# Judeo-(T)amazigh(t)

# Judeo-Berber

## What we know and what we don’t

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SPEAKING JEWISH AROUND THE GLOBE

# Judeo-Amazigh

- Introduction
- Nomenclature
- Language family
- Regional dialects
- Distinctive features
- Writing systems
- Sociolinguistic variation
- Contemporary status

# Some questions

1. Who are the Berbers?

2. Who are the Berber Jews?

3. Nomenclature: Berber, Amazigh, Tamazight?

4. What are Berber languages?

5. Why study (Judeo-)Berber?

# Who are the Berbers?

# Berber people

- Nomadic people crossing the desert on camels and living in tents(?)
- Most are sedentary farmers in the mountains and valleys

YORK

# Berber people

- Indigenous population of North Africa
- The Maghreb region cf. Tamazgha

# Berber people

- Indigenous population of North Africa
- The Maghreb region
- Total population: 36 mln
- Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger
- France, Spain, Belgium, Netherlands, Norway, Israel, United States, Canada

# Berber in Morocco

- 2001: royal decree established the IRCAM ‘Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture’
- Moroccan identity = composition of different elements
- Berbers acknowledged as an ethnic majority
- Tamazight = principal element of the national culture, its promotion = a national responsibility
- IRCAM charged with the promotion of Tamazight language/culture in education and media
- 2011: Tamazight an official language of Morocco

> Change in the state’s attitude towards Berber from a policy of neglect to explicit recognition and support.

# Berber flag

# 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; André Goldenberg 1992; Simon Lévy (1934-2011).

# 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
- They came from ancient Israel after a stay in Egypt
- Old Jewish settlements in Berber lands
- 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
  OR:
- 1936: 145,700 in Morocco (incl. 25,000 monolingual) (Abramson 2018)
- 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.

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JEWISH LANGUAGE PROJECT

# MOROCCAN JUDEO-AMAZIGH

Jews in Morocco have spoken many languages, including Judeo-Arabic, Haketia (Judeo-Spanish), and Jewish French.

In rural Southwestern Morocco, especially the High Atlas Mountains, some Jews spoke a Jewish version of Amazigh, also known as Tamazight or Berber. This language is now endangered, but efforts to document it are underway.

www.jewishlanguages.org

# 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 used pejoratively; *Amazigh* – covering all population
- T-amazigh-t = referring to the language

  ... but which one?

# Berber languages

- Afro-Asiatic language family (Hamito-Semitic)
- incl. Semitic, Cushitic, Egyptian, Chadic, (Omotic?)

# Berber languages

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KABYLE
SHAWIYA
RIFFIAN
CENTRAL ATLAS TAMAZIGHT
SHILHA
AWJILA
SIWA
FEZZAN
TAMAHAQ
TAMASHEQ
TAYART TAMAJEQ
TAMAHAQ
TAWELLEMMET
TAWELLEMMET

GHOMARA
SANHAJA DE SRAYR
RIFFIAN
Judeo-Riffian
Judeo-Senhaja?
RIFFIAN
?
Standard Moroccan Tamazight
EASTERN MIDDLE ATLAS BERBER
CENTRAL ATLAS TAMAZIGHT
Judeo-Tamazight
TAZNATIT
AIT SEGHROUCHEN
SHILHA
Judeo-Shilha

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

# Why study (Judeo-)Berber?

- Why study any language? intercultural learning: any language = key into a culture
- History: insights in the history of North Africa (and North African Jews)
- Linguistics: historical, descriptive, language documentation/preservation, endangerment, sociolinguistics, contact, Jewish languages...

# Why study (Judeo-)Berber?

- (Im)migration studies: e.g. research on present-day Jewish Moroccans in Israel or the US
- Justice to the diversity, e.g. a more nuanced image of the Jewish Moroccan community in Israel
- (Jewish) Berber artistic skills (visual and oral): jewelry; music, songs, folklore
- Anthropology, ethnography, musicology, social studies, politics, philology, literature, cultural heritage, personal, etc...

# Judeo-Berber

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

Distinctive features?

# Phonology

# Transcription

- Pharyngealized (“emphatic”) consonants are written with a dot underneath: *ṭ* (IPA [tˤ])
- Underscore indicates spirantization: *t̲* (IPA [θ])

| Symbol | IPA | Symbol | IPA |
|---|---|---|---|
| š | ʃ | ḥ | ħ |
| ž | ʒ | h̲ | x |
| ṭ | t͡s | ġ | ɣ |
| č | t͡ʃ | ε | ʕ |
| ǧ | d͡ʒ | y | j |

# Moroccan speakers’ conventions

2 = ء = ’

5 = خ= ḫ

7 = ح= ḥ

3 = ع= ε

6 = ط = ṭ

9 = ق = q

4~8 = غ= ġ

# Judeo-Berber: Phonology

- Shift *s* > *š* (sh) <ś> and *z* > *ž* (zh) <ź> in some varieties
  - **ś**: *ṣbeṛ* ‘be patient’, *Aśfalu* (place name), *aḥiḏuś* (music genre)
  - **ź**: *a nẓuṛ* ‘we’ll see’, *yuźen* ‘he sent’, *źźin* ‘beauty’
- Loss of labialized velars $k^w$ $g^w$ $ḫ^w$ $ġ^w$ in some varieties
  - *nekk$^w$ni* > *nekkni* ‘we’
- Shift *q* > *k* and *ḍ* > *ṭ* in some varieties
  - *lɛkl* ‘brain’: all examples borrowings from (Judeo-)Arabic?
- Shift *l* > *n* in some varieties: *wanu* ‘nothing’, *kunnu* ‘all’
- Centralized pronunciation of vowels.

# Judeo-Berber: Phonology

- → Some features are shared with/borrowed from Judeo-Arabic
- → Not all distinctive features are found in all Judeo-Berber varieties
- → Variation within (non-Jewish) Berber is already quite large (some varieties lack labiovelars, etc.)
- → Some features of “Judeo-Berber” may be found in non-Jewish Berber varieties (e.g. parts of Tinghir).

Morphology

# Overview

## (Muslim/Jewish) Berber

- Two major lexical categories: verbs and nouns
- Qualification: quality verbs and quality nouns (rather than adjectives)
- Functional categories: tense/aspect markers, negation markers, complementizers, conjunctions, prepositions.

# Verbs

# Major Characteristics

- Subject affixes (prefixes, suffixes, circumfixes) mark PNG (person, number, gender) of the subject
- Verb stems mark MAN (mood, aspect, negation)
- Distinguish (minimum) three aspects: Aorist (AOR), Perfective (PFV), Imperfective (IPFV)
- Additionally, some varieties distinguish negative aspects: PFV.NEG, and some also IPFV.NEG
- Prefixes derive passives (*t-, m-*), causatives *(s-)*
  - *i-sġa* (3MS-buy.PFV) ‘he bought’
  - *ss-lmad-ġ* (CAUS-learn.IPFV-1S) ‘I make learn/teach’
  - *t-ffaġ-m* (2-leave.PFV-2P) ‘you (pl.) left’

# Verbal Complex

# Verbal Complex

- Verbal complex = verb with clitics and particles
- Particles express mood/aspect or negation
- Clitics (also known as *verb satellites*):
  - pronominal (DO, IO)
  - ventive *d* (direction toward the speaker: ‘here’)
  - ientive *n* (direction from the speaker: ‘there’)
- Position of the clitics: postverbal or preverbal, depending on the syntactic context:
  - *uwi-n=d* ‘they brought’
  - *ur d=uwi-n* ‘they did not bring’.

# Nouns

# Noun Classes

- Marked for gender (M/F) and number (SG/PL)
- Class I: Berber morphology (Berber prefixes), distinction between Free State (EL, *état libre*) and Annexed State (EA, *état d'annexion*)
  - masc. sg: usually *a*-...: *a-rgaz* 'man', EA *u-rgaz*
  - masc. pl: usally *i*-...-*en*: *i-rgaz-en* 'men'
  - fem. sg: usually *t-a-...-t*: *t-a-mġar-t* 'woman', EA *t-mġar-t*
  - fem. pl: usually *t-i-...-in*: *t-i-mġar-in* 'women'
- Class II: Arabic morphology (article *l*-, pl. as in Ar.)
  - *lḥal* 'situation', *lmsakin* 'poor people'.

# Qualification

# Qualification in Berber

- “Quality words” as a semantic concept vs. “adjectives” as a syntactic/descriptive category
- Most Berber languages: no true adjectives
- Instead: quality **verbs** and **nouns**
- Some Berber languages have stative verbs (sub-class of verbs, morphologically distinct).

# Quality Verbs

- Express events and describe properties
- Take subject markers, expressing PNG
- Distinguish aspects: Aorist, Perfective, Imperfective.
  - *i-mellul* ‘he/it (M) is white’
  - *t-mellul* ‘she/it (F) is white’
  - *ar i-ttimlul* ‘he/it (M) is becoming white’

# Quality Nouns

- Refer to things, but can be used attributively;
- Example: ‘white’ (= ‘white one’)

| **Masc. Sg.** | **Fem. Sg.** | **Masc. Pl.** | **Fem. Pl.** |
|---|---|---|---|
| a-mlil | t-a-mlil-t | i-mlil-n | t-i-mlil-in |

# Judeo-Berber: Morphology

- Morphology of Judeo-Berber: as non-Jewish varieties
- Hebrew loans: can belong to Class II (Arabic-morphology, *l-*): borrowed through Judeo-Arabic?
  - *lmila* ‘circumcision’, *lqibuṛa* ‘tombs’, *lmiɛaṛa* ‘cemetery’
  - *lḥuṛban* ‘the destruction [of the temple]’
- Can be integrated into Class I (Berberized)
  - *lašon* ‘language/tongue’ > *t-a-laśu-t* ‘Hebrew language’
  - *ḫuḫma* > *t-a-ḫuḫmi-t* ‘wisdom’
  - *kohen* > *t-a-kwaḥni-t* ‘being Cohen’ (verbal noun)
- Non-integrated loans (can retain Hebrew plural?)
  - *prɛu* ‘pharaoh’ (?)

# Syntax

# Syntax

- Flexible word order: can be VSO, SVO, etc.
- The verb can have clitic pronouns (DO, IO) that can change position depending on the syntactic context
- Judeo-Berber: generally the same syntax as the local non-Jewish Berber varieties
- In written (religious/liturgical) texts, Judeo-Berber can have a distinct syntax: calque translations from Hebrew, or a mix of calque and regular syntax
- In some texts: influence of Judeo-Arabic syntax.

# Lexicon and Semantics

# Lexicon/Semantics

- Lexicon shared with the non-Jewish varieties: Jewish and non-Jewish Berber mutually intelligible
- No evidence of a secret language, vs. Judeo-Arabic
- Hebrew words referring to Jewish cultural life
  - *lmila* ‘circumcision’, *talaśut* ‘Hebrew (language)’...

**Proverbs and Sayings**

- Local Berber proverbs (with a Jewish pronunciation):
  - *imik s imik a ysekśem uram agdur*
    ‘Little by little the camel enters the jar.’
- Calque translations of biblical Jewish expressions
- Some references to the Jewish culture.

# Writing systems

# ⵜⴼⵏⴰⵖ Tifinagh ⵜⴼⵏⴰⵖ

- One of the scripts used to write Berber
- Descended from the Libyco-Berber (Libyc) script
- Abjad, 1st mill. BC, North Africa + Canary Islands
- Libyc script died out in the north but spread into the Sahara > evolved into the Tuareg Tifinagh
- Tuareg Tifinagh/ traditional Tifinagh (ⵜⴼⵏⴰⵖ)
- Neo-Tifinagh (ⵜⴼⵏⴰⵖ) developed by Berber Academy
  - Tuareg Tifinagh adopted to write Kabyle
  - Modified/adopted for use across North Africa.

Libyco-Berber inscriptions in Kerfala, northern Algeria

Libyco-Berber inscriptions in Oukaimeden, Morocco

# Neo-Tifinagh

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | B | G | Gʷ | D | Ḍ | E | F | K | Kʷ |
| H | Ḥ | ɛ | X | Q | I | J | L | M | N |
| U | R | Ṛ | ɣ | S | Ṣ | C | T | Ṭ | W |
| Y | Z | Ẓ | | | | | | | |

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# Writing Berber

- Tifinagh: official script; symbolic; emblem of identity
  Neutral/compromise; prevents the spread of Berber
- 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).

# JUDEO-AMAZIGH IN MULTILINGUAL TEXTS

Since speakers of Judeo-Amazigh (Berber) often preserved their language only orally, there are very few texts in this language. One of the first Judeo-Amazigh texts discovered utilized a mixture of Hebrew, Judeo-Amazigh, and Judeo-Arabic. In the 1970s, revitalization efforts resulted in the publication of a Judeo-Amazigh translation of the Passover Haggadah.

www.jewishlanguages.org

ובאות תקפא לינו אויבינו נאם
ישראל תקפי אנפלח ויקום ובאפיך יתהפכו
~~[illegible]~~ ניתאנו עאפאך יאקבי יקלחאנ
מורחבא ואנא לידאן שיעם נקבי מוקחבא
ביפבום נתאדאמת נקבי ישוקאנ ינוקבי
אוברח ובקעיד אד אכוארו ונחמדו
כיפאה האת יוניא האת ויוקיח לפטול
פרש

תם 160

# Pesah Haggada

- 1st version: from Morocco, Tinghir, written by Yossef Malka in 1959 (Galand-Pernet & Zafrani 1970)
  - Is it a traditional/spontaneous translation?
  - Commissioned in the 1950s
- 2nd version: commissioned in Morocco from Rabbi Masʕud Ben Shabbat in the late 1940s (Chetrit 2018)
- 3rd version: commissioned in Israel in 1994 from Yehuda Derʕi from the Sous Valley (Chetrit 2016, 2018)

→ the whole Haggada was not translated in Judeo-Berber

**Figure 1:** Excerpt from the manuscript of Masʿud 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)
- Language use: mostly for daily communication
- Explanation of religious texts (mostly orally)
- Some prayers were recited/chanted in Berber

# Sociolinguistic variation

# Variation

- Sociolinguistic and regional variation
- Jews of different regions belong to different tribes
- 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 *mellaḥ*, 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.

# Contemporary status

# 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)

# Judeo-Tashelhit
## *Mother Tongue*

- Ester Perets, about rrays (singer/dancer): https://youtu.be/xuZW9oLjpT4

- Ester Perets, mentioning Ben Gurion https://youtu.be/8d_3ec862YE

- R. Nissim Avichzer, about a falcon https://youtu.be/2R1RSDwG7QE

Ester Perets, about rrays

Ester Perets, mentioning Ben Gurion

# Judeo-Tinghir

*Miléna Kartowski-Aïach and Kamal Hachkar*

- By Hnina Shmouyal (Sabag)
  - *Asfalu*: https://youtu.be/X17bEkCvze8
    (Cf. https://youtu.be/sE17_whmsuc,
    by Miléna Kartowski-Aïach and Tawargit)
  - *Dduġ ar dinnaġ* ‘I went there’: https://youtu.be/SH9Kr9tsTbQ
  - *Aḥiḏuś* ‘Ahidus’: https://youtu.be/sba04M010Dc
  - *Ay amaziġ-a* (a lullaby): https://youtu.be/NlyfgUXdVEw
- By Israel Sabag:
  - *Asmun inu* ‘My friend’: https://youtu.be/QwnujGc6Tzc

Hnina Shmouyal, *Asfalu*

Milena Kartowski-Aïach, *Asfalu*

# (Instead of) conclusions

# Recordings

- Show how Jews adopted local cultural practices
- Part of the local Berber poetic tradition
- Show diversity of Judeo-Berber languages, representing a continuum of distinctiveness
  - Tashelhit: hardly any distinctive features
  - Tinghir: some distinctive features (phonology)
    - 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
- *Jewish language* due to sociolinguistic/cultural features (Chetrit 2007, Benor 2008).

Thank you
for your attention!

# Texts
## (Translation exercises)

- Text 1: Word / pdf (Ḥad Gadya)
- Text 2: Word / pdf (Pesah Haggada)

Ḥad Gadya (Chetrit 2016)

Pesah Haggadah (Galand-Pernet & Zafrani 1970)