The Berbers
Linguistic and genetic diversity

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The Berber ‘world’
Linguistic approach

- The Berber language and its place in Afro-Asiatic
- Sub-Classification
- Characteristics of Siwi
- The case of Tuareg
- Berber and Afro-Asiatic
Proto-Afrasian ~ 17 000 / 15 000 bp.

~ 15 000
Proto-Omotic

~ 13 000
Proto-South-Erythraic
(Proto-Cushitic)

~ 11 000 / 10 000
Proto-Chadic

~ 9 000 / 8 000
Berber

Proto-Boreafrasian

Proto-Erythraic

Proto-North-Erythraic

After Ehret (1995)
Typological characteristics of Boreafrasian 1

1) VSO word order > anteposition of derivational morphemes

Ex. : Oromo (Cushitic) :  
- baq - s - ani : they melted
  - melt - CAUS - 3Pl

- nyaat - am - e : it was eaten
  - eat - PASS - 3MSg

Kabyle (Berber) :  
- ss - fsi - n : they melted
  - CAUS - melt - 3Pl

- y - mm - cca : it was eaten
  - 3MSg-PASS - eat
Typological characteristics of Boreafrasian 2

• 2) More widespread use of templatic patterns:

• Oromo (Cushitic): *dhal-t-ee*: she gave birth, *dhal-t-a*: she gives birth, *dhal-uu*: giving birth (animals only)

• Zenaga (Berber): *t-urag*: she gave birth, *t-arug*: she gives birth, *tarwah*: giving birth

• Limited occurrence of templatic patterns in some Cushitic languages, but systematic in Boreafrasian
Tentative Berber classification 1


- Three conservative languages:
  - Zenaga (Mauritania)
  - Tuareg (Mali, Niger, Algeria, Libya)
  - Ghadamsi (Libya)

- Have partly retained the proto-Berber vocalic system:
  - *a, i, u, aa, ii, uu*
**Reflexes of the proto-Berber vowel system in modern languages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*PB</th>
<th>Zenaga</th>
<th>Tuareg / Ghad.</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>æ</td>
<td>ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i, u</td>
<td>i, u</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aa</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uu</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Northern Berber

- Fairly homogeneous: Tashelhiyt (Morocco), Tamazight (Morocco), Kabyle (Algeria), etc.

- Most distinctive sub-group (genetic?): "Zenati"

- Core group: Tarifit (Morocco), Beni Iznassen (Morocco), Ait Seghrouchen (Morocco), southern Morocco oases (e.g. Figuig), Beni Snous (Algeria) etc.

- But some features recurrent in Algeria (Chenoua, Chaouia), Tunisia (Senned), Libya (Zuara, Nefousi) and many Saharan isolates in southern Algeria (Timimoun, Ouargla, Mzab) and Libya (Sokna, El Foqaha, Augila), east to Siwa oasis (Egypt)
"Zenati" features 1

- 1 - Retention: proto-Berber *g and *j are kept distinct

- Proto-Berber: *j = Tam. g, Ghad. ж / Rif ё, Chen. ȝ

- Proto-Berber: *g = Tam. g, Ghad. ж / Rif ё, Chen. g
### Examples of Proto-Berber *g / *j

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Form 1</th>
<th>Form 2</th>
<th>Form 3</th>
<th>Form 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tam.</td>
<td>agd[^id]i`</td>
<td>g[^er]</td>
<td>ag[^el]</td>
<td>ag[^em]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghad.</td>
<td>a[^jad]id[^i]</td>
<td>j[^ar]</td>
<td>a[^jel]</td>
<td>a[^jem]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rif</td>
<td>a[^zj]id[^i]</td>
<td>z[^ar]</td>
<td>a[^yer]</td>
<td>a[^yem]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen.</td>
<td>a[^zd]id[^i]</td>
<td>z[^ar]</td>
<td>a[^gel]</td>
<td>a[^gjem]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Zenati" features 2

2. inflectional change (innovation):

- verbs of type IA8 (C1C2u) change their ending to -a

- share: Tuareg - a\(\text{vbd}^{\#}u\), Rif - bə\(\text{d}^{\#}a\)
- lose: Tash. - z\(lu\), Seghr. - z\(la\)
- accept: Ghad. - æ\(rd\text{d}^{\#}u\), Nef. - æ\(rd\text{d}^{\#}a\)

- (cf. M. Kossmann, 1994)
"Zenati" features 3

• 3. Morphological (presumably innovation):
• Absence of initial vowel in CV- stems

• Tash. *a-kal* / Figuig *faɪl* : land
• Tash. *a-fus* / Timimoun *fus* : hand
• Tash. *ta-sa* / Sokna *t-sa* : liver
• Tash. *ta-fukt* / Rif *θ-θuθ* : sun
"Eastern" features 1

1. Devoicing of PB /d̪/ (Siwa, Augila, Sokna, Nefousi, Senned - not Elfoqaha nor Zuara; but also found in some places in Northern Algeria):
   - leg: Augila at̪ar, Siwi / Nefousi / Senned: t̪ar, Zuara əd̪ar
   - lend: Augila / Nefousi / Sokna / Senned ərt̪əl, Elfoqaha ərd̪əl

2. "Zenati" retention *j vs *g (all except Augila)
"Eastern" features 2

3. "Zenati" absence of initial vowel: all, but very haphazardly
- scorpion: Augila *t-bar*dimt, Nefousi / Zuara / Senned *t-bar*dimt, Elfoqaha *ta-bur*d*dimt*
- stick: Augila / Sokna *ta-bar*it, Elfoqaha / Nefousi *t-bar*it
- beard: Augila *ta-mir*t, Zuara *ta-mart*, Nefousi *tu-mar*t, Siwi / Sokna / Senned *t-mar*t
- hand: Augila / Elfoqaha *a-fus*, Nefousi *u-fәs*, Siwi / Sokna / Senned *fus*
"Eastern" features 3

4. Morphological analogy (innovation)
Verbs in aC- (conjugation IA3) have neutralized to uC- (most general in Siwi, since even imperative is affected; other Eastern have it in aorist only)

Tash.  azən : send  yazən (aor.)  yuzən (perf.)

Sokna  azən  yuzən  yuzən

Siwi  uzən  yuzən  yuzən
Siwi characteristics 1

1. Northern: PB short vowels reduce (innovation)
   - Zen. azankud\textsuperscript{z}/ Siwi az\textsuperscript{z}nk\textsuperscript{t}: Dorcas gazelle

2. Eastern: \textit{d} > \textit{t} (innovation)
   - Cf. above

3. "Zenati":
   - palatal vs non-palatal *g (retention)
   - Tash. \textit{rgigi}/ Siwi \textit{rədʒridʒ}: shake
   - absence of initial vowel (innovation?): cf. above
Siwi characteristics 2

4. Siwi innovations:

- Resultative with final -a (uniquely shared with Augila)

- Complete neutralization of IA3 verbal patterns

Elfoqaha: yəmmūt : he died, is dead
Augila / Siwi: immūt : he died  immūta : he is dead

cf. above
Siwi characteristics 3

- Berber negative marker \( w\dot{e}r / ur \) has been replaced by \( la \)

- Tam. \( i\dot{z}z\emptysetnz-as-t \) he sold it to him neg. \( ur-as-t-i\dot{z}z\emptysetnz \)

- Siwi \( i\dot{z}z\emptysetnz-as-t \) neg. \( l\acute{a} i\dot{z}z\emptysetnz-as-t \)
Siwi lexicon

• out of 96 Swadesh list items:
  • - 50 are found throughout Berber (including Tuareg, with one exception): big, bird, bone, breast, burn, claw/fingernail, cold, come, die, drink, dry, ear, eat, eye, fat, fire, to fly, foot, full, give, hand, head, hear, heart, horn, I, kill, knee, know, liver, louse, mountain, night, nose, one, red, say, sit down, see, skin, sleep, stand, sun, tongue, two, vomit, walk, water, we, white, you / thou
  • - 24 are Arabic loans, rather widely spread (less often in Tuareg - a few seem specific to Siwi): all, bark, blood, cloud, egg, feather, fish, good, hair, hot, leaf, long, many, name, not, person, root, seed, small, smoke, tail, tree, way, yellow
  • - 17 are shared with a sub-group of Berber only, mostly Eastern: belly, bite, black, dog, earth, green, male, meat, moon, new, rain, sand, star, stone, swim, tooth, woman
Siwi linguistic affinities

- Mostly Eastern, with the other Libyan oases, but rather notable impact of "Zenati" features

- Genetic research urgently needed in Libya and in the southern Moroccan oases (Figuig), Algeria not being practicable at present
The Tuareg dialects

- Divided into three main groups: Northern (Algeria), Western (Mali) and Eastern (Niger) with some spill-over into neighbouring countries.

- Conservative group, fairly well-known linguistically, the Malian dialects being slightly underdescribed

- Genetic and linguistic research to concentrate on Mali (contacts already established). Also a few small groups in Niger speaking apparently non-Tuareg Berber languages (Ayt Tawari, etc.)
Berber origins

- Berber languages are very different from other Afro-Asiatic languages - so a long time since split-up (Ehret: 9000 BP)
- But internal differentiation in Berber is slight (TMRCA: 2500 BP? - roughly comparable to Germanic or even Romance)
- So two stages must be recognized: Proto-Berber 1, the earliest split-off from Afro-Asiatic, whose genetic correlate might be the M81 mutation (cf. Jean-Michel's talk) and the much more recent Proto-Berber 2, the putative ancestor of modern Berber languages
Proto-berber 1

Proto-berber 2

9000 BP

2500 BP

tuareg
zenati
etc.….