jew
 - Kahina – Cohen?
 - Kahina ‘diviner, priestess soothsayer’
 - The link to the Jews is questionable
- No linguistic information on the early N. African Jews
- Multilingualism/multiglossia: Latin, Greek, Hebrew (for education), Aramaic (cf. Mediterranean Jews).

Islamic period

- From the 9th c., Arabic (> Judeo-Arabic) became the principal language of N. African Jews
- In the 15th c., some Spanish Jews also settled in the interior Berber lands.

Historical sources

- al-Idrisi (12th c.) mentions the existence in ancient times of Jewish tribes in North Africa
- Ibn Abi Zar (14th c.): at the end of the 8th c., two Berber tribes lived in the area of Fez, composed of 1) Muslims, and 2) Christians, Jews, and pagans
- Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) writes that it is **possible** that in the past some of Berber tribes adhered to the Jewish religion
- > Before the Arabic conquest, the vast majority of Berbers was Christian or pagan (Hirschberg 1963)

Testomonies

- 19th c: first evidence of Jews using Berber;
rural Jews in peripheral regions: Morocco, Algeria, Libya
(Chaker 2004; Chetrit & Schroeter 2003; Chetrit 2007)
- Charles de Foucault (1886): Moroccan Jews mainly
speak Judeo-Arabic, but in Berber-speaking regions
they also know Berber; some have Berber as L1
- Simon Levy (2009): at the beginning of the 20th c.
around 8% of the Jewish Moroccan population has
Berber as their first language, more understand it;
cf. 76% Arabic; 16% Spanish/Haketiya (*Alliance*)

Number of speakers

- 7th c: a few hundred? (al-Idrisi 12th c.)
- 1912: 8,000 in Morocco (Lévy 2009; Beider 2017)
Cf. 77,000 Judeo-Arabic; 16,000 Haketia
- 1936: 145,700 in Morocco (incl. 25,000 monolingual)
(Abramson 2018) – unlikely, probably exaggerated
- 1950-1960s: immigration to Israel
- 1992: 2,000 speakers, mostly in Israel
- Today: a few dozen or hundred (?): in Israel,
very few in Morocco, France (Chetrit 2022)
- > Severely endangered. *Ethnologue*: 8a (moribund).

Reasons of decline

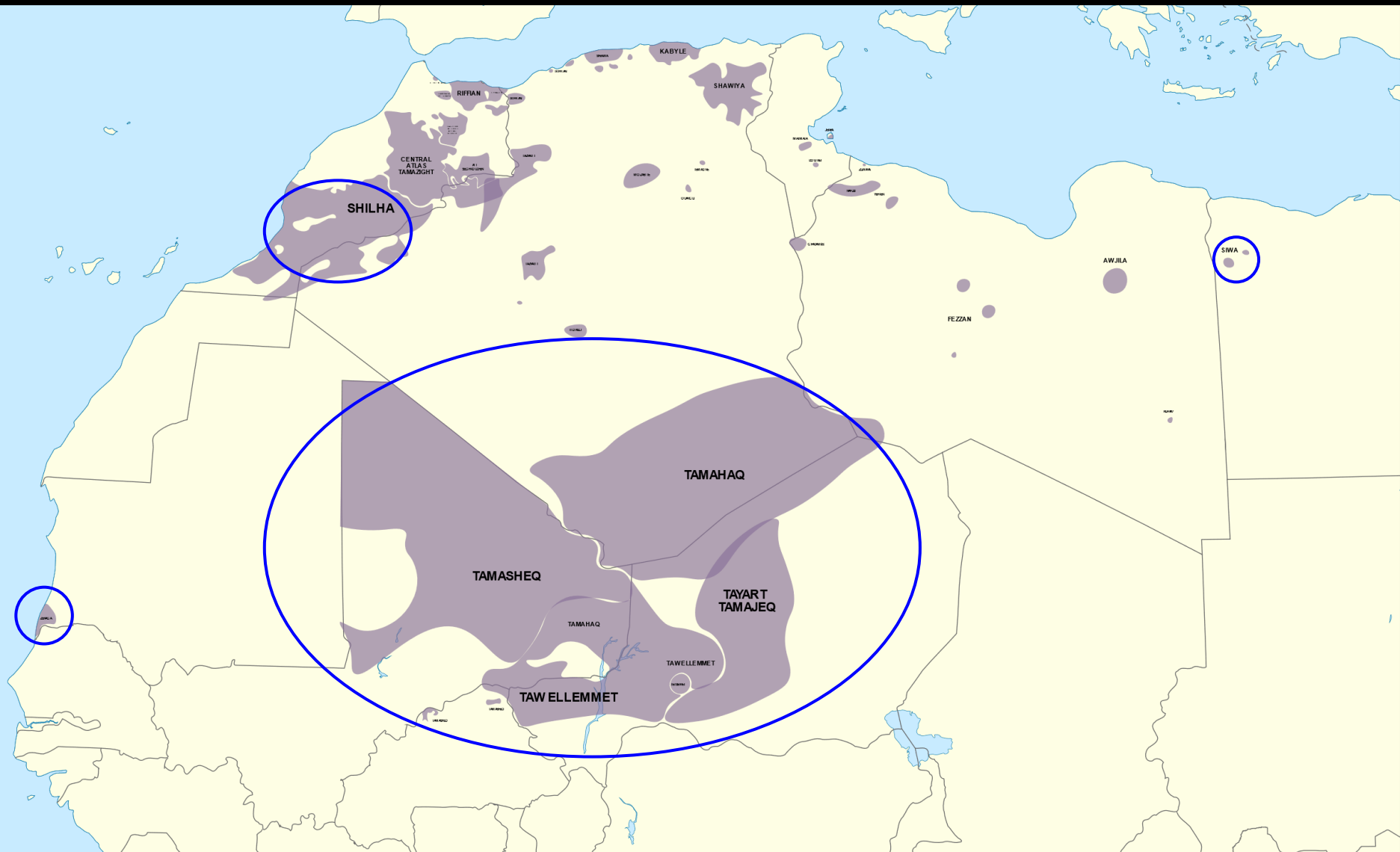
- Leaving the rural areas, change in lifestyle
- The French protectorate (1912-1956)
- Monolingual (Judeo-)Berber communities became bilingual in the 20th c when roads were constructed
- Contact with the urban Jews (Judeo-Arabic)
- Jewish Universal Alliance (*Alliance Israélite Universelle*): French schools for Jewish children (first school in Tetouan, 1862)
- Immigration to Israel in 1950s-1960s
- Monolingual Judeo-Berber speakers were rare

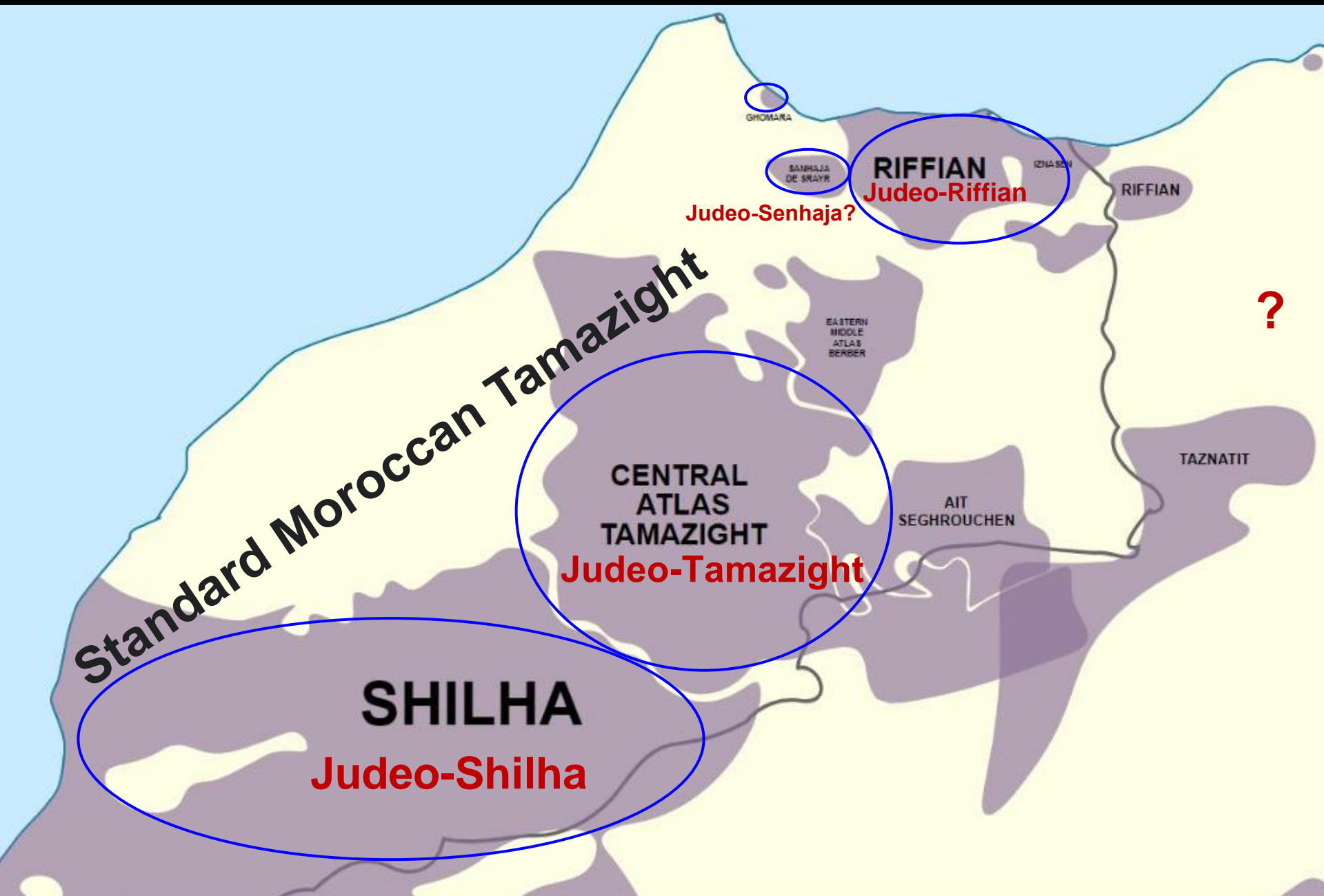


Nomenclature

Nomenclature

- Berbers/ Amazigh(s)/ Imazighen (controversy)
- Berber: exonym; pejorative? ‘barbarian’ (βάρβαροι)?
- Amazigh: endonym (but by whom?); not all-inclusive
- *Taqulit*: used to refer to Judeo-Berber (S. Morocco?)
- Possible to specify: *Berber* – not pejoratively;
Amazigh – covering all population
- **T**amazight**t** = referring to the language
... but which one?





GHOUMARA

BANHAJA
DE SNAJR

RIFFIAN
Judeo-Riffian

IZNA SEN

RIFFIAN

Judeo-Senhaja?

?

EASTERN
MIDDLE
ATLAS
BERBER

CENTRAL
ATLAS
TAMAZIGHT

Judeo-Tamazight

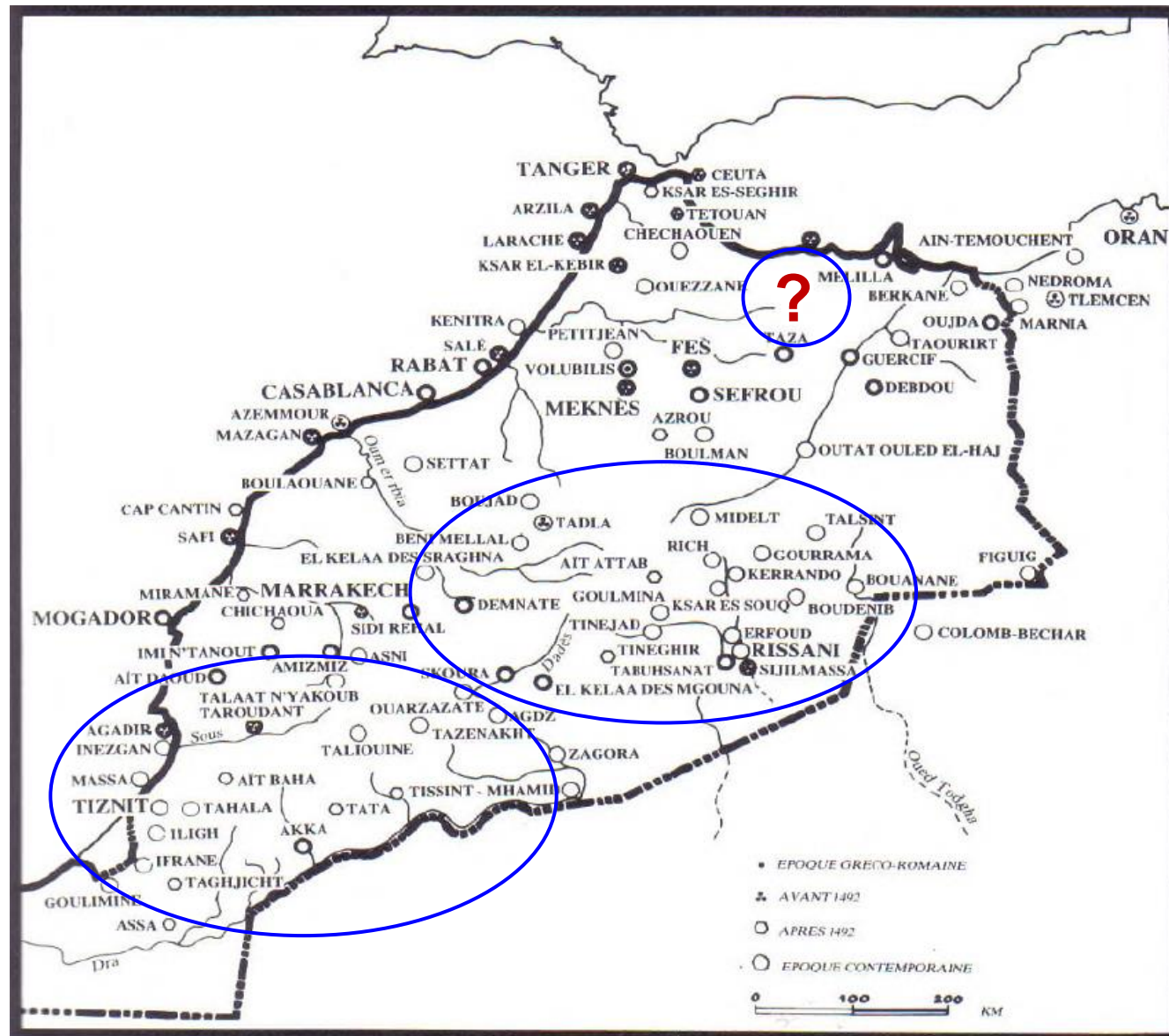
AIT
SEGHROUCHEN

TAZNATIT

Standard Moroccan Tamazight

SHILHA

Judeo-Shilha



Jews in Morocco from the Greco-Roman period to the present
La vie juive au Maroc, p. 18 (Chouraqui, Attal)

Judeo-Berber

- Judeo-Berber/(T)amazigh(t): a recent concept/term
- Reconstruction of the identity
- Refers to any Berber variety spoken by the Jews
- *Judeo-*: the language has distinctive features
- Is this the case for Judeo-Berber?



Distinctive features?

Phonology

- Merger of /s/ <s> and /ʃ/ <sh> in some varieties
 - Loss of labialized velars k^w , g^w , x^w , y^w :
 - *nekk^wni* > *nekkni* ‘we’
 - Shift $q > k$ and $q̣ > ṭ$ in some varieties
 - Shift $l > n$ in some varieties
 - Centralized pronunciation of /i/ and /u/ as [i̠], [u̠]
 - Diphthong insertion
- Some features are shared with Judeo-Arabic
- But not all and not everywhere...

Hebrew loans

Hebrew words referring to Jewish cultural life:

- *lašon* 'language' > *talaśut/talasut* 'Hebrew'
- *ḥuḥma* 'wisdom' > *taḥuḥmit* 'id.'
- *kohen* > *takwaḥnit* 'being Cohen' (verbal noun)

Some are borrowed through Judeo-Arabic:

- *lḥorban* 'the destruction [of the temple]'
- *lqiboṛa* 'tombs'
- *Imiεaṛa* 'cemetery'



Writing systems?

Writing Berber

- Tifinagh: official script; symbolic; emblem of identity

Neutral/compromise?

- Arabic script: favored by speakers who are literate in the Arabic language/script

Arab-Islamic orientation

- Latin script: used by linguists, writers, intellectuals

Western (French, colonial?) orientation

- Hebrew script: used (rarely) for Judeo-Berber

Used by a Jewish minority/those literate in Hebrew

→ Scripts associated with ideologies

! (Judeo-)Berber languages generally not written;
“oral culture” (vs. Arabic/Judeo-Arabic).

וְתַעֲמִיד תַּקִּיפָא לְיוֹנָנְךָ אֲיִיבֵיךָ נִקְרָא
 יְשִׁיבֵיךָ תַּקִּיפָא אֲנִי פִּלְחֵיךָ דִּיקָם וְנִקְרָא אֲנִי
~~וְנִקְרָא~~ נִקְרָא וְנִקְרָא אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי
 כִּדְחֵיךָ וְנִקְרָא לְיוֹנָנְךָ שִׁיעָם נִקְרָא כִּדְחֵיךָ
 בִּישְׁבוֹם וְנִקְרָא אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי
 אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי
 לְיוֹנָנְךָ קִיאָתִי יִיבֵיךָ קִיאָתִי לְיוֹנָנְךָ
 פִּשְׁתִּי

Pesah Haggada

- Galand-Pernet & Zafrani 1970
 - Is it a traditional/spontaneous translation?
 - Commissioned in the 1950s
 - 2nd version: commissioned from Masud Ben Shabbat
 - 3rd version: commissioned in Israel (Chetrit 2007)
- the whole Haggada was not translated in Judeo-Berber

כוללו ואצאן ורא נסנג'ה' חתה יאתת כלה!
 ג'יץ אד סנתוואל " כוללו ואצאן ארנשתא אגרום
 סווא יכמר סווא יפצ'ר " ג'יץ אד כוללו יפצ'ר " כוללו ואצאן
 אר נשתא פרא יגאת לכצרת ג'יץ אד תאילילות "
 כוללו ואצאן אר נשתא אר נסה " סווא נג'וור סווא
 נווררן " ג'יץ אד כוללו נווררן "
 עבס' יסמנאן אנוה איפרעון גמיצר " יסופגאן רבבי
 ג'יפה סוואפוס יזהדן דדרע יצחאן " מלא וריסופג
 רבבי לואלידהין נג' גמיצר סול זכאן נללא ג'יס נפני
 ולא תארווא נג' ולא תארווא נתארווא נג' יכדאמן
 אנוה איפרעון גמיצר " מקאר ופאן נג' כוללו
 לעולומא נג' כוללו לפוהאמא " נסן כוללו תאוראת
 לוצהיית פללאג' אנעאוווד אופוג' גמיצר ואנוה
 יסוגותן אייעאוווד אופוג' גמיצר גוואנוה יתאושכאר "
 מטעה' ספליד מא יגראן גרפי אליעזר " דרבי יהושע
 דרבי אלעזר יווס נעזריה " דרבי עקיבא דרבי טרפון
 איס כוללו מונן נתמאזירת נבני ברק " ארתעאווודן
 אופוג' גמיצר ג'יץ אן כוללו " אייליג' דושכאן
 ימחצארן נסן נאנאסן איית סיד ילכס לוקת
 נתאללית נצבאח "

אמר

Figure 1: Excerpt from the manuscript of Mas'ud Ben Shabbat (without pagination).
 The first page of the manuscript (from Joseph Chetrit's personal archives).

Writing Judeo-Berber?

- No independent literary/intellectual works
- Very few written texts (exceptions)
- Oral literature: songs and tales, shared with the Muslim Berbers
- Some still found Israel (*aḥiduś*, *aḥwaš*): collective dancing and singing (Elmedlaoui & Azaryahu 2014)
- Cf. Jewish Kurdish Sahrane
- Language use: mostly for daily communication
- Explanation of religious texts (mostly orally)



Sociolinguistic variation



Variation

- Most Berber Jews were bilingual in Berber and Arabic
Two situations:
 - Berber as L1, women/children knew Berber better than Arabic
 - Arabic as L1, women/children knew Arabic better than Berber
- History of the community is linked with the language, that could be more or less similar to the local Berber.

Variation

Many factors can influence the language, e.g.

- Bilingualism, proficiency in (Judeo-)Arabic
 - Exposure to the local Muslim Berber
 - Life in the *mellah*, the Jewish quarter (if there is one)
 - Existence of a Jewish school
 - The study of Hebrew texts
- Immersion in the Jewish life influences the language:
Jewish concepts (Talmudic references, Hebrew loans)
- ! Hebrew loans: prevail in the *written* language

Variation

- Linguistic specificities are linked with the media:
 - 1) written form, if there is written literature;
 - 2) oral form, if Jews led a separate segregated life
- There was not always a written literature or a separate Jewish community
- Therefore less specificities in Judeo-Berber than e.g. in Judeo-Arabic.



Documentation

Post-vernacular language

- Vernacular: used as means of communication
- Post-vernacular: not used in daily life, but learned to (re)connect with culture/heritage (Shandler 2006)
E.g. Yiddish
- Judeo-Berber?
 - Little post-vernacular engagement among younger generations
 - Documentation by linguists, musicologists, filmmakers (*Mother Tongue*, Miléna Kartowski-Aïach, Kamal Hachkar)



(Instead of) conclusions



Recordings

- Show how Jews adopted local cultural practices
- Judeo-Berber songs are part of the local Berber poetic tradition
- Show diversity of Judeo-Berber languages, representing a continuum of distinctiveness
 - Tashelhit recordings: hardly any distinctive features
 - Tinghir recordings: some distinctive features
 - Are these features transferred from Judeo-Arabic?
 - Distinctive features transcend language borders?

Distinctiveness

- Judeo-Berber is very close to the local Berber
- When written, Judeo-Berber also has distinct syntax (calque translations from Hebrew)
- However, it is rarely written
- Reasons of the lack of distinctiveness:
proximity of Jews and Muslims in rural areas
- Judeo-Berber can be considered a “Jewish” language due to sociolinguistic/cultural features (Chetrit 2007, Benor 2008)
- Within Judeo-Berber, there are many varieties.



Thank you
for your attention!