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A Grammar of Awjila Berber (Libya) : based on Umberto Paradisi's material

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Citation

Putten, M. van. (2013, October 1). *A Grammar of Awjila Berber (Libya) : based on Umberto Paradisi's material*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/21848>

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Issue Date: 2013-10-01

Chapter 5

Adjective

The adjectives, which can have various forms, correspond to stative verbs of the type *cċc*. This distribution suggests that adjectives can be made into stative verbs by means of applying the scheme of the *cċc* formation to the root. Due to the sparsity of our data, we cannot be certain whether this is truly a regular de-adjectival derivation, or whether this only seems to be the case due to a lack of data.

m.sg.	m.pl.	f.sg.	f.pl.	stat.v.	
gzil	gzilən	təgzilt	təgzilɪn	gəzzəl	‘short, low’
yzif	<i>n.a.</i>	təyzift	<i>n.a.</i>	yəzzəf	‘long, high’
mlil	mlilən	təmlilt	təmlilɪn	məlləl	‘white’
štəf	štəfən	təštəft	təštəfɪn	šəttəf	‘black’
zwəy	zwəyən	tzwəyt	tzwəyɪn	zəwwəy	‘red’
azuwər	zuwərən	tazuwərt	tzuwarɪn	zəwwər	‘large’
aləqqùq	<i>n.a.</i>	tələqqùqt	<i>n.a.</i>	ləqqəq	‘thin’
aməqqərən	məqqərənən	taməqqərənt	tməqqranɪn	məqqər	‘big’
aməškùn	məškùnən	taməškùnt	tməškúnin	məššək	‘small’

The m.pl. *məqqərənən* ‘big’ has an unexpected variant *məqqərən*.¹ A variant of the f.sg. of the same adjective is found in text XV as *tməqqərənt* instead of *taməqqərənt*.

One Arabic adjective takes the adjectival endings: m.pl. *kəddimən*, which comes from Ar. *qadīm* ‘old’. The correspondence Awjila *k* to Ar. *q* and Awjila *dd* to Ar. *d* is unexpected.

As is the case in other Berber languages, the adjective is morphologically identical to the noun, and should be considered a sub-class of the noun that can be used appositionally after another noun to qualify it (see Galand 2010: 145). There are, however, no examples of adjectives being used independently in the corpus.

An example of an adjective that has lexicalized as a regular noun is the masculine plural noun *aməzzɪn* ‘sons’, which is the suppletive plural of *ɪwi* ‘(my) son’. *aməzzɪn* is not used adjectivally in the corpus, but is transparently related to the common Berber root *mZY* ‘to be small’. The adjectival meaning and the specialized nominal usage are

¹This cannot be a printing error as these variants are specifically cited in Paradisi as follows: <mo-qqrānen (moqqrānen)>

attested in El-Foqaha Berber: *mezẓâi* f. *tmezẓâit* pl. *imeẓẓâyen* f. *tmezẓâyin* ‘small, son/daughter’ (Paradisi 1963a: 109ff. s.v. figlio).

Paradisi distinguishes between two types of adjectives, the indefinite and the definite adjective. His indefinite adjective is morphologically identical to the stative verb, and there is no reason to distinguish it from the stative verb in the way that Paradisi does. Stative verbs that are placed directly behind the noun, must then be considered verbs in attributive position, i.e. relative clauses (section 10.6.6).

When adjectives are placed after a noun, Paradisi claims that they give a definite meaning to the noun-adjective phrase. There are three attestations in the texts of such a “definite” adjective modifying a noun. In two of these examples, a definite reading is not possible. This suggests that Paradisi’s interpretation of the difference between attribution by means of adjectives and attribution by means of stative relative clauses is wrong. What the actual difference between adjectives and stative verbs is when used attributively remains unclear.

- (23) *Y-aškí* *Žhà sar* (or: *syàr*)=*tafilli=nn-as w=iðd-as* *irìw fəlli-s takabàrt*
 3sm-leave:*pf. Jha from=house=of-3s and=with-3s child on-3s shirt
təzwàyt u=y-ərfaɸ=tì=ya *af=agərəɸ=ən-n-as*.
 red:sf and=3sm-carry:res.=DO.3sm=res. on=neck=of-3s
 ‘Jha left his house and with him (was his) child had a red shirt on and he carried him on his neck.’ [PT:XIII]
- (24) *d-gulì-t* *ká* *irìw fəlli-s takabàrt təzwàyt?*
 2s-see:*pf.-2s neg. child on-3s shirt red:sf
 ‘Have you not seen a child with a red shirt on?’ [PT:XIII]
- (25) *ayrəš=dik* *tirìwt tməqqərànt*.
 slaughter:imp.=IO.1s girl big:sf
 ‘Slaughter your oldest daughter for me.’ [PT:XV]

One example of the adjective in a definite reading is found in Paradisi’s word list:

- (26) *amədən mlil* *bahi* *ká*
 man white:sm be.good:sm neg.
 ‘The white man is not good’ [P: s.v. bianco]

We only have a single example in the dictionary where a stative verb is translated with an indefinite meaning, it is not contrasted with an adjective.

- (27) *amədən gəzzəl*
 man be.short:3sm
 ‘a short man’ [P: s.v. corto, basso]