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How Arabic Regional Features Become Sectarian Features. Jordan as a Case Study

Enam Al-Wer, Uri Horesh, Bruno Herin and Maria Fanis*

1 Introduction

In a number of Arabic-speaking communities, variation in the local dialects is constrained by the religious/sectarian affiliation of speakers. The classic examples of such communities in Arabic dialectology are Baghdad (BLANC 1964, ABU-HAIDAR 1991, PALVA 2009) and Bahrain (HOLES 1987), in addition to a number of Jewish Arabic dialects in North Africa (most notably HEATH 2002, which meticulously describes and contrasts the ethnolects of Jews and Muslims in Morocco). The studies available from Arabic so far deal with this variation at the macro-sociolinguistic and descriptive levels for the most part.

In the discussion of religion as a sociolinguistic variable in her introductory textbook, BASSIOUNEY (2009: 103–111) makes reference to the case in Bahrain as well, mostly through citations of HOLES' work. In one paragraph (p. 107) she offers a cursory “[t]hird wave variation studies” analysis of the variation that HOLES had observed in Bahrain, through what she perceives as the Baharna having “changed their community of practice” (see ECKERT and McCONNELL-GINET 1992 for more on this concept and its proper applications in sociolinguistics). We shall return to this type of a more socially intricate analysis of our Jordanian data in the concluding section of this current study.

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In Baghdad, BLANC referred to three communal dialects, namely Christian, Jewish and Muslim, with the former two being the older, while the formation and focusing of the Muslim dialect is considered to be chronologically more recent (see also ABU-HAIDAR 1991 and PALVA 2009). In Bahrain, the distinction is made between the Sunni Muslim and the Shi'a Muslim (or Baharna) dialects. The formation of the Jewish varieties of North Africa (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia) is traced to the first wave of Arab migration into North Africa during the 7th century, commonly referred to as the pre-Hilalian period.¹

The emergence of separate sectarian/religious varieties in Arabic is generally attributed to a combination of two historical factors:

1. Different genealogical origin of the dialects in question, or different geographical provenance. For instance, most of the Christian population in Iraq hail from northern Iraq, and the Arabic Christian dialect of Baghdad is a sedentary dialect that is believed to have “evolved from the Arabic vernacular of medieval Iraq” (JASTROW 1978: 318), whereas the Muslim dialect is akin to the Bedouin norm and has a more recent history (ABU-HAIDAR 1991: 2–3). By the same token, the origin of the Sunni Arab group in Bahrain lies in central Arabia and their dialect is classified as a Bedouin dialect, whereas the Shi'a Baharna dialect is of sedentary stock (see HOLES 1987).
2. Social barriers, which would have restricted the amount of contact between different religious groups, thus preventing natural processes of koinéization. In modern times, the former Christian, Jewish and Shi'a neighborhoods in Baghdad and Bahrain are no longer exclusively or predominantly inhabited by members of the same respective group. The Jewish community of Baghdad has pretty much disappeared as a result of the emigration of the vast majority of its members, and the Christian community has experienced a steady decrease in its size for similar reasons. The Shi'a community of Bahrain continues to form a majority of the population in the country, although their dialect has been considerably less dominant than the dialect spoken by the Arab Sunni group, who comprise a numerical minority despite being the socially dominant group. In interdialectal settings, in both Baghdad and Bahrain, predict-

1 'Hilalian' is derived from the name of an Arab tribe, Banū Hilāl, who had invaded North Africa leaving from Egypt in the 11th century and is considered to be the second wave of Arabization that reached the countryside, after the first wave, which was the Islamic conquest in the 7th century, mostly limited to cities. More on this can be found in HEATH (2003: 2–8).

ably it is the speakers of the less dominant dialects (Christian, Jewish and Shi'a Baharna) who accommodate to the dialects traditionally spoken by the more powerful groups (Muslim Baghdadi in Baghdad and Sunni Arab in Bahrain) (BLANC 1964, ABU-HAIDAR 1991, AL-QOUZ 2009). The most recent sociolinguistic study in Bahrain shows that the traditionally Shi'a linguistic features are leveled out in the modern dialect of the capital city, Manama (AL-QOUZ 2009), a phenomenon that was reported and predicted to escalate by HOLES (1987).

A number of sociolinguistic studies have investigated various communities in the Levant (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine)² without factoring in religion as an independent variable for micro-sociolinguistic variation. It is worth noting, however, that in her treatment of variation in Beirut, GERMANOS (2009, 2011) does analyze the correlation between perception and production of a number of features across religious groups (e.g., the genitive exponents and the realization of /q/).

AL-WER (1991) deliberately designed the sample of speakers to include almost equal numbers of Muslim and Christian speakers (from three Jordanian towns). The results showed no effect of religion in the use of the four phonological features investigated in that study. These results were expected given the structure of the Jordanian society and the nature of its political system. The structure of the traditional Jordanian society is largely tribal and religious affiliation plays no role in group identity formation. This characteristic has been sustained by 'shared space' in that there is no physical segregation between the Christians and the Muslims (most cities and villages are inhabited by members from both religious groups). Additionally, upward social mobility (e.g., access to services, promotion in the state administration sector, armed forces and the private sector) is not linked to religious affiliation. Subsequent research (see HERIN 2010, AL-WER – HERIN 2011, HERIN – AL-WER 2013), which involved analyses of the phonology, morphology and syntax of the central Jordanian dialects spoken in and around the city of Salt, uncovered patterns which indicate that religion may indeed be an important factor or is emerging as such. In this article, we present the analysis of these features and attempt an explanation in light of the demographic and sociopolitical developments in the country.

2 See for example in Damascus ISMAIL (2008); in Jordan AL-WER (1991, 2007); ABDEL-JAWAD (1981); in Beirut GERMANOS (2009, 2011); in Palestine COTTER (2013); HORESH (2014).

2 Demographics

The countries of the Levant (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine) are multiethnic and multilingual. The majority of the population are Arabs, Arabic-speaking and Muslims, and the largest religious minority are the Arab Christians³ who are among the oldest Christian communities in the world (see HOURANI 1991). Christian community size varies in the four countries. In terms of proportion to the total population, Lebanon has the highest rate of Christians (approximately 40%), followed by Syria (approximately 12%), Jordan and Palestine (approximately 5–7%). The size of the Arab Christian communities in the Levant as a whole has been decreasing steadily due to the fact that proportionately more Christian Arabs have migrated from their home countries, and birth rate among Christians overall is lower than among Muslims in the region.⁴

In Jordan, the vast majority of the Christians are indigenous Arabs and claim descent from the Ghassanids, an ancient Christian Arab tribe that inhabited and for a time ruled the Levant.⁵ At the turn of the 20th century, they formed 20% of a total population of around 300,000–400,000 people.⁶

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- 3 Other groups include Syriacs (Aramean) Kurds (mainly in Syria), Armenians, Circassian, Chechen, Dom, and Turkoman. Syria and Lebanon used to have Jewish communities until the early 1950s, and Palestine has always had a stable indigenous Jewish population.
 - 4 Statistics about the ratio of Christians to the total population in the countries of the Levant could not be found in the official material published through the official sources (Jordan's Department of Statistics; Syria's Central Bureau of Statistics; Lebanon's Central Administration of Statistics). The figures available through other sources (e.g., Wikipedia, BBC, Economist, CIA) vary quite considerably. The percentages cited in this article were obtained through church sources. The figures provided by the CIA World Fact Book are the closest to those available through the church. According to CIA World Fact Book, 2013, the percentages are as follows: Lebanon 39%, Syria 10%, Jordan 6%, West Bank 8% (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>).
 - 5 Non-Arab Christians in Jordan include small communities of Syriacs and Armenians. The majority of Jordanian Christians are Greek Orthodox, followed by Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic; protestant churches have smaller followings. In this article we do not specify denominations of the Christian speakers because such a distinction among the speakers is irrelevant for our analysis. The vast majority of Muslims in Jordan are Sunni, and all Muslim speakers in the sample are Sunni.
 - 6 The earliest available official census is the Housing Statistics of 1952, which gives a figure of 586,200 for the total population, rising to just over 900,000

By 1952, the ratio of Christians had dropped to 12.5% (of approximately a total population of 580,000). According to church sources,⁷ there were approximately 220,000–240,000 Christians in Jordan in 2008. This means that the community has been increasing at a rate of roughly 2.5% since the 1950s, which is broadly in line with the rate of natural population increase in the country as a whole.⁸ Furthermore, these figures suggest that:

1. The decrease in the percentage representation of the Christians in the population is due to an increase in the concentration of Muslims (rather than a decrease in absolute numbers); and
2. the size of the indigenous Christian community has remained largely unaffected by the newcomers (migrants) into the country.

Jordan's Muslim population has seen an extraordinary rate of increase as a result of the political situation in the region, in particular as a result of the Arab-Israeli wars. The population increased roughly by one million between 1952 and 1970, and by a further one million between 1970 and 1983; during this period, natural increase stood at 3.2% on average. It continued to rise by about one million per decade to reach 6.2 million in 2011. The natural birth rate has fallen steadily, to reach 2.1% in 2011.

Precise statistics regarding the size of the Palestinian population who sought refuge in Jordan in the aftermath of the *Nakba* (1948) and *Naksa* (1967) is not available, but it is likely that approximately 3 million Palestinians now live in Jordan, i. e., 35%–45% of the current population. A breakdown in terms of religion of the displaced Palestinians is also unavailable, but it is commonly known that the vast majority (possibly up to 90%) are Muslims (Sunni), which means that there is an absolute increase in the number of multiethnic Muslims. This is in contrast to the nature of the increase in Christian numbers, which resulted primarily from the natural growth of the indigenous Christian-Jordanian community. There is therefore a difference in the ethnic composition of the two communities: the growth of the former has deluted the prevalence of the Jordanian element among

according to the results of the First Population & Housing Census (Department of General Statistics: http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_a/main/cd_yb2011/pdf/Population.pdf. Accessed 24 August 2013).

7 <http://www.qenshrin.com/details.php?id=6282#.Uh9y6hzsv-s>. Accessed 24 August 2013.

8 According to the figures released by the Department of Statistics, natural increase in Jordan was 3.2, rose to 3.6 during 1979–1994 and went down to 2.1 in 2011. http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_a/main/cd_yb2011/Pre+Ind/ind.pdf.

the increasing Muslim population, whereas the latter has cemented the prevalence of the Jordanian element among the Christian population. Insofar as linguistic developments are concerned, such a situation would lead us to expect a more conservative linguistic behavior on the part of the Christian community as a whole vis-à-vis the traditional Jordanian dialects, which indeed is what our data show, as will be explained presently. The conservative linguistic behavior of the Christians in Jordan is primarily predicated on the lack of intermarriage between Muslims and Christians, a practice that is socially prohibited and not specific to Jordan. A similar situation is reported by WOIDICH (1996) regarding the Christian village of 'izbit il-Basili in Upper Egypt, which is situated in the heart of B'ēri region. WOIDICH maintains that in this village they speak a different dialect from the rest of the region, which he attributed to the fact that because of religion, the Christian population did not mix with Bedouin tribes and therefore their dialect remained unaffected by Bedouin features which are characteristic of the (regional) B'ēri dialect (see WOIDICH 1996: 194–196). The same is true of the Christian dialect of Baghdad, which also exhibits older linguistic features principally (see ABU-HAIDAR 1991; also, PALVA 2009).

3 The research and the locality

This article is based on empirical research on the dialect of Salt that spans 25 years. The earliest data collection was conducted in 1987 and the most recent in 2012. Each individual research output was conducted according to the empirical and theoretical standards used in sociolinguistic research. The first study, presented in AL-WER (1991), consisted of a systematically drawn sample of 45 speakers (23 Muslim, 22 Christian) where four segmental phonological features were cross-tabulated with social variables (age and education). This initial study was carried forward in 1997 with an additional sample of six young male and female speakers in Salt (4 Christian, 2 Muslim). Parallel to these two studies, and independently of them, a descriptive grammar of the Salt dialect, analyzing all aspects of the grammar of the dialect and based on the speech of ten Muslim and Christian speakers (5 speakers of each), was completed in 2010 (HERIN 2010). A subsequent analysis of 354 features of the Salti dialect led to the conclusion that the dialect of Salt is a Horani dialect (HERIN 2013). It was these findings that led the researchers to conduct further research during 2011–2012, this time focusing on religious affiliation and adding a further nine old speakers (4 Christian, 5 Muslim).

What was not made apparent by the two types of linguistic analysis in isolation, i. e., those carried out by AL-WER (1991), and the in-depth gram-

mathematical analysis of the same dialect (HERIN 2010, HERIN 2013), was made possible when combined these two differing approaches to the analysis of the Salt dialect pointed to the potential linguistic divergence between Muslim and Christian communities.

This finding is worth pursuing for several reasons. First, the methodological rigor of the initial studies by AL-WER and HERIN guarantees the validity of the findings that have led to the unearthing of the correlation between religion and linguistic behavior. Second, the fact that this finding came about by precisely recombining empirical data conventionally derived in a way that, perhaps, amounts to a meta-empirical analysis and recombination of data may suggest that a great deal is to be gained if we were to operate outside the existing epistemological parameters for sociolinguistic analysis.⁹ Therefore, by combining the findings of the aforementioned studies in an innovative way that transcends the established epistemological boundaries in sociolinguistics, this article is able to evaluate the possibility that religion can be an independent variable if and when we undertake multi-layered analysis.

Salt (phonetically [saltʕ]¹⁰) is located in the central region, approximately 25 km northwest of Amman, the capital city of Jordan. Unlike Amman, it has had a fairly stable native population and a distinctive traditional dialect. Until the establishment of a central independent government in Jordan in 1921, Salt was the major urban settlement in the country. But although its role as the most important city was gradually taken over by Amman, it continues to act as a symbol of what is considered authentic Jordanian culture.¹¹

An important aspect of the social history of Salt is that what is thought of as a native population is actually made up of not only extended families whose origins lie in the town itself, or generally on the east side of the River Jordan, i. e., indigenous Jordanians, but also of branches of families who migrated into Salt during the 19th and 20th centuries from the Palestinian city of Nablus in particular. These early migrants have been totally integra-

9 The idea that adherence to disciplinary epistemology constrain knowledge production is well known and widely discussed in the social sciences and observed in the applied sciences (see KUHN 1977).

10 Throughout this article, where phonetic representation is concerned, it is denoted using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) between square brackets [].

11 For details about the situation in Amman see AL-WER (2007).

ted, and are considered part of the native population of Salt.¹² Out of the eighty families who originally came from Nablus, 78 are Muslim and have mixed with the original Muslim population through marriage.¹³ This characteristic of the city's population can be seen as a microcosm of modern Jordanian societies as a whole, as outlined above. Therefore, various linguistic patterns that manifest themselves in Salt can be seen as, or assumed to be, representative of linguistic patterns which are present, or will be developing elsewhere in the country. In particular, religion appears to have played a significant role, because it affected variation in the linguistic patterns acquired by the children of the Muslim and the Christian communities respectively.

The traditional sedentary dialects of central Jordan, whose main representative is the dialect of the city of Salt and its surroundings, are an extension of southern Horani.¹⁴ Therefore, in order to understand the linguistic divergence on the basis of religion mentioned earlier, it is essential that we situate the dialect of Salt within traditional Horani.

4 Northern and central Jordanian dialects: Horan

Geographically the plains of Horan (phonetically [ho:ra:n]) stretch from south of Damascus to the outskirts of the city of Kerak in southern Jordan, and thus include all of the northern and central Jordanian regions, including the Balqa region in which Salt is located. Horan has been split down the middle between Syria and Jordan as a result of the re-drawing of the region's map in accordance with the Sykes-Picot agreement between France and Britain in 1918. It has been inhabited since ancient times by rural communities who have relied for the most part on farming grain. Although the local toponymy clearly indicates that the region was Aramaic-speaking, historical sources are also clear about the existence of speakers of Arabic since pre-Islamic times (see, e.g., OWENS 1998: 55; AL-JALLAD, DANIEL and

12 Although Salt people emphasize that they consider these families as native by now, when the locals talk about the town and its families the word *garāba* 'foreigners' is sometimes used to describe their status in the local population.

13 For a detailed account of the social history and the demographics of Salt during the period between 1864 and 1921, consult the seminal work by DAWOOD (1994).

14 This article is not about the connection of the dialect of Salt to the Horani group. For a detailed analysis in support of this argument see HERIN (2013).

AL-GHUL 2013: 23).¹⁵ Nowadays, the area is inhabited by the descendants of these communities and recently settled Bedouin tribes.

The first linguistic account of the variety of Arabic spoken in the area was written by the notable French Semiticist and dialectologist JEAN CANTINEAU.¹⁶ His work remains the main source for the traditional dialects of northern Jordan. The rest of Transjordan was investigated for the most part by PALVA, AL-WER and HERIN.¹⁷ Linguistically, the dialects of Horan belong to the southern Levantine group, which includes the dialects of Palestine and Transjordan. It is not easy to identify clear-cut isoglosses that separate the north from the south. Among the features that distinguish between the northern and southern Levantine groups are:

1. The inherited triangular vocalic system /a/ – /i/ – /u/, which is preserved in the south but simplified into /a/ – /ə/ in the north. This however, is highly problematic because oppositions between /i/ and /u/ can still be found in many Syrian and Lebanese varieties.
2. The split-negation morpheme -š, which is common in Palestine and Jordan, although it can also be found in parts of the Lebanon.
3. The 1SG imperfective index is realized as *a-* in the south, but ‘zero’ in the north, although *a-* is common in the region of Aleppo.
4. Dropping of the *y-* glide in the 3rd person of the imperfective when *b-* is prefixed, mostly attested in the south but absent in the north. This, too, cannot be generalized because non *y-* dropping varieties can also be found in Palestine.

15 JEAN CANTINEAU was one of the original scholars to have claimed that the Nabateans, who wrote predominantly in Aramaic for centuries, were actually native speakers of Arabic. O’CONNOR (1986) casts some doubt on this argumentation (also citing MARCEL COHEN), but there still is a preponderance of evidence in subsequent scholarship supporting the existence of Arabic in the Levant, and in Horan specifically, in the early centuries of the Common Era.

16 While working on epigraphic Nabatean in Transjordan and Palmyra (CANTINEAU 1930–1932), CANTINEAU also authored two foundational studies in the realm of Arabic dialectology: *Le dialecte arabe de Palmyre* (CANTINEAU 1934) and *Les parlers arabes du Ḥōrân* (CANTINEAU 1940, 1946). His work includes a grammar (CANTINEAU 1946) and a linguistic atlas (CANTINEAU 1940).

17 See, among many others, PALVA (1976, 1980, 2004) for Bedouin dialects and PALVA (1989, 2007) for sedentary dialects. AL-WER (1991, 2002, 2003, 2007) are in-depth investigations of the sociolinguistics of Jordan. The first full-length description of a Jordanian variety can be found in HERIN (2010).

Since none of the features mentioned above are absolutely distinctive, a combination of phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical features is needed to distinguish between northern and southern Levantine dialects. Before tackling the issue of variation based on religious affiliation in Jordan, we need to briefly review the linguistic peculiarities of the dialects of Horan, mostly at the level of phonology and morphology.

The most peculiar features of Horani dialects are the realization of the feminine ending *-a*, the distribution of the affricate /č/ as a reflex of etymological /k/, the lexical distribution of /u/, dark /l/, the nominal pattern CaCiC and the maintenance of /a/ in the imperfective yiCCaCiC.

4.1 Feminine ending *-a*

Apart from rural varieties of central and southern Palestine, most Levantine varieties raise feminine *-a* to [e] or [i] after unvelarized pre-velar consonants. Low realizations are found after velarized segments and post-velar consonants. Horani dialects differ both in the phonetic quality of the raised vowel and contextual conditioning (see AL-WER 2002, 2007). In these dialects, *-a* raises to [ɛ]. Moreover, raising occurs systematically only after coronal sounds (/t/, /d/, /s/, /z/, /t̪/, /d̪/, /š/, /č/, /ǧ/, /n/ and /ǧ/). After labials (/b/, /m/ and /f/), raising is sensitive to vowel harmony, and is triggered in the vicinity of another front vowel. The adjacency of back (velar and beyond; this also includes labiovelar /w/) and velarized consonants prevents raising. This general distribution is exemplified in Table 1.

Table 1: Raising of *-a* in Horani dialects

Coronal	<i>maǧnūn-e</i>	‘crazy (f)’
Labial (front)	<i>ǧēb-e</i>	‘pocket’
Labial (back)	<i>magsūm-a</i>	‘divided (f)’
Post-velar	<i>barak-a</i>	‘God’s benediction’
Velarized	<i>ʾarmaḷ-a</i>	‘widow’

4.2 The affricate [č]

The affricate [č] as a contextual variant of /k/, is well attested and well described in many varieties of Arabic. Typically, two types of affrication are identified. In the Bedouin varieties of the Levant, Mesopotamia and North Arabia, [č] regularly occurs as an allophone of /k/ and the following alternations are commonly found in most varieties: *dīč* ‘rooster’ – *dyūk* ‘roosters,’ *čān* ‘he was’ – *ykūn* ‘he is.’ Besides these, certain dialects exhibit a general-

ized passage from /k/ to /č/ in all contexts. Some well-known cases are rural Palestinian (central and northern), the dialect of Sukhne (BEHNSTEDT 1994) in eastern Syria and a few villages in northern Horan such as Zakye and Kanakir¹⁸ (CANTINEAU 1946: 224). Superficially, the dialects of Horan closely resemble the Bedouin varieties, whereby the affricate surfaces most consistently in the vicinity of front vowels: *hēč* ‘so’, *hača* ‘he spoke’, *samič* ‘thick’, *rāčib* ‘riding’, *ḥayyač* ‘he weaved’. The affricate [č] does not usually surface in back contexts, in which case /k/ is maintained: *kūc* ‘elbow’, *mafrūka* ‘rubbed’, *ḥākūra* ‘yard’, *kūs* ‘glasses’. Although Horani appears to treat affrication identically to Bedouin varieties of Northern Arabia, a closer analysis reveals a fundamental difference between the two norms of varieties. To illustrate this difference, compare the realizations of the noun **dik* ‘rooster’ and the verb **kān* ‘to be’ in both Bedouin and Horani dialects, as illustrated in Table (2):

Table 2: Realizations of **dik* ‘rooster’ and **kān* ‘to be’

	‘rooster’	‘roosters’	‘he was’	‘he is’
Horan	<i>dīč</i>	<i>dyūč</i>	<i>kān</i>	<i>ykūn</i>
Bedouin	<i>dīč</i>	<i>dyūk</i>	<i>čān</i>	<i>ykūn</i>

Table 2 clearly shows that Horani may, although marginally, affricate in back contexts (*dyūč*) and may not in front contexts (*kān*, [ka:n]). The most straightforward explanation for this phenomenon is that affrication in Horani is not phonetically conditioned, but relies on a root-based lexical distribution.¹⁹

A striking feature of Horani is the wide lexical distribution of the short vowel /u/, where other Levantine varieties exhibit /i/ or /a/. For example: *ḡubne* ‘cheese’, *zulum* ‘men’, *ḥuṣur* ‘mats’, *guṣṣa* ‘story’, *sum‘a* ‘fame’, *guṭ‘a* ‘piece’, *zubde* ‘butter’, ‘*ulba* ‘can (n)’, ‘*ub“i* ‘traditional men’s gown’, *luḡwa* ‘language,’ *tumm* ‘mouth,’ *dunya* ‘world,’ *ṣu‘ba* ‘difficult (f).’

The velarization of /l/ in Horani dialects is widespread, as exemplified by the following items: *gaḡb* ‘heart’, *xāl* ‘uncle’, *naxil* ‘palm tree’, *gamuḡ* ‘lice’, *gabuḡ* ‘before’, *ṣamuḡ* ‘sand’, *saxḡla* ‘kid (goat)’, *gāl* ‘he said’. There appears to be phonetic conditioning that triggers velarization of /l/: spread from an ad-

18 These two toponyms are pronounced locally [zātʃje] and [ʃanāʃir], respectively.

19 For more on this root-based lexical distribution and its possible origin, see HERIN (2013) and HERIN – AL-WER (2013).

jacent velarized consonant and the vicinity of a velar and post-velar element. Horani dialects, like most Levantine varieties, have the following general anaptyctic insertion rule: $\emptyset \rightarrow \text{ə} / \text{C}_\text{C}\#$. The specificity of Horani lies in the backing and rounding effect that velarization has on this anaptyctic vowel (here epenthetic /ə/), bringing it somewhere near [ɯ]. Thus, in most Levantine dialects the underlying form /naxl/ ‘palm tree’ is rendered /naxəl/; in Horani it is realised as /naxul/.

Also specific to Horani is the almost exclusive use of the nominal/adjectival pattern CaCiC: *taḡil* ‘heavy’, *kaṭīr* ‘much, many’, *čabīr* (~ *kabīr*) ‘big’, *sarīr* ‘bed’, *ša‘īr* ‘barley’, *sanīn* ‘years’, *taḥīn* ‘flour’, *zabīb* ‘raisin’, *raḡīf* ‘flat bread’, *ba‘īd* ‘far’, *raftī* ‘thin’, *zaḡīr* ‘small’, *naḡīf* ‘clean’, *gaṣīr* ‘short’, *malīḥ* ‘good’, *ḍa‘īf* ‘weak,’ *wasī* ‘large’, *fariče* ‘unripe smoked wheat’, *ḡadīd* ‘new’. Other Levantine dialects usually have CCiC; for Horan, CANTINEAU (1946: 310) could only retrieve four items of this pattern (CCiC): *brīḡ* ‘teapot’, *šrīt* ‘strip’, *kdiš* ‘cart horse’ and in some areas *kṭīr* ‘much, many’ which alternates with *kaṭīr*.

CANTINEAU (1946: 262–265) cites a few examples of verbs in the imperfective whose pattern is yiCCaCiC but it is clear from these examples that the dialects of Horan maintain the vowel /a/: *yinkasir* ‘it breaks’, *yintafti* ‘it turns off’, *yištaḡil* ‘he works’. On the other hand, across the Levant, most dialects have /i/: *yinkisir*, *yintafti*, and in the case of the verb ‘he works’, the vowel simply drops: *yištḡil*.

We now turn our attention to examining these traditional Horani features in our data from Salt.

5 The data and analysis

Of particular significance to our classification of the dialect of Salt as a Horani dialect are the rules that govern the raising of the feminine ending, and a root-based lexical distribution of the affricate /č/, which are identical to the patterns found in Horani proper (see above). These two features, to the best of our knowledge, are found nowhere else in the Levant. At the same time, Salt differs from Horani proper in other aspects, which we argue are due to independent developments. Some of these developments represent changes that have gone to completion while others continue to show variation, as our data will show.

5.1 Traditional Horani features in Salt

The dialect of Salt has /i/ or /a/ in many items in which Horani proper has /u/; thus we find: *ḡibne* ‘cheese’ (rather than *ḡubne*), *zilim* ‘men’ (rather than

zulum), *zibde* ‘butter’ (rather than *zubde*), *dinya* ‘world’ (rather than *dunya*), ‘*ilbe* ‘box’ (rather than ‘*ulba*), *lağwa* ‘language’ (rather than *luğwa*), *ša‘be* ‘difficult’ (rather than *šu‘ba*). But, in other items the traditional Horani pronunciation with /u/ alternates with /i/, e. g. *guşsa* ~ *gişsa* ‘story’, *sum‘a* ~ *sim‘a* ‘fame’, *guč‘a* ~ *gič‘a* ‘piece’, ‘*uḅi* ~ ‘*ibi* ‘traditional men’s gown’, *huğra* ~ *hiğra* ‘exodus’, *yurkuḏ* ~ *yirkiḏ* ‘he runs’, *ğum‘a* ~ *ğim‘a* ‘Friday’, *yiktul* ~ *yiktil* ‘he kills’, *yiktub* ~ *yiktib* ‘he writes’, *tuğāra* ~ *tiğāra* ‘trade’. In this subset of the data (/u/, /i/ alternation), the analysis shows that while there is no clear-cut distribution along sectarian divisions, certain /u/-items occur exclusively in the speech of the Christian speakers; examples include, ‘*uḅi*, *huğra*, *yurkuḏ*, *ğum‘a*, and *tuğāra*. On the other hand, certain /i/-items occur exclusively in the speech of the Muslim speakers, e. g. ‘*ibi*, *yirkiḏ*, *ğim‘a*. Additionally, /u/-items do not occur in Muslim speech exclusively; and no /i/-items are found exclusively in Christian speech. Bearing in mind that traditional Horani (i. e. Old dialect of Salt) has /u/ in all of these items, these data point to a tendency on the part of the Christian speakers to preserve older features (/u/), while innovative /i/ is used more widely among the Muslims.

5.1.1 Dark /l/

The distribution of dark /l/ in Salti differs from Horani. Only the word *galb* ‘heart’ was recorded consistently with /l/. The preposition/adverb *gab(ə)l* ‘before(hand)’ occurs 74 times in the corpus; of these, 44 tokens contain the velarized (dark) reflex *gab(ə)l* ‘before(hand).’ Among these 44 tokens, only three tokens occur sporadically in the speech of three Muslim informants, while the remaining 41 items occur in the speech of Christian informants. One of the Christian informants, an elderly female Christian, used the velarized reflex consistently. Until very recently, the verb ‘he said’ was recorded consistently without velarization: *gāl*. But, in our most recent fieldwork in the Christian town of Fuhais (Summer 2012), a female speaker used a velarized reflex of *gāl* ‘he said.’ This finding was unexpected given that a dark /l/ pronunciation in this particular word is a stereotype of Horani proper and has never been recorded for Salt and its environs before.²⁰ This is another case where we find that an old traditional feature is preserved

20 In all remaining items, dark /l/ occurs in the environment preceding the feminine suffixes *-a* and *-āt*, i. e., it is used in restricted environments; examples are: in *xāl* (clear /l/) ‘uncle’ vs. *xāla* (dark /l/) ‘aunt’, *naxil* vs. *naxla* ‘palm tree’, *gamil* vs. *gamla* ‘lice’, *ramil* vs. *ramla* ‘sand’, *saxil* vs. *saxla* ‘kid (goat).’ Therefore, there is a strong indication that dark /l/ is a recessive feature in the Salt dialect.

considerably more consistently in the speech of the Christians, which points to the emergence of a sectarian pattern of variation.

5.1.2 CaCiC/CCiC

As far as CaCiC/CCiC is concerned, in certain items the dialect of Salt consistently has the innovative pattern CCiC (for traditional Horani CaCiC): *tgīl* (<*ṭagīl*) ‘heavy’, *kṭīr* (<*kaṭīr*) ‘much, many’, *kbīr* (<*kabīr*) ‘big’, *snīn* (<*sanīn*) ‘years’, *b’id* (<*ba’id*) ‘far’, *zḡīr* (<*zaḡīr*) ‘small’, *mliḥ* (<*malih*) ‘good’, *friḥe* (<*fariḥe*) ‘unripe smoked wheat’, *ḡdid* (<*ḡdadid*) ‘new’. In other items, it shows variation; thus, *ṭhīn* ~ *ṭahīn*²¹ ‘flour’, *zbīb* ~ *zabīb* ‘raisin’, *nḏif* ~ *naḏif* ‘clean’, *gṣīr* ~ *gaṣīr* ‘short’, *wsīc* ~ *wasīc* ‘large’. The innovative non-Horani pattern CCiC for ‘raisin’ occurs also frequently across the corpus, in the speeches of both groups but the variant *zabīb* ‘raisins,’ displaying traditional Horani pattern CaCiC, occurred in the speech of Christians only. Similarly, the word for ‘clean’ was used by three informants, two of whom were Christian. These two informants consistently pronounced this item using the Horani pattern CaCiC, *naḏif* ‘clean,’ whereas the Muslim informant in this group used the non-Horani pattern CCiC, *nḏif*. So far, the general pattern consists of a change in progress from original Horani CaCiC to innovative CCiC; where the original form is preserved it occurs more consistently among the Christians, which is in keeping with the pattern of linguistic segregation according to religious affiliation. Another example that supports this observation is manifested in the tokens of the word for ‘clean.’ There are five tokens in the corpus, all of which from the speech of one Christian informant; three tokens occurred as *wasīc* and two tokens as *wsīc*, i. e., where the older Horani pattern is privileged over the innovative form, the speaker is often Christian. An anomaly to the trajectory of the change from CaCiC to CCiC is the word for ‘short.’ In this case, the pronunciation *gaṣīr* ‘short,’ with the older pattern CaCiC, is the norm across the population; (only one Muslim informant used *gṣīr*).²² The general picture that emerges from analyzing the patterns found in the corpus regarding this feature is that Salti generally favors the innovative pattern CCiC, but remnants of Horani CaCiC also occur, mostly in the speech of the Christians. So, we have yet another example

21 The word for ‘flour’ was recorded consistently as *ṭhīn* in spontaneous speech, but one of the informants commented that *ṭahīn* is the original term in the traditional dialects of the peasants.

22 To explain the anomalous behavior of this lexical item a proper analysis of the mechanism through which this change in progressing is needed, which is beyond the scope of this article.

of linguistic divergence from the pattern found among the majority of the population in Salt along the lines of religious affiliation.

5.1.3 yiCCaCi(C)

Traditional Horani uses /a/ in verbal forms of the type yiCCaCi(C), e.g., *yištaḡil* ‘he works.’ There are plenty of examples of this pattern in the corpus, which shows that the pattern is stable in the dialect of Salt. However, the corpus also contains two innovative patterns: yiCCiCi(C), as in *yiḡtifil* ‘(that) he celebrates’, *btistiḡi* ‘she is shy’, *yistiwi* ‘(that) it gets cooked’; and yiCCCiC, whereby /a/ is elided altogether. The latter pattern occurred in various conjugations of the imperfective form of the verb *yištaḡil* ‘he works’, yielding the following forms *aštḡil* ‘(that) I work,’ *yištḡil* ‘(that) he works’, *tištḡil* ‘(that) you/she work(s),’ *bištḡil* ‘he works.’ Both of these innovative patterns, yiCCiCi(C) and yiCCCiC, are the patterns normally found in urban Palestinian dialects, including the dialect of Nablus. In terms of distribution according to religion, the Palestinian-like patterns occur exclusively in the speech of the Muslim informants, while in the speech of the Christians, only the inherited Horani form yiCCaCi(C) is found.

It is of particular importance to point out that the emergence of this sectarian-related speech pattern is further corroborated by the behavior of the Christians in Salt who originate from Palestine (see section 3 above). For example, the speech pattern of a Christian family whose ancestors moved into Fuhais (pronounced locally [fhe:s^h]) (on the outskirts of Salt) 150 years ago falls squarely in the overall pattern of the Christians of Salt, which is characterized by the preservation of older Horani features. While in the case of Palestinian Christians the mechanism is one of accommodation, rather than preservation, it compounds the phenomenon of linguistic segregation along sectarian affiliation, which is the thesis of this article.

6. Conclusion

This article puts forth innovative ideas about the role of religious affiliation in linguistic variation in Jordan. While the Jordanian society has for a long time been demographically demarcated by various religious groups, it is the increased social salience of religious affiliation that has transformed religion from a community signifier into a sociolinguistic variable.

In particular, we argue that the linguistic segregation along sectarian affiliation in Jordan is very likely to intensify. Language has always been a vehicle of social embeddedness. In the case of Jordan, and due to recent socio-political developments religion has modified the effects of language on so-

cial stratification. The perceived cohesion and relative homogeneity of the Jordanian society has been changing to the point of dilution due to the influx of huge numbers of refugees within a relatively short period of time. While both Christian and Muslim Jordanians have been affected by the influx of refugees, especially in large urban centers, the group most affected, perhaps threatened, by the increasing multiethnicity of the Jordanian society is the Christian group. In this new social topography, the group that feels more alienated from the evolving notion of Jordanian identity is the Christians.

As has been established in the literature, marginalization can lead to an exaggeration in the use of linguistic features as a way of accumulating symbolic capital (ECKERT 1989, 2000; ECKERT – McCONNELL-GINET 1992: 479). In the case of Arabic, an interesting example is analyzed in the Egyptian case by HAERI (1997). There, too, religion is at play, though in quite a different scenario. Rather than describing a tension between different religious groups in Egypt (e. g., Muslims and Copts),²³ what HAERI discusses is the marginalization of traditional religious Muslim education by the secular state. Yet what she dubs “Classical Arabic,”²⁴ a variety culturally and historically linked to Muslim tradition, appears to be overused (or “transgressed,” as she phrases it), in such “inappropriate” contexts as Mickey Mouse cartoons and Omar Sharif interviews.

Returning to Jordan, whether the Christians will engage in such behavior is something that cannot be fully affirmed at this time. What our data, though, can presently attest with confidence is that were the Christian Jordanians inclined, consciously or unconsciously, to adopt localized/traditional Jordanian linguistic features, they are better equipped to do so both linguistically and psychologically. The practical implication of the conservative linguistic behavior of the Christians, which is primarily predicated on the lack of intermarriage between Muslims and Christians, is that the Christians have retained the linguistic ability to use the local Jordanian dialects.

23 Elsewhere (HAERI 2003: 48–51) the controversy of whether members of the sizeable Coptic minority in Egypt are “allowed” (the alleged prohibition appears not to be a formal one) to teach Classical Arabic in Egyptian public high schools is discussed.

24 HAERI deliberately uses one English term, “Classical Arabic” to denote all of the formal varieties and sub-varieties of formal Arabic, which in Arabic are called *al-luġa al-‘arabiyya al-fuṣṣḥā* (lit., ‘the eloquent Arabic language’), in order to conform with the nomenclature employed by native speakers of Arabic (see HAERI 2000: 73–74; 2003: 19–21).

If that were to happen, it would work against the norm of leveling out minority features under the same circumstances. Crucially, the pattern of linguistic divergence observable among these two communities in Jordan not only highlights religion as an important constraint on linguistic variation, but in the case at hand we can actually observe the evolution of ‘sectarian’ linguistic stratification.

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