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The MEDITERRANEAN LANGUAGE REVIEW is an interdisciplinary peer-reviewed forum for the investigation of language and culture in the Mediterranean, South-Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region. The editors of this periodical welcome articles, reviews, review articles and bibliographical surveys in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish relating to the following aspects of Mediterranean languages, past and present:

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Contents

Werner Diem <i>Eine Vereinbarung von 1207 n. Chr. aus Toledo über eine Mauer und ein Wasserrecht</i>	1
Marinus Wiedner <i>A Diachronic Study on the Preservation of a Selection of Five Phonemes in Contemporary Béarnese</i>	13
Dieter Stern <i>Lo Schiavonesco – Plurilingualism on the Venetian and Dalmatian Stage of the 16th–17th Century</i>	35
Bruno Herin <i>Two Texts in Syrian Domari</i>	77
Assaf Bar-Moshe <i>The Jewish Arabic Dialects of Southern Iraqi Kurdistan within the Jewish qəltu Dialects Continuum</i>	107
Book Reviews	
Linda Mëniku and Héctor Campos <i>Advancing in Albanian. Textbook + Workbook</i> (Christian Voß)	119
Valentina Serreli <i>Language, Society and Ideologies in Multilingual Egypt. Arabic and Berber in the Siwa oasis</i> (Maarten Kossmann)	122

Kosovo anhängt, verstärkt diesen Eindruck nur: Kosovo ist immer das merkmalfahrende, deviante und/oder defizitäre Glied der Opposition, in der Albanien die Norm bildet (z.B. passt der mehrheitlich muslimische Kosovo nicht in das albanische Autostereotyp der Glaubenstoleranz, die bei genauerem Hinsehen der kommunistischen Religionsfeindlichkeit unter Enver Hoxha ähnlich ist).

Angesichts des populistischen Vereinigungsnarrativs (*bashkim*) aus Tirana und Pristina, dem 2022 auch die heimische Linguistik mit der Edition einer gemeinsamen Schulfibel zum fünfzigjährigen Jubiläum des Standards von 1972 gehuldigt hat, überrascht die Ignoranz, mit der Mëniku/Campos der Demonopolisierung albanischer Kultur infolge des steigenden Image und Prestige kosovarischer Künstler:innen und/oder Sportler:innen in den letzten Jahrzehnten begegnen. Wenn ich abschließend festhalte, dass das vorliegende Lehrbuch ein Referenzwerk für die nächsten Jahrzehnte sein wird, so muss ergänzt werden, dass es seiner politischen Verantwortung nicht gerecht wird – nämlich Lösungen aufzuzeigen für die Vermittlung einer in Albanien, Kosovo, Nordmazedonien und Montenegro gesprochenen, plurizentrischen Sprache: für amerikanische und westeuropäische Studierende, die nicht nur nach Tirana, Saranda und Theth fahren möchten, sondern auch nach Tetovo, Ulcinj und Pristina. Vor allem aber sollte bedacht werden, dass ein sehr großer Adressatenkreis des Lehrwerks *heritage students* aus genau diesen ex-jugoslawischen Gegenden sind, deren Regionalkultur hier weitgehend ausgeschlossen ist.

Language, Society and Ideologies in Multilingual Egypt. Arabic and Berber in the Siwa oasis, Valentina Serreli. (Anthropological Linguistics, Vol. 8) De Gruyter Mouton, 2024. xii+199 p. ISBN 978-3-11-104512-2.

Reviewed by Maarten Kossmann
Leiden University Centre for Linguistics

The linguistics of the oasis of Siwa in western Egypt have attracted a lot of serious scholarship over the last fifteen years. Works by Christfried Naumann, Valentina Schiattarella, and Lameen Souag have greatly enhanced our knowledge and understanding of the linguistic structures, oral literature, and linguistic history of the local Amazigh (Berber) language. The present study, by Valentina Serreli, focuses on language ecology. It is based on a PhD dissertation defended in 2016, but has been greatly revised and restructured in this publication.

Present-day Siwa is multilingual in a way that is quite typical of the Maghrib, but less so of Egypt. On the one hand, there is Siwan, the local Amazigh language, traditionally spoken by the sedentary population; then there is the Arabic variety spoken by Bedouin populations living in the oasis. Through processes of the ongoing integration into the general network of the Egyptian state and culture, Nile Valley Arabic (locally known as *maşri*, and called “Egyptian” in the book) has assumed a ma-

jor role too. Like anywhere in the Arab world, Standard Arabic plays an important role in its own niches.

Serreli sets out to unravel this intricate web of language usages, looking both at practices (who speaks what to whom and when), and ideologies. She does so based on fieldwork, spanning over a decade (2011 to 2022). During this fieldwork, over 60 interviews were conducted with different people; some of these were rather short (10 minutes), others could take up to two hours (p. 42). Even though the book does not provide indications about the length of the individual interviews, the over-all corpus is huge, and the transcription and analysis must have demanded an incredible amount of work and dedication. In addition to the interviews, the researcher made sure to be highly integrated in local social networks, and was able to observe language usage during informal meetings and, especially, family reunions and festivities. Moreover, as a foreign woman she was able to interview both women and men. As a result, people from many backgrounds were part of the research, and – as far as any research of this type can be so – the description provided in this book can be considered representative of what is happening in contemporary Siwi society.

The first four chapters bring the necessary grounding to the research. After an introduction and a chapter on methodology, it is shown that people in Siwa themselves distinguish between three different groups: Siwans, Bedouins, and “Egyptians”. These groups are associated with specific linguistic behavior: Siwans speak Siwi, Bedouins speak Bedouin Arabic, while the rest group of “Egyptians” speak Nile Valley Egyptian Arabic. In local eyes, language is not the only characteristic of these groups and certain cultural phenomena are used in defining ethnic boundaries as well. The fourth chapter goes into questions of nation-building and how to combine being Egyptian and Siwan – a change from a monolithic local identity (Siwan) to a more complicated interplay of identities. Chapter 5–7 address the central question of the book: how are the different languages used, and how do people see this themselves. Serreli shows that both Siwans and Bedouins consider their respective languages to be the only acceptable choice for in-group communication, and that this is also reflected in practice by the fact that the languages are transmitted to children. However, in intergroup communication, especially with outsiders, a very different situation obtains. Here, Egyptian Arabic is the language of choice, and Siwans show pride in their ability to accommodate to their interlocutors. Mixed families tend to use Egyptian Arabic among themselves, while outdoor socialization and wider family ties ensure that their children also learn Siwan.

The importance of Egyptian Arabic is relatively recent in the oasis, and seems to be increasing fast. From her interviews, Serreli concludes that in earlier times, a large percentage of Siwans were monolingual Amazigh speakers; nowadays everybody also knows Egyptian Arabic, and, as a result of mass media, even pre-school children are fluent in the language. As a result, the formal domains of education and religion, which used to be ideologically Arabic, but in practice allowed for some degree of use for Siwan, now have become 100% Arabic. In the in-group domain, on the other hand, Siwan remains very strong. Only a few young Siwans who spent a

long time in the Nile Valley choose to raise their children in Arabic, and it is difficult to predict how the occasional preference for Egyptian Arabic as expressed by a number of teenagers in the interviews will work out in their language habits once they are adults.

Thus the present situation seems to be relatively stable. Siwan is protected by being the ideologically preferred choice in in-group communication, and by the clear segregation of domains when it comes to language use. Even though society is a little less closely knit than before, it is still characterized by dense family and neighborhood networks, which ensure a continuous context for using the language, and for establishing and maintaining linguistic and societal ideologies. Still, and Serreli is very clear about this, this seemingly stable situation is a recent development from a largely monolingual situation, and one can easily imagine this present stability to be upset in the not-so-far future.

Serreli points to some important changes at the ideological level. For most people, Siwan is a way of living, something that you learn automatically, and that is simply there. However, some Siwans are now restating it as a symbol of a broader heritage and identity, as opposed to other versions of being Egyptian. Interestingly, the interviewees that expressed such views were largely uninterested in questions of transnational Amazigh identity (or did not want to express this to a foreign researcher), and nobody seems to be invested in the introduction of Amazigh in education. While Siwan identity is explicitly Amazigh locally, there seems to be no feeling of sameness with other Amazigh groups except for the observation that the languages are similar.

As there has never been a “berberist” colonial discourse in Egypt, language ideologies in Siwa help us to see how – independent from such western language ideologies – Amazigh can function as a major ideological factor of distinction and separation from speakers of other languages. Simplistic views of “Berber identity” as a purely colonial (and post-colonial) construct clearly do not hold.

Serreli’s book is beautifully written and impressively well-structured. As an example, one can mention how she integrates the discussion of her own positionality and the description of the network of participants. This way, we get the necessary information about the researcher as part of the research set-up without the text evolving in some kind of ego-document; at the same time, the potentially tedious enumeration of participants and their place within the network is brought to life by describing how the researcher came into contact with each of them. Similarly, the abundant use of well-chosen fragments from the interview gives one the impression that she lets her participants speak, instead of just providing the author’s narrative. This work can function as an example to anybody aiming to present this type of research. It is well-grounded in the theoretical literature, and aims to contribute to these discussions. At the same time, it offers a fascinating – and very readable – view of language practices in a specific situation to readers less invested in such general questions.

In conclusion, this is a very rich, very important, and immensely interesting study, for anybody interested in the language ecology of Northern Africa and in minority languages in general, and for those who are genuinely interested in what processes obtain in language loss and language maintenance in such languages.