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Ya raḥḥí! Tanṭini binét!:

Ġbēne in the Traditional Muṭallaṭ Arabic of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye

Abstract This article offers a local version of the Palestinian folktale of Ġbēne, audio recorded in 2018 in the town of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye in the Muṭallaṭ area. The tale of Ġbēne represents the feminine passage from infancy to adulthood and marriage. These stages are marked by the opposition of white and black, which symbolically evoke complex cultural values. After a background to folktales in general, and in the Palestinian Arabic speaking area in particular, the tale of Ġbēne is examined within its sociocultural context, with reference to its contemporary transmission and notes on plot, content, and cultural elements and comparisons of its different versions. The text is provided in transcription and translation, and accompanied by a linguistic analysis that highlights the features of the traditional Arabic variety spoken in Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye through comparisons with other dialects, especially those spoken in adjacent areas inside the Muṭallaṭ region and outside it.

Keywords Palestinian Arabic, Traditional Muṭallaṭ Arabic, pausal forms, epenthetic vowels, Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye, Palestinian folktales

1 The Tale of Ġbēne in the Traditional Muṭallaṭ Arabic of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye¹

This article provides a linguistic and literary analysis of a version of the tale of Ġbēne narrated by a grandmother to her granddaughter in the village of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye, in the Muṭallaṭ region (Israel). In section 2, I provide a background

¹ I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their significant contribution to the improvement of this article and the Israel Folktale Archives named in honour of Dov Noy (IFA), at the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Library, University of Haifa—and in particular Michal Rubin, Digital Content and Special Collections—for the effective and patient assistance in retrieving all versions of the tale of Ġbēne held in the IFA collections and for making them available to me for the purpose of this research.



to Palestinian folktales, their tradition and contemporary reception and research. Section 3 reports some information about the documentation of this tale. In section 4, I delve into the scope of the present work. In section 5, I provide a dialectological sketch of the Muṭallaṭ area, while section 6 is dedicated to some phonetic and morphological features of the dialect of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye. Section 7 describes various linguistic and lexico-semantic features and cultural elements shown in the text of the tale, including the symbolic implications of different colours as related to Ġbēne's identity and to that of other literary figures. Transcription and translation of the text are provided in section 8. Section 9 adds further linguistic observations and conclusions.

2 Palestinian folktales: heritage, identity, and militant philology

In the first half of the twentieth century, collecting tales directly from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Littmann (1954) noted the richness of the local narrative heritage. Other Western scholars, among them Arabists, anthropologists, psychologists, and writers, have been fascinated by the folktale heritage of Palestine (Crowfoot 1937; Geva-Kleinberger and Ben-Artzi 2013; Hanauer 1935; Patai 1998; Raufman 2018; Read MacDonald 2006; Meron and Kabha 1993; Meron et al. 2005; 2012; Perez and Rosenhouse 2022; Schmidt and Kahle 1930; Seeger 2023; Spoer 1931; von Mülinen 1908). Traditionally situated at the centre of trade routes used for millennia between three continents and two seas in a location that has been home to holy places for many religious currents, Palestinians preserve an astonishing living museum of narrative motifs in their folklore.

Since the Roman period and throughout the Byzantine and Ottoman eras, the Muṭallaṭ region, where Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye² is located, has served as a main artery between Arabia and the southern Levant on one side and the Galilee and the northern Levant on the other (Hütteroth and Abdulfattah 1977). As mentioned in Cerqueglini (2022a), the paths of the *via maris/tariq al-baḥr* have determined the linguistic and cultural geography of this area for millennia. Indeed, some minor segments of the *via maris* departed from the main artery along the unhealthy marshy coast eastwards in correspondence with Tel Afeq, directed to Šəkem/Nablus, while its main trunk continued northwards. It reached up to Tel Dor (modern Ḥadera, just west of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye), and there it split into two main trunks. One proceeded northward, toward the coasts of Lebanon and Anatolia,

² Toponyms are transcribed according to their local pronunciations, i.e. in the case of Arabic, accounting for dialectal differences, including distribution of help vowels. In the case of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye, the emphatic pronunciation [k̤] of */q/ is maintained as it reflects the original phoneme more closely than [k] and the emphasis is still heard among male speakers (Cerqueglini 2022a). Personal names are transcribed according to their local pronunciations wherever they do not have an official form in Latin letters.

while the other leaned eastwards, crossing the areas of Kufr Qar^{ic}, Umm ʔl-Faḥm, and Megiddo, and then crossed the Jezreel Plain, through the areas of Nazareth and Kufr Kanna toward Tiberias. From there, it proceeded to Ḥazor, crossing the Golan Heights, finally reaching Damascus.

Thus, throughout history, the network of roads that crossed the central regions of today's Israel has favoured the demographic and economic development of the Samaritan hills on one side and the Jezreel Valley on the other, as two distinct circuits of the same system. The western offshoots of the Samaritan hills, i.e. what we now call Mešullaš/Muṭallaṭ, as well as the Jezreel Valley, seem to have been areas of transit and diffusion of cultural and linguistic features and mixing between autochthonous rural and allochthonous Bedouin dialectal types.³ In light of archaeological data, therefore, the internal differentiation of the Muṭallaṭ dialects becomes clear. Thus, the aspects of the convergence of the Bāka l-Ġarbiyye dialectal type with the northern sector of the Muṭallaṭ (ʔArʔara, Kufr Qar^{ic}, Umm ʔl-Faḥm, Zalafe) and some aspects of regional convergence between the northern sector of the Muṭallaṭ and some village dialects of the Jezreel Valley (Talmon 2002; Procházka 2021) can eventually find their historical *Sitz im Leben*.

Fable seems to have been a very popular genre in traditional Palestinian folk culture. Through this narrative genre, ancestral values, norms, and warnings were transmitted orally from generation to generation in the symbolic and allusive forms of childhood entertainment. The world reflected in these stories is the rural, urban, and Bedouin traditional, premodern society of the southern Levant, jealous guardian of archaic customs and cultural codes, yet constantly exposed to intensive and diverse commercial contacts and cultural influences. Modern Palestinian collective identity is rooted in this world, its values, and its popular mythologies, and from them it draws its lifeblood (Jayyusi 2007; Saʔdi and Abu-Lughod 2007; Sayigh 1979; Swedenburg 1990). Thus, according to Aboubakr (2014), after the Nakba the preservation, transmission, and study of Palestinian folklore became a form of memory and resistance to cultural uprooting.

The goal of keeping Palestinian identity alive and preserving the memory of life before the Nakba has led a stream of intellectuals of Palestinian origin to engage in the extensive collections and study of the traditional narrative heritage (Aboubakr 2019; Al-Barġūṭī 1979; As-Sarīsī 2004; Amin 2003; Kanaana 1994; Muhawī 2001; Muhawī and Kanaana 1989; Nabūʔānī 2011; Nimr 2007; Sirhan 2014). Through the popularisation of traditional children's literature and an en-

³ The affrication of /k/, generally recognized as unconditional, is attributed by Palva (1984) to the penetration of this Bedouin feature into Central and Southern Palestinian rural dialects and considered typical of local rural dialects by Jastrow (2004). Zuʔbi (2021: 311) attributes the affrication of /k/ and the preservation of the interdental series and grammatical distinctions between some masculine and feminine forms in ʔArʔara (northern Muṭallaṭ) to both traditional rural and Bedouin traits.

cyclopaedic and systematic collection of the narrative heritage, they actively resist the loss of identity to which the Palestinian populations seem to be destined by land confiscation, relocation, exile, and diaspora. This is how Ramona Wadi reviews Farah Aboubakr's essay *The Folktales of Palestine* (2019), based on materials collected by Muhawi and Kanaana (1989):

Farah Aboubakr's treatise *The Folktales of Palestine* argues that Palestinian memory should not be framed solely through resistance and offers a detailed analysis of Palestinian folktales and their importance in shaping, nurturing and imparting Palestinian identity. Palestinian dispossession requires a strong memory and a narrative based on continuity. Recollections of Palestine before 1948 are paramount, hence the importance of oral narratives and storytelling that promote a constant reference to Palestinian culture, land, traditions, villages and society. Palestinian folktales, argues Aboubakr, 'are instrumental in strengthening communal bonds and in ensuring the survival of a people's oral traditions'. (Wadi 2019)

Furthermore,

Both the stories and the process of storytelling itself help to define social, cultural and political identity. For Palestinians, the threat of losing their heritage has engendered a sense of urgency among storytellers and Palestinian folklorists. Yet there has been remarkably little academic scholarship dedicated to the tradition.⁴

Regarding cultural reappropriation, in a 2011 interview, Sharif Kanaana focused his attention on the construction of modern Palestinian identity after the Mandate period and the relationship of the Palestinians who remained in Israel after 1948 with their identity. Kanaana, who was born in the village of 'Arrābe in the Galilee, emigrated to the United States, and then returned to Ramallah, expresses himself on Israeli Palestinian identity as follows:

As for Palestinian identity, I would say it [the book] went through something similar to what I went through myself [...]. In 1948, the Palestinians who remained inside the Israeli borders felt they were completely lost. No communication was allowed with the rest of the Arab world, not even by mail or phone. As a result, their identity became diluted; they wished to be accepted in the Israeli Jewish society. However, [...] Palestinians were rejected, and were thus impelled to search for their own identity. It didn't take Palestinians too long to discover that identity, to discover their roots, which are now being strongly revived among the Palestinians of 1948 [Palestinian citizens of Israel] as rejection by Israelis continues to intensify.

⁴ 'Description'. Accessed 30 May 2023. <https://bloomsbury.com/us/folktales-of-palestine-9781788314268/>.

I went through the same process as an individual; after all, the business of searching for your own identity is the business of locating things that symbolize it. For me, these symbols were in folklore. (Myers and Rohana 2011)

The link between memory and political commitment is also evident in other projects. For example, the five-volume encyclopaedic work *Mawsūʿat al-ḥikāyāt al-ḥurāfiyya al-filastīniyya (Encyclopedia of Palestinian Folk Tales)*, edited by Sharif Kanaana and Nabil Alqam (2021–2022), was published by Tāmer Institute for Community Education, an NGO founded during the events of the First Intifada (1989). Tāmer is engaged in providing education to Palestinian youth disadvantaged due to the sociopolitical situation and a lack of means and ‘focus[es] principally on the rights to education, identity, freedom of expression, and access to information’.⁵

The cultural engagement of generations of Palestinian intellectuals educated in the homeland and abroad with the conservation and the promotion of the rural and urban Palestinian heritage, within and outside academia, was not limited to the collection of folk narrative and involved additional fields of investigation, such as proverbs (ʿAbbās and Šāhīn 1989; Aġbāriyya 1955; ʿArafāt 1990; Isleem 2009; Lubānī 1999; Mahmud and Albarmil 2021; Zibin and Altakhaineḥ 2014, among others);⁶ material culture, language, and customs, which also reveal connections with past cultures of the area (ʿAbbās 1989; Al-Ḥurūb 2015; Farsun 2004; Halayqa 2014; Khoury 2022; Lubānī 2006a; 2006b; 2009; 2018; Naguib 2008; Sarḥān 1989); folk songs and music (Kanaaneḥ et al. 2013); and the documentation of the local Arabic varieties (Al-Ḥīḥī 2009; Al-Barġūṭī 2001; Halloun 1997; Lubānī 2006c; 2007; 2016; Othman and Neu 2008; Shahin 1995; 1999; Sobeh 2019; Zuʿbi 2014)⁷ and traditional historical narratives, especially those related to the Nakba. Regarding the last topic the projects ‘Zochrot’, launched in Israel,⁸ and the American University of Beirut’s ‘Palestinian Oral History Map’⁹ are of particular relevance.

Thanks to its charm, popularity, and the communicative power of its universal symbols, the folk tale is fundamental in all cultures in defining and shaping

⁵ ‘TAMER Institute for Community Education’. Accessed 29 May 2023. <https://tamerinst.org/en/pages/about-tamer>.

⁶ Names of people and places that do not have an official or commonly used transliteration are rendered in transcription.

⁷ What is expressed in this paragraph also applies to the local nomadic dialects, which have been studied in the last several decades by a growing number of native-speaking researchers. Data concerning nomadic varieties are not included in this article as they are beyond the scope of the present research.

⁸ ‘Zochrot’. Accessed 29 May 2023. <https://zochrot.org/>.

⁹ ‘Palestinian Oral History Map’. Accessed 29 May 2023. <https://libraries.aub.edu.lb/poha-viewer/map/en/#>.

collective identities (Bar-Yitzhak 2005) and remains central in safeguarding and recovering Palestinian culture within the Palestinian Territories and outside, in the Palestinian diaspora, and in disseminating and promoting it. The most important example of this phenomenon remains the *Speak, Bird, Speak Again*, an anthology of forty-five folk tales collected and edited by Ibrahim Muhawi and Sharif Kanaana, mentioned above, and first published in English in 1989 by the University of California, Berkeley. In Kanaana's words, the book was the result of his personal process of identity reappropriation after several years of living abroad (Myers and Rohana 2011). It became so popular and was considered to contain such valuable testimony on Palestinian history, society, and culture that a French version was published by UNESCO in 1997, followed by an Arabic edition in 2001. Yet despite its importance in preserving the endangered Palestinian heritage, in May 2007 the book was banned from school libraries throughout the Palestinian territories by the Ministry of Education of the newly-elected Hamas government, allegedly over mild sexual innuendo, probably due to the presence of vernacular body part terms.¹⁰ This step was part of the Islamic radicalization process that Hamas was pursuing then and continues to promote, especially in Gaza (Khoudary 2019).

The folk heritage of the Muṭallat region has been documented by Meron and Kabha (1993) and Meron et al. (2005; 2012), who report several stories from this area, especially from Wādi 'Āra, in the northern part of the Muṭallat. However, these tales were 'somewhat adapted for the learners', according to Zu'bi (2021: 312).

3 The documentation of Ġbēne's tale

Muhawi and Kanaana's 1989 anthology contains written testimony of the tale of Ġbēne in English translation accompanied by some anthropological notes and interesting comparisons with other tales from the same corpus. In the Arabic edition, the text, obviously transcribed in Arabic characters, respects the original dialectal forms in which the tale was narrated. As the introduction to the online English version indicates,¹¹ the stories were collected in the Galilee, the Gaza area, and the West Bank. The place of elicitation and the identity of the informant of the story of Ġbēne are not mentioned. Recent folkloristic and linguistic analyses of the tale of Ġbēne within the Galilean Bedouin milieu can be found in Perez and Rosenhouse (2022).

¹⁰ 'PA Orders Book of Folk Tales Pulled from Schools'. 2007. Accessed 29 May 2023. <https://ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3372783,00.html>.

¹¹ 'UC Press E-Books Collection, 1982–2004'. Accessed 29 May 2023. <https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft4s2005r4;brand=ucpress>.

Fifteen versions of Ġbēne's tale are preserved in the Israel Folktale Archives (IFA). They all have the Hebrew translations, while only some also have an Arabic transcription: IFA 23153, 24011, 23139, 20301, 24273, 22414, 22424, 22180, 17079, 16715, 17394, 17412, 23987, 25050, and 20984. The records IFA 17394 and 17412 are Bedouin versions, while IFA 23987 and 20984 are Druze versions. The other eleven versions—either catalogued as 'Muslim' or without reference to the religious identity of the narrator—are accompanied by the name of the collector, the name of the narrator and almost always by the place of recording. Nine versions of the tale come from different places in the western and eastern Galilee, from Akko to Mu'āwiya, Šfār'am, Kfar Iksāl, Səğūr, and Yāfit in-Nāšra.

The version of Ġbēne's tale—provided with an English translation—in Raufman (2018) is IFA 23139 (collected by 'Arīn Ḥālīd, from Šfār'am; narrated by Salīm Yaḥyā, an Israeli Muslim informant from Kufr Qar^{ic}). This version is particularly important because it stems from the Muṭallaṭ area. It was elicited in the village of Kufr Qar^{ic}—five kilometres north of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye, four kilometres west of Umm 'l-Faḥm—in the northern part of the Muṭallaṭ region, at the boundary with the Lower Galilee. Raufman's contribution focuses on anthropological, psychological, and symbolic aspects of the fable and provides detailed comparisons between the contents and the plot of the different documented versions of the tale.

As further evidence of the internal sociocultural differentiation within the Muṭallaṭ area, IFA 23139—meaningfully shorter than the narration presented here—is quite different from it in terms of cultural elements. Additional details about it are provided in the discussion of the text (section 9).¹²

4 Scope of the present work

The version of Ġbēne's folk tale presented in this article is intended to show further testimony of this charming folk tale and, above all, provide documentation of the rural Muslim Arabic dialect of the central-northern Muṭallaṭ spoken in Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye. The text was narrated in 2018 by a woman who was then seventy-six years old to her granddaughter, Taqwa, who was then about twenty-two years old. Since the linguistic map of the Muṭallaṭ has been indelibly marked by the years since the foundation of the State of Israel (Cerqueglini 2022a), I sought an informant who authentically represented the traditional dialect of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye. Indeed, families and even entire villages uprooted from the Shefela and the coastal region (Furaydis, Jaffa, Qannir, Salama, Summayl, Šēḥ Muwannis,

¹² Unfortunately, for most of the IFA texts, the file recordings have not been preserved and there is no phonetic transcription, only the Arabic (non vocalised) written version. Therefore, except for some shallow lexical comparisons, a systematic comparative dialectological analysis is impossible.

Ṭanṭūra, Umm Ḥālīd, Yāmūn, among others) moved eastward during Israel's War of Independence, immigrating into the territories defined today as the Muṭallaṭ region and Jordan (Arnold 2004).¹³ The woman, who was born and lived in Bāka l-Garbiyye, claimed her family was originally from that city or in any case had lived in it for many generations.¹⁴

5 The Muṭallaṭ dialectal area

While some linguistic regions in the Southern Levant have been studied and systematically described (Behnstedt and Geva-Kleinberger 2019; Henkin 2010; Rosenhouse 1984; Shawārbah 2007; 2012; Seeger 2009; 2013), the Muṭallaṭ region, central in ancient and recent linguistic history, remains almost completely unexamined, with the sole exception of a sketch of central rural Palestinian types by Palva (1984), articles by Jastrow (2004; 2013), Cerqueglini (2021; 2022a; 2022b), Majadly (2012), and Zu'bi (2021), and some data from the northern Muṭallaṭ fringes mentioned in *Atlas of the Arabic Dialects of Galilee* by Behnstedt and Geva-Kleinberger (2019). One purpose of this article is to add a linguistic document in one of the Muṭallaṭ varieties to the existing body of knowledge.

The Muṭallaṭ region (Hebrew: Ha-Mešullaš) lies along the border with the Palestinian Authority (PA), between Umm ʾl-Faḥm to the north and Kufʾr Qāsim to the south. It comprises the eastern Plain of Sharon, between Nahal Taninim to the north, the Yarkon River to the south, the Israeli Central Plain to the west, and the Samaritan Mountains to the east. The Muṭallaṭ, with its sedentary, agricultural lifestyle, is considered linguistically homogeneous (Jastrow 2004). Traditional Muṭallaṭ Arabic (TMA) is considered a conservative rural Muslim dialect characterised by the preservation of interdental, voiceless uvular (among men) and pre-uvular (among women) articulation of *q, affrication of *k, the preservation of -h- in the 3rd person pronominal suffixes -ha, -hum, and -hin, and the preservation of long unstressed vowels. The vowel system is considered unitary and defined as conservative, with three short vowels (/a/, /i/, /u/) and five long vowels (/ā/, /ē/, /ī/, /ō/, /ū/). The old diphthongs */ay/ and */aw/ became /ē/ and /ō/, respectively. Long stressed vowels in open syllables are shortened when they lose stress, but this kind of shortening does not take place if the syllable is closed, differently from Cairene Arabic and other neighbouring sedentary Palestinian varieties, but similarly to Galilean Bedouin dialects. A series of exceptions to this general rule is produced by the suffixation of the negation -š/-iš, which

¹³ Furthermore, as reported by Zu'bi (2021: 312), some areas of the Muṭallaṭ experienced sporadic waves of immigration throughout history, such as the immigration of Egyptian peasants from the Delta region at the time of Muḥammad ʿAlī into the ʿArʿara area.

¹⁴ Even though some references are made to the different versions of the tale, any systematic comparisons of narrative and cultural elements fall outside the scope of the present work.

causes the reduction of the long vowels even when they remain accented (*šufnāč* ‘we saw you [f.sg.]’ vs. *ma šufnāčīš* ‘we did not see you [f.sg.]’) (Jastrow 2004).

In private conversations, young Muṭallaṭ Arabic speakers pointed out that ‘Muṭallaṭ Arabic’ seemed to them too general a linguistic category. They supported their claim with the fact that the so-called Muṭallaṭ had by no means in the past ever represented a unitary region with a deep historical identity like that of the Upper Galilee, the Lower Galilee, the Carmel, or the Jerusalem area. They often pointed to epenthetic vowels as an example of dialectal variation within the Muṭallaṭ. Because epenthetic vowels have different weight across TMA varieties, their presence causes different placement of stress: for ‘I hit’ there is *ḍarabʔt* and *ḍarábʔt*. Jastrow proposes these forms as full alternatives, without further considerations of geographical and social order.

The Muṭallaṭ became a geographic and military concept when the term *mešul-laš* ‘triangle’ was coined in Hebrew to indicate the area of Kufʔr Qāsīm, Ġalġūliya, and Kufʔr Bara (originally: the ‘Small Triangle’, to differentiate it from the ‘Big Triangle’ between Ġanīn, Ṭūlkarem, and Nablus). Here, Israelis had established control before the 1948 war. This situation in itself generated a sense of solidarity and belonging among the people of the area. The concept of a unitary region later extended to the entire area along the border with the West Bank, from the Green Line northwards and westwards, as people living there suffered from similar vicissitudes of separation, loss, and subjection to military control. Nonetheless, linguistic and cultural differences are still apparent among them and are especially striking in terms of lexical choices. Probably the area defined in the past as the ‘Small Triangle’, i.e. the southern part of the Muṭallaṭ, north-northeast of Tel Aviv, has a unitary, conservative, linguistic identity, most prototypically reflecting the features described by Jastrow (2004), while proceeding toward the north, inter-dialectal differentiation within the Muṭallaṭ is noteworthy, also due to the contact with Bedouin and sedentary Galilean varieties and stylistic prestige tendencies developed over time. In fact, linguistic evidence suggests that the areas of the Jezreel Plain (Maṛġ ibn ‘Āmir) and Ḥūla Valley once shared features considered today typical of the Muṭallaṭ dialectal type, dismissed as considered rustic and of low prestige (Nevo 2006; Procházka 2021; Rosenhouse 2002).

Due to the absence of major urban centres of acculturation, the diffusion of linguistic models, and the innovative nature and rural character of Muṭallaṭ society, the traditional varieties spoken in this area are still quite well preserved, especially among elderly women. Contrary to other regions, such as the Galilee and Jerusalem, the population of the Muṭallaṭ is homogeneously Sunni Muslim. According to Jastrow (2004), the religious unity of the Muṭallaṭ is one of the main reasons for its dialectal homogeneity. Interestingly, Jastrow (2004) emphasises the linguistic uniformity of the Muṭallaṭ area, yet in the title of his contribution, he refers to its ‘dialects’.

Cerqueglini (2021; 2022a; 2022b) and Zu‘bi (2021) have recently revealed the coexistence of both uniformity and differentiation within the ‘Muṭallaṭ linguistic region’ considering its sociohistorical background. Indeed, in addition to the fact that the Muṭallaṭ only became a sociopolitical entity after 1948, intermarriage between people from its different cities and micro-areas from south to north, was quite rare in the past and remains so. Community seclusion is customary in the Muṭallaṭ, even within a shared religious and socioeconomic landscape. As in all communities, jokes, sayings, and preconceptions circulate to ironically stigmatise the attitudes and traits of people from neighbouring communities, marking neat distinctions between different social identities. Despite the undoubtedly unitary character of some general, structural characteristics, social differentiation seems to be reflected in several linguistic features. Linguistic features differ to varying extents from place to place, sketching a nuanced picture. Thus, for example, the final *imāla*, the affrication of *k, the de-emphasizing/fronting of *q, and the pre-pausal lowering of -i(C)# are realised to different degrees and present with varying frequency and distribution among the speakers of different settlements (Cerqueglini 2022a). To give an idea of what this means, the distribution of feature variation across the different areas of the Muṭallaṭ could be conceived as similar to the dialectal diversification profiled in the dialectological maps drawn by Seeger for the rural area around Ramallah (2013: XVIII–XXX).

According to Cerqueglini (2022a), based on corpus data, the Muṭallaṭ dialectal region can be divided into four dialectal micro-areas: Umm ^ī-Faḥm/Zalafe/‘Ar‘ara/Kufr Qar^{īc} (Northern TMA), Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye (Northern-Central TMA), Ṭīra/Taybe/Qalansawe (Central TMA), Kuf^{ūr} Qāsim/Kuf^{ūr} Bara/Ġalġūliya (Southern TMA). Across these microareas, many of the features recognized as distinctive in central Palestinian dialects in general (Palva 1984) and TMA dialects more specifically (Jastrow 2004) are found to vary or to be present to different extents, while lexical patrimony and heritage are quite differentiated.

6 The Traditional Muṭallaṭ Arabic Variety Spoken in Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye

Today, Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye is a city of some 31,000 inhabitants located along the Green Line, about thirty kilometres north of the Tel Aviv’s metropolitan area. The separation wall erected between Israel and the West Bank in 2000 divided the original settlement in two, creating a western enclave (Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye) in Israel and an eastern one (Bāḳa š-Šarḳiyye) in the Palestinian Authority.

According to Majadly (2012) and Cerqueglini (2022a), the dialect of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye has some specific traits not present in other Muṭallaṭ areas and thus represents a dialectal type in its own right that can be considered both geographically and dialectologically as representing a transition between the central area

and the northern Muṭallaṭ, whose dialects are more exposed to the influences of the Galilean types.

In this section, I report the observations on the dialectal features detected in Bāḡa l-Ġarbiyye present in the (unfortunately sparse) existing literature. I refer here in particular to some phonetic and morphological traits also detectable in the text of the tale reported here. A more detailed discussion of the linguistic features in light of the data provided by the text of the tale is found in section 8.

6.1 */q/ > /k/

The distinctive features typical of TMA (*/q/ > /k/ and */k/ > /č/) are found in what Palva defines as ‘Rural Central Palestinian’ (1984), consistently with the data reported in Bergsträsser (1915) and Cantineau (1938). The */q/ > /k/ is also shared by some Carmel Coast varieties (Jastrow 2009). Cerqueglini (2022a) reports that the quantitative data regarding the fronting or de-emphasizing of */q/ are quite homogeneous across the four TMA areas. Yet in the variety spoken in Bāḡa l-Ġarbiyye, there is a clear gender-based difference in the degree to which the fronting is realised. Among men, */q/ is pronounced with higher energy than it is among women, similarly to what Abudaljuh described (2011) regarding the gender-based differences in the realisation of emphasis in some Jordanian varieties. Among women, the emphasis is not audible, as shown by the data reported in this text, in which */q/ is transcribed as it always is and consistently pronounced by this female informant, i.e. [k], according to the notation proposed by Jastrow (2004; 2013), which is different from the back velar realisation [k̠] documented by Zu‘bi in ‘Ar‘ara (2021: 319). According to Nevo (2006) and Procházka (2021), in some villages in the southern part of Marḡ Ibn ‘Āmir—Iksāl, Mqēbli, Ṣandala, and Qūmye—reflexes of */q/ vary between [k], medio-palatal [k̠], and velar [q].

6.2 */k/ > /č/

In 1915, Bergsträsser marked in his maps a vast diffusion of the affricate pronunciation of */k/ in the southern Levant, across Bedouin and rural areas. This feature is also spread over northern and central Jordan, the Syrian Ḥawrān,¹⁵ and among the so-called ‘Šāwi dialects’ (Younes and Herin 2016; Procházka 2003), where it develops in proximity to frontal vowels (Procházka 2021). Cantineau (1946), Cowell (1964), Lewin (1969), and Grotzfeld (1980) have written about the treatment of */k/ and its affrication in the *großsyrisches Raum*. According to Procházka (2021), affrication does not take place in the Ḥūla Valley, where the

¹⁵ According to Christie (1901: 110), the dialects of the Jezreel Plain correspond to Ḥawrānīs and Bedouin types.

prepalatal /k/ has been preserved, as it has in most Galilean types (Behnstedt and Geva-Kleinberger 2019: map 62) and in Southern Lebanon. In contrast, in most Marḡ ibn ʿĀmir villages, speakers tend to maintain the pronunciation [k], yet based on information provided by older speakers, the affricated pronunciation [č] was common in the past.¹⁶

According to Palva, the affrication of */k/ > /č/ takes place in rural central Palestinian dialects in all environments. He reports the phenomenon in both *dīč* ('cock [sg.]') after /i/, a frontal vowel, and *dyūč* (pl.), after /u/, a back vowel, following Cantineau (1946). Palva (1984) first noted that the behaviour of the palatalization of */k/ > [č] was quite unclear and significantly decreased from south to north. Jastrow (2004) reports some comparative examples of affrication of suffixed 2nd person singular and plural pronouns between Umm ʿl-Faḡm and Kufʿr Bara. Both varieties have *dārak* 'your (m.sg.) house', *dārič* 'your (f.sg.) house', *dārčīn* 'your (f.pl.) house' but 'your (m.pl.) house' in Umm ʿl-Faḡm is *dār-kum*, while in Kufʿr Bara is *dārčum*. The general impression is that the affrication of */k/ in the northern system is more consistently related to contextual allophony and probably reflects a more consistent rule system of possible Bedouin origin. The allophonic system seems to have spread southwards, where it has lost its consistency through massive overextension.¹⁷ In the northern regions, it seems indeed to correlate with the presence of front vowels, as Palva and Jastrow have aptly noted, while proceeding toward the south, the local systems seem more chaotic. The system has some peculiarities in Bāḡa l-Ġarbiyye. In the text presented here, the affricate realisation [č] of */k/ seems to take place systematically in most contexts, with very few exceptions.

6.3 Final *imāla*

Similarly to what Seeger (2009; 2013) reported regarding the villages around Ramallah, and Procházka (2021) and Behnstedt and Geva-Kleinberger (2019: maps 23, 46) stated regarding the Jezreel and Ḥūla Valleys, the use of the final *imāla* of the feminine singular ending seems to follow different phonetic rules in the different Muṭallaṭ areas. For example, according to Zuʿbi (2021: 315), in the northern Muṭallaṭ village of ʿArʿara, the final *imāla* follows the same rules as in

¹⁶ Interestingly, according to Procházka (2021), the difference between the several villages lies in the number of words that exhibit the feature of affrication, as shown in Behnstedt and Geva-Kleinberger (2019: map 62).

¹⁷ According to Palva (1984) and as reported by Procházka (2021), the Jezreel Plains and the northern Muṭallaṭ have been affected by the same trend in which the original allochthonous Bedouin allophonic system for the affrication of */k/ first affected the northern regions and later extended southwards, losing its original profile as the original complementary allophonic distribution lost its transparency.

Nazareth and Kufr Kanna (Havelova 2000; Zuʿbi 2017; 2022), in contrast to other Muṭallaṭ areas (Cerqueglini 2022a).

With the exclusion of the emphatic contexts and after /r/, where the *imāla* rising is not realised (Levin 1971), the *imāla* height in Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye seems to phonologically be consistently /-i/. Cerqueglini (2022a) notes that in the northern Muṭallaṭ areas, the realisation of the final *imāla* is often of middle type [-e] in contrast with the expected [-i] common to some Galilean types and Nablus (An-Nūri 1979),¹⁸ while in the southern areas of the Muṭallaṭ it has the realisation [-i]. Cerqueglini (2022a) observes that in Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye, the final *imāla* rising, always excluded by emphatic contexts both synchronically (*bēza* ‘white [f.]’) and diachronically (**bāqa* > [bāka]) seems to correlate with the height of the vowel of the preceding syllable (*midrasa* ‘school’¹⁹ but *mʿallimi* ‘teacher [f.]’).

However, in calculating local *imāla* outcomes, one cannot ignore the effects of morphology, both diachronic and synchronic, as Blanc (1966) intuited, masterfully followed by Abo Mokh and Davis (2018).²⁰ Several facts are worth considering in this context. Indeed, different realisations of final *imāla* are found in the text reported here. For example, the name of the main character Ğbēne, from the nominal pattern **ḡubayna*, and *fārde* ‘wedding party’ are both spelled with a final -e, clearly distinguished from the final -i audible in words like *ḡibni* ‘cheese piece’. Another exception to the general rule is the word *ḡarāzi* ‘pearl’, with a final -i (lowered to pausal -e) after a syllable containing -ā-. A possible explanation for this phenomenon may be found in the fact that the three ‘exception words’ are part of the specific lexicon of this tale and its plot. Therefore, they might have been learned and handed down among the speakers of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye with the characteristics of a different dialect. Indeed, the elderly grandmother sometimes seems to search in her memory for the exact words, just as she attempts to remember the precise order in which Ğbēne’s family members are asked for permission to go to the party. Efforts are represented in the recording by hesitations, repetitions, and self-corrections.

In the case of *ḡarāzi*, the word the informant uses the most in the narration is the plural form *ḡarazāt* ‘pearls’, which occurs three times and is the routine dialectal form to refer to jewellery made with pearls, while ‘pearl’, in the singular form, is seldom used and it is generally pronounced *ḡarūza* in Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye.

¹⁸ This tendency is shared by some village varieties of the Marḡ ibn ʿĀmir dialect (Behnstedt and Geva-Kleinberger 2019: maps 23, 46; Procházka 2021).

¹⁹ Concerning the passage from *ma-* to *mi-* in the vocalisation of the prefix in *nomina loci*, this originally Bedouin feature affects a number of lexical items in the northern Muṭallaṭ and Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye, as well as in the Jezreel Valley (Procházka 2021) and is probably a relic of Bedouin dialectal influence. In the text proposed here, in section 8.1, line 39, the form *mutraḡiḥ* ‘your place’ shows the rural *mu-* prefix.

²⁰ For an extensive discussion on diachronic and sociohistorical methods in Arabic dialectology, see Al-Wer et al. (2022).

The word *ḥarāzi* appears in the tale reported here only once, in *pausa*, together with its verb in the singular form, yet the entire sentence is then corrected and rephrased in the plural (section 8.1, line 41, transcription). The use of the singular probably reflects the memory of the original version in which the informant learned the tale. When we compare different versions of the tale, it appears that a single precious and magical blue pearl (Raufman 2018) capable of maintaining a channel of communication between mother and daughter was given to Ğbēne by her mother. In particular, as regards *ḥarāzi* ‘pearl’, the high *imāla* in the end might represent the phonetic rules of a different variety, probably a local Bedouin one.²¹

For the other two cases, the name of Ğbēne and the word *fārde*, other explanations are possible. As Shachmon (2011) observed, the height of the *imāla* may vary between internal and pausal forms. As this text demonstrates, the traditional variety of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye seems to show an alternation in the degree of the *imāla* in names that have a final *-i* within prosodic units, as they have a final *-e* when they appear at the end of prosodic units, i.e. a lowering takes place in their pausal forms. Ğbēne may thus be the pausal form of *ḡbēni*, assumed as the basic form of the personal name, just as it happens for Ġarbiyye, and not Ġarbiyyi, in the city’s name.

The cultural word *fārde*, which has been widely diffused in Palestinian Arabic-speaking areas though the archaic, mysterious language of the tales, deserves special attention. In the tale reported here, it always appears at the end of a prosodic unit in the form *fārde*, with a final *-e*. The final *-e* may thus always occur here as a ‘regular’, local pausal form. Nonetheless, in *fārde*, the final *-e* may also reflect the original Persian pronunciation *parde* from Classical Persian *parda* ‘curtain, veil’, Iranian Persian *parde* (MacKenzie 1971: 65; Nourai 2011: 361), or, much more plausibly, its Ottoman Turkish derivative *perde* ‘curtain’, in which the *-e-* in the first syllable is pronounced openly before the *-r-*, close to a quite elongated *-ä-* (Kélékian 1911: 319). In Palestinian dialects, the word is pronounced *fārde*, as I transcribe it here, or *fārda* ‘Parda’, as Raufman transcribes it (2018).

²¹ Indeed, some elements of Ğbēne’s plot—such as the camel, the *amir* as an authority figure, and the custom of letting girls graze the herds of sheep and camels—indicate that this tale originated in a Bedouin milieu. Furthermore, Ğbēne is accompanied by a black slave. African slaves were customarily trafficked by the Bedouins and used as attendants, especially during long journeys such as the *ḥiḡḡa*. Members of some Negev Bedouin lineages explain the presence of families of African origin in their village who bear their family names as the result of their families’ progenitors bringing back black male slaves from the *ḥiḡḡa*. The slaves were bought in the markets of Arabia to attend them on their long journeys. Later, the slaves were integrated into the household—maintaining a subordinate rank—and could start their own families under the protection of the Bedouin family, marrying black-skinned women (Cerqueglini 2022c). In fact, the socioethnic layering of the composite Negev Bedouin society is a much more complex topic masterfully explained in Henkin (2010).

The word might have entered the local Palestinian lexical stock during the period of Ottoman rule. This word appears in many languages across the Balkans, the Middle East, and Asia in relation to the practice of women's seclusion either during wedding ceremonies or once a woman has acquired marital status (Britannica 2008). In some cases, the final vowel reflects an original *-a*, in others an original *-e*: Georgian *parda*; Hindi *pardā*; Kazakh *perde*; Punjabi *parda*; Urdu *pardah*; Uyghur *perde*; Uzbek *parda*. The languages that have inherited this word through Ottoman Turkish prevalently show reflexes of a final *-e* (with further adaptations to local morphologies): Albanian *perde*; Bulgarian пердѐ; Greek μπερντές; Laz ფერდე; Macedonian перде; Romanian *perdea*; and Serbo-Croatian перда/*perda* (Meninski 1680, 1687).

6.4 Epenthetic vowels

In comparison to other sedentary dialects of the Galilee and the Bedouin dialects of the southern Levant, TMA varieties in general do not easily tolerate *-CC* groups, especially at the words' boundaries, particularly at the ends of words. This phenomenon is reflected in the nominal and verbal morphologies. The main reference work on epenthesis in central rural Palestinian varieties is that of Palva (1965), who accounts for the existence of different epenthetic systems in the Lower Galilee and mentions the phonological laws that rule the functioning of the epenthetic system of Ṭurṣān. As Amir et al. (2014) and Cleveland (1967) aptly suggest, vowel systems vary across the Palestinian dialects not only with regard to vowels' phonological vs. allophonic values but even in terms of their acoustic constituents and articulatory features. These aspects of variation should also be studied in the realm of epenthetic vowels. For instance, Cleveland (1967: 48) reports that in the dialect of Dawayimeh (close to Hebron), the 'intercalary vowel' is generally /i/, yet it may appear as [u] following environmental conditioning (*bīnit* 'girl' vs. *ūzumti* 'my body').

Consonantal clusters divided by epenthetic vowels may appear at the beginnings of words, in medial position, in coda, or across word boundaries. According to Cerqueglini (2022a), different TMA areas have different rules for epenthesis regarding the nature of the consonantal cluster as divided and the articulatory type and length of the epenthetic vowel used as a divider. To these conditions, prosodic rules constraining the distribution of the different vowel types should be added, as this article shows through the transcription of the text and its linguistic analysis.

Research on the epenthetic vowels in the Muṭallaṭ is not very developed, despite their evident pervasiveness. As Piggot (1995) and Abu Salim (1980) have pointed out, the comparative study of the epenthetic vowels across language systems requires meticulous and complex work. According to Cerqueglini (2022a), in northern TMA, as in some of the Lower Galilean types described by Palva

(1965), the epenthesis is absent in word-medial position when the second word radical consonant is /r/ or /l/. In central TMA varieties, the epenthetic vowel is used with all consonantal groups, and generally realised as a very short and quite centralised [ə]. In southern TMA, the epenthetic vowel tends to be consistently /i/. A [a] vowel appears after a pharyngeal sound in all TMA varieties. Regarding the Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye dialectal type, Cerqueglini (2022a) also observed that epenthesis is quite a pervasive phenomenon: dental (or, more in general, frontal) consonants seem to attract the frontal vocalic realisation [i], while in other cases [e] (sic) is used. This preliminary sketch is reviewed and partly modified in the present analysis.

The complexity of the system of rules governing epenthesis in Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye is one of the most evident aspects in the transcription of the text reported here due to the existence of different qualities and lengths of the epenthetic vowels, that are seemingly dependent on both phonetic and prosodic conditions. In contrast to other sedentary and Bedouin Levantine Arabic varieties (Cleveland 1967; Klimiuk 2013; Palva 1965; Rosenhouse 1984), here allophonic alternation of the help vowels does not seem to be connected with vowel harmony but rather with the consonantal environment.

Allophonic alternation of the /-i-/ help vowels is marked in the transcription. In general, the epenthetic vowel before the consonant -l- in the article is always [ə]. Dental and frontal consonants may prime a more fronted realisation [i], for example in the preposition *l-*, i.e. *ʔl-*. The pharyngeal sounds *ʕ* and *ħ* prime the use of the low allophone [a]. Some cases of the effect of vowel harmony on epenthetic vowels appear in this text.

The articulatory length of the epenthetic vowels—i.e. CⁱC vs C^əC vs CiC vs Cé:C—seems to alternate in relation to prosodic conditions (internal forms, pausal forms, and emphasised pausal forms). For example, the basic form of the word for ‘girl’ is *bin^ət*, becoming *binⁱt* in *pausa* and *binét*, with an elongated and stressed vowel, in emphasised pausal forms. These aspects will be explored in the linguistic analysis of the text. In fact, the general trend of the lowering of the articulation point of the vowels in the pausal/pre-pausal forms (*i* > *e*; *u* > *o*), studied by Shachmon and Faust for some Galilean varieties (2017), in Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye affects not only long final vowels or final *imāla* of the feminine forms but also epenthetic vowels.

6.5 The 3rd person masculine singular suffix

Also in this case, similarly to what Shachmon (2011) and Seeger (2009; 2013) observed in other dialectal types, the realisation of the 3rd person masculine singular suffix seems to follow different phonetic rules in the different areas within the Muṭallaṭ. In particular, it is in general accepted that the 3rd person masculine singular suffix is *-u* in the entire Muṭallaṭ (Shachmon 2011). According to Cerque-

glini (2022a), it is spelled as *-u* in the northern Muṭallaṭ, while in Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye and in the southern Muṭallaṭ areas it is instead realised as *-o*. Nonetheless, more research is needed on the conditions ruling vowel lowering /*u*/ → [o]. Indeed, in Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye, consistently with what happens in the case of the feminine singular nominal ending *-i* and in the quality of the epenthetic vowels *-i*/², the pausal forms of the 3rd person masculine singular suffix *-u* also seem to undergo a lowering. In the case of *-u*, the resulting realisation is [-o].

7 Between snow white and Cinderella: Ğbēne and other colourful ladies

The story of Ğbēne has been extensively studied both in comparison with other stories from traditional Palestinian folklore (Muhawi and Kanaana 1989) and the world folklore heritage (Raufman 2018). Its narrative type has been identified in ‘an oicotype of ATU 403’ (Raufman 2018), i.e. it is a local development of the plot type ATU 403, corresponding in the anthropological literature to the ‘Black and White Bride’ story type—based on the German tale *Die weiße und die schwarze Braut* collected by the Grimm brothers and first published in 1815 (Rölleke 1975)—to which Snow White and Cinderella also belong, to different extent. The tale symbolically refers to the female transition from childhood to adulthood, i.e. to fertility and marriage, symbolised by the opposition of white and black. The name Ğbēne—local pronunciation of **ğubayna*, the singulative and diminutive form of *ğibn* ‘cheese’—means ‘small piece of cheese’,²² referring to the white colour associated with the girl’s miraculous birth, beauty, and innocence. Ğbēne is born indeed to a childless woman. Different versions of the tale include various scenarios in which Ğbēne’s mother prays or wishes for the birth of a baby girl white as cheese, inspired by the beauty and the whiteness of pieces of cheese or snowflakes.²³

In fact, in the rural Palestinian culture, the fresh, firm, and clear complexion of young girls is traditionally compared in sayings and proverbs to the cheese from which the liquids had been squeezed (*ğibne maʕsara*). As Dalman (1939 6: 303) reports, *ğibne maʕsara* was the title of a popular song that went: *ħadd el-ʕağīye ğibn w-ed-dōr lissa boh umeʕašserūh ha-l-ķidde mā boh danas moiye* ‘Die Wange des Mädchens ist wie Käse, worin noch Labmagen ist und den man so ausdrückte, daß keine Spur von Wasser darin bleibt.’

²² According to Muhawi and Kanaana (1989) the cheese referred to in the tale is made from sheep’s milk. It is white and comes in slabs with rounded corners (pl. *qrāš*; sg. *qurš*) about three inches square by half an inch that are stacked in brine. For *qurš*, Seeger (2022: 814) proposes ‘rundes, flaches Objekt, Scheibe, Töpferscheibe; Stück; Brotfladen’.

²³ The motif of snow as inspiring the conception of a baby girl in a childless woman is found in the tale *Die Geschichte von Fraulein Schneechen* (Littmann 1984: 332). In Littmann’s tale, the girl is ‘white as snow and red as blood’ (Littmann 1984: 332).

Once she reaches maturity, the girl is invited out. No one in the family seems to be willing to take responsibility for giving her permission to go. Her relatives' attitude probably represents the effect of traditional Arab societies' beliefs and customs, which consider the beginning of sexual maturity a problematic period in women's life, implying first social contacts with men and the risk of losing virginity and honour, with consequences for their own social respectability and that of their family members. Ġbēne is eventually somehow allowed to go. Different versions of the tale give different reasons for the invitation. In some versions Ġbēne is deceived by some peers and abandoned outside the village, with the excuse of going to pick fruits from trees²⁴ (Muhawi and Kanaana 1989), while in others, such as the one reported here, she is invited to a wedding party (*fārde*). The insistent and collective invitation to a wedding party—made by a group of peers or unspecified figures—alludes to the arrival of sexual maturity, the pressure of sexual desires, and the urgency of marrying and beginning her reproductive life within the collectively recognized framework. Indeed, Ġbēne is placed by her mother on a camel, as if she herself were going to get married, according to an ancient Bedouin custom.

The exact meaning of *fārde* in the Palestinian tales remains elusive. Or rather, it seems to have acquired different meanings according to the marriage customs adopted by the different Bedouin or rural societies of the southern Levantine linguistic area. In the southern Levant, the word does not refer to a curtain, veil, or secluded space, but to a procession, either accompanying the bride from her father's house to the groom's, as customary among the Bedouin, or 'fetch[ing] a bride from another village' (Raufman 2018), as told in IFA 23139. In her English version of IFA 23139, Raufman (2018: 178) leaves the word untranslated as 'Parda', and the passage of the tale where this custom is explained is translated as follows:

One day, when Ġbēne was sixteen or seventeen years old, the people in the village wanted to go out and bring a bride, in a custom called Parda (*fārda*)—almost all the people from the village went to the Parda—men, women, children—each one who had a donkey or horse to ride, following, with the bride riding in a howdah.

In fact, in this part of IFA 23139, two meanings of *fārde* are conflated. One refers to the bride's people taking her, veiled and riding a camel, to the house of the groom, while the other refers to the people of the village going to another village to take a bride. In other words, the original Bedouin and the later rural customs merge here. Indeed, among some Bedouin groups, the bride, dressed up and veiled, rides a camel during the festive wedding parade that leads her from the paternal tent to the tent of the groom erected for the wedding season in the

²⁴ In Muhawi and Kanaana's version (1989), *dōm* is the name of the fruit. It is probably identifiable with the Christ-thorn tree, a wild tree that bears edible fruit.

same encampment. Customarily, Bedouins have preserved strict endogamy over time, marrying the *bint al-ʿamm*, the daughter of the paternal uncle, as the first and preferable option. Bringing brides from other villages seems a local custom of Palestinian rural societies. Indeed, in his dictionary of sedentary Palestinian varieties, Seeger (2022: 758) translates *fārde* (pl. *fārdāt*) as ‘Hochzeitsgefolge; Brautzug; Abholen einer Braut aus fremdem Dorf’.

In the version of the tale from Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye reported here, it is not clear whether the original sense of *fārde* as ‘collective parade for the bride’ is still transparent for the narrator. She first says *ʿiriṣ*, the routine Muṭallaṭ word for ‘wedding party’, yet corrects herself afterwards, using the word *fārde*, which belongs to the plot of this tale, as explained in a note by Muhawi and Kanaana (1989). The informant seems to consider both *fārde* and *ʿiriṣ* synonyms for ‘wedding party’.

Naturally, going to a party or otherwise leaving the village means being alone for the first time. Once consent has been obtained from the whole family, or, in some versions, from the whole village community, Ğbēne can go. The mother then gives her a jewel, a pearl, or a pearl necklace, which will act as a channel of communication between her and her daughter. Through the pearls the mother will be able to go to the rescue of her daughter twice, saving her from the machinations of the slave, but the third time this does not happen again. Far from the protection of the family, Ğbēne is confronted with her misadventures, marked by the colour black, represented by the black servant and the coal. In some cases, she dyes herself black so as not to be recognized when she manages to return to her own village with the help of a knight (Muhawi and Kanaana 1989).²⁵ In other versions, such as IFA 23139 and the version reported here, the black servant who was supposed to lead Ğbēne’s camel to the wedding party takes Ğbēne down from her mount, paints Ğbēne black and herself white, and thus disguised manages to ride Ğbēne’s camel and eventually marries a prince. The act of riding metaphorically alludes to sexual intercourse. Its allusive meaning is revealed by the desire of the servant to ride instead of Ğbēne. In short, the wedding invitation turns into a disappointment for Ğbēne, who loses her status and has to attend the servant’s wedding rather than celebrate her own.

Through the exchange of colours between Ğbēne and the servant, the cosmic order is subverted. What is white becomes black, and what is black becomes

²⁵ The self-camouflage is reminiscent of the story of Sackcloth hiding in a sack so as not to marry her father (Tale 14. Muhawi and Kanaana 1989). Self-camouflage also represents an attempt at self-protection in the story of Ğbēne in the version reported by Muhawi and Kanaana (1989). The girl does not want to be sexually attractive to the men who offer to help her get home and once in the village she does not want to be recognized by the same envious people who betrayed her. In the tale of Cinderella, too, the girl is covered by black coal, which conceals both her beauty and her real social status. Thus, she remains unattractive to suitors, who consider her stepsisters instead, but at the same time the black coal protects her from the sexual aggressiveness of males, eventually allowing her to preserve her honour and marry a prince.

white. The opposition between black and white seems to be a fundamental dichotomy in human cultures and languages. It seems that cross-linguistically there are no chromatic systems, whether hue-oriented (Berlin and Kay 1969) or brightness-oriented (MacLaury 2005), that do not recognize this opposition as primary. Indeed, this primary opposition probably derives from the universal experience of the daily alternation between light and darkness (Hemming 2012), where light allows discernment while darkness blunts it. The experience of colour distinction is associated with the appearance of the first light of the sun at dawn, a sacred time in astral and monotheistic religions. An example of this association in Islam is the passage of *Surat al-Baqara* 2–187 where the time of the beginning of the religious daily fasting is indicated by the verse ‘[...] and eat and drink until the white thread appears to you distinct from the black thread, then keep your fast till the nightfall.’ An example from Judaism is the definition of the colour *tekelet* in the Mishnah: *Tekelet* is the colour of the stripes on the prayer shawl. Because it is similar to white, it cannot be seen before daylight; the moment when the stripes can be distinguished from the white parts of the shawl defines the time when the morning prayer can be recited (*Mishnah, Berakhot* 1.2) (Sovran 2013).

Further ‘embodied’ anthropological interpretations of the opposition of white and black, based on the physiology of the human body, claim white to be associated with milk, an essential food; black with faeces or decomposing, dead, materials; and red, the third colour to be cross-linguistically distinguished and named, with blood (Palmer and Schloss 2010). These colours are the richest in symbols across cultures. In particular, in Arab culture—especially in its primaevial expressions, still represented in some Bedouin societies—white and black are associated with social respectability and female and male honour (Kressel and Wikan 1988). The colour name *iswid* ‘black (m.sg.)’ is so loaded with ominous meanings that it is avoided for taboo reasons, so the words *azraq*, originally ‘grey/blue’ and *asmar* ‘dark’ are used instead (Borg 2009).

In the tale, the harm, dishonour, and humiliation caused to Ġbēne by the black servant are symbolically embodied by the verb *šaḥḥar* or *šaḥḥir* ‘schwärzen (jn, etw); schwarz machen (jn); unglücklich machen (das Leben); entehren, in Schande bringen, entjungfern (eine Frau)’ (Seeger 2022: 518). The verb literally means ‘to blacken’ and metaphorically refers to slander, humiliation, and damage done to someone’s life, especially a woman’s, by dishonouring her. Soot is the material used to blacken Ġbēne, either by the servant or by herself, in different versions. The word for soot is *šaḥḥār/šuḥḥār* (Seeger 2022: 518). A common Arabic curse is *Allāh yišaḥḥrak* ‘May Allāh blacken you’ or among the Bedouins *Allāh yisawwid wiḡhak* ‘May Allāh blacken your face’.²⁶ The ‘face’, *al-wiḡh*, represents the legal subject and his/her authority and responsibility in traditional Bedouin law and

²⁶ Muhawi and Kanaana (1989) report that the verb ‘blacken’ also appears in Tale 1, ‘Tunjur Tunjur Tunjur’ (paragraph 11). The mother shouts at daughter pot who stole goods *ya mšaḥḥara*

in other, less conservative, sedentary Arab societies. Therefore, ‘to blacken the face’ means to socially and legally shame someone. In fact, black is such a powerfully ominous and symbolically loaded colour as to apparently entail opposite meanings, especially among the Bedouins, for whom black represents disgrace, dishonour, and shame, with all their social consequences: moral contempt, social isolation and, eventually, ruin, yet is also the basic, dominant, colour of the fabric used for women’s dresses, and not simply to protect them from the sun’s rays. In the Bedouin and, more generally, the Arab social order, women are entrusted with the honour of their families, including their male relatives. Violations of the honour code are punished. Once, they were mainly resolved through physical violence (Kressel et al. 1981). Therefore, women are burdened with the responsibility of preserving honour, whether through sexual conduct or in other aspects of their social lives. Thus, black accompanies women and marks them as the holders of a great power and its ambiguous, yet revered, codes. In other words, Ġbēne’s black disguise may simply allude to her entrance into sexual life which, even in the accepted form of marriage, still involves physical intercourses and the loss of virginity. It is no coincidence that brides throughout the Arab and Muslim world wear not only veils but also heavy facial and body makeup—in traditional societies usually in white, black, and red (Hemming 2012; Prasse 1999; Shinar 1999; Stewart 1999). Makeup stereotypes their facial features, making them unrecognisable to protect them not only from evil eye and bad spirits but also from personal dishonour, shrouding in mystery the delicate existential passage during which they are about to lose their feminine honour.

At this point in the plot, when black turns white and white turns black and all order is subverted, falsehood and injustice seem to destroy Ġbēne’s fate and promote that of the servant girl instead. But as often happens in fairy tales, the unfortunate young woman finds help in the elements of nature, which conspire to restore the cosmic order. She finds shelter in a tree—considered an omen of a wealthy marriage in the local folklore (Muhawi and Kanaana 1989)—and the animals she grazes, affected by the girl’s sad song, become involuntary helpers. The *amīr*, willing to enquire about his animals’ depression and lack of appetite, meets the girl and hears her story. Ġbēne’s singing is a central element of the plot. In other tales related to the transition to sexual maturity, the singing motif is associated with birds, symbols of fertility, whose names are used in Palestinian Arabic to allude to the sexual organs.²⁷

Both Ġbēne and the black servant are invited to bathe and thus the servant’s machinations are revealed. In IFA 23139, the servant is kindly forgiven, while in

‘O blackened one!’ ‘You [should be] ashamed!’ Children were directly exposed through tales to the complex and nuanced code of honour, which involved rules of social and sexual conduct.

²⁷ Examples of the symbolic and allusive function of birds, expressing both male and female sexuality, are present in tales 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 in Muhawi and Kanaana (1989).

the version reported here, she is beheaded and burnt, to the surprise of the young listener. Yet afterwards, the servant is mistakenly mentioned again, proving that in earlier versions of the tale, the black servant's misbehaviour was not taken seriously enough for her to be punished. Once the servant is dismissed, Ğbēne finally receives the marriage proposal from the *amīr*. However, she is already at the *amīr*'s house and away from her family, so her marriage ceremony risks diverging from the common order of events, according to which first the girl's hand is requested and then a farewell party takes place at the bride's place before she can join the marital household. In the version reported here, the *amīr* and Ğbēne seem to go in search of the girl's family together. Since the narrator of the story reported here seems not to be sure about the exact sequence of the events or not remember them clearly, her granddaughter, Taqwa, asks her for more details about how Ğbēne and the *amīr*'s life together actually began. In IFA 23139, the *amīr* arrives at Ğbēne's village and asks her father for permission to marry her. In the end, a party in which the whole community participates for seven days is organised.

Lines 92–93 in sections 8.1 (transcription) and 8.2 (translation) report the motif of the meeting and mutual recognition between parents and daughter after the completion of the initiatory journey. The parents' recognition is gradual: initially, due to the crying, they are unable to recognize the girl as the daughter they thought was missing. The motif of the parents' tears is ritual and symbolic: during the experience of the rite of passage, the little girl symbolically disappeared to make way for the woman (Grambo 1971). Even the difficult recognition is part of the fulfilment of the ritual: it underlines that the woman is profoundly different from the little girl she was before. Eventually, the recognition marks the reintegration of the woman into the society in her adult status. The symbolic and ritual value of the final mourning for the child and the recognition of the adult is evident also in other Palestinian folktales, such as the tale of 'Šāṭer Ḥasan and His Nine Brothers' (Perez and Rosenhouse 2022).

Finally, a conservative aspect of the text presented here is the closing formula, in which the listener is invited to reciprocate by telling a story in turn. Instead, in the text reported here, as sometimes happens especially with female narrators, there is no opening formula.

Beside the colour symbolism, additional motifs present in the version of the tale of Ğbēne reported in this paper can be found also in other folktales from Bedouin and sedentary Palestinian milieus (e.g. Perez and Rosenhouse 2022: 183–199, 255–267, 305–321).

8 *Qiṣṣat* 'Ğbēne: an almost all-female story

As mentioned above, the text reported here was narrated by a female informant in her seventies to her granddaughter, Taqwa, a psychology student in her twenties. It is important to emphasise that the two women speak different gen-

erational varieties. The narrator, who will simply be called ‘Grandmother’ from now on, speaks the traditional dialect of the city of Bāka l-Ġarbiyye and has never studied or been heavily exposed to other varieties of Arabic or foreign languages. Taqwa, on the other hand, has not only mastered Hebrew and written Arabic, but uses here a conversational variety that is not only ‘educated’, i.e. influenced by high, written registers of Arabic (Badawi 1973; Blanc 1960; Kaye 1994; Rosenhouse 2007) but also adapted to inter-dialectal communication within the Palestinian Arabic linguistic koine (Henkin 2016), in which many features of her Muṭallaṭ dialectal background disappear. For example, Taqwa does not show sensitivity to the dialectal rules governing the alternation of internal and pausal forms and the distribution of help vowels. From a macroscopic point of view, Taqwa’s vocabulary is different from that of her grandmother; she does not say *ḥurrāfa*, according to the traditional lexical usage (Muhawi and Kanaana 1989), but *qiṣṣa* (transcription, line 1). The intergenerational lexical difference becomes clear when Taqwa interrupts her grandmother and asks her to explain the meaning of the unfamiliar word *ṭurṭamaniyyi* (transcription, line 34).²⁸ Grandmother explains that this word referring to Ğbēne’s slave is a synonym of *sōda* ‘black’, simplifying the meaning of this cultural word and restricting it to a synonym of ‘black’, the main connotation repeatedly associated with Ğbēne’s slave during the narration. Indeed, this word belongs to a sociohistorical and semantic sphere inaccessible to Taqwa and her generation. Such cases of meaning negotiation exemplify the complex phenomenon defined as intergenerational conversational repair and studied by Henkin in Negev Arabic varieties (2023). Therefore, regarding the features of the traditional Muṭallaṭ variety of Bāka l-Ġarbiyye, only the parts of the reported text attributed to the elderly informant (Grandmother) need to be considered here.

The text, narrated by a woman to her granddaughter, is a story in which men and women seem to wield different forms of power and authority, as was often highlighted in the folklore literature in the Arabic-speaking world (Perez and Rosenhouse 2022). The tale highlights women’s decision-making powers in marriage planning, i.e. in shaping family and society. In this version of it, an aunt or grandmother of Ğbēne has the final say on allowing her to go to the party. Another figure who appears in this version of the tale is the mother of the *amīr*, who eventually drives away the fraudulent bride and consecrates the legitimate one through the revealing bath. The bath probably alludes to the ritual washing that preceded the bride’s dressing. This custom remains a fundamental part of Arab marriage rituals, carried out with more and more elaborate forms over time,

²⁸ The word *ṭurṭamaniyyi* probably represents a popular reinterpretation of the Arabic word *turkumān*, which ultimately entered Arabic from the Persian *turkmān*. This word, which originally described some Turkish groups of central Asia, probably passed into local Levantine popular use to generally indicate foreigners and slaves from remote and exotic places.

which can include elements such as the first complete shaving of the girl's body, makeup, and the rite of the henna.

The version of the story presented here is predominantly feminine also from a purely grammatical point of view. Not only most of the characters are women but even the animals that Ġbēne takes care of are always associated with feminine verbal forms that are still clearly distinguishable from the masculine ones in traditional Muṭallaṭ dialects, according to the distinct morphological patterns precisely described by Jastrow (2004).

Nonetheless, a remarkable exception to this pan-feminine tendency is found here in the preliminary interactions between grandmother and granddaughter, in which the grandmother addresses Taqwa using the 2nd person singular 'you' in the masculine grammatical gender. The masculine forms are clearly audible in the recording, reported in the transcription (section 8.1), line 3: *w-ⁱnta sġir... hassa ḥatyārit*, 'when you were young (m.), now you grew (m.) old'. These data were confirmed by Taqwa. The sentence in line 3 is actually mixed in terms of the interlocutor's gender. Grandmother begins with the feminine form *ḥar-raftiċ* 'I told to you (f.)' and continues with the two masculine forms reported above. In the traditional Muṭallaṭ dialects, the female speech is notoriously characterised by the use of masculine grammatical forms, often participles and adjectives, with feminine referents (Dbayyat 2004). In this case, the masculine gender might have been used for apotropaic reasons, a sort of grammatical gender 'disguise' to protect the granddaughter from evil spirits. Nevertheless, the use of masculine forms for feminine referents in the traditional Muṭallaṭ dialects, as in other Palestinian Arabic varieties, has been reported in literature among women peers (Barontini and Ziamari 2009; Rosenhouse 1998; Rosenhouse and Dbayyat 2006; Sa'ar 2007; Walters 1991; Zu'bi 2021), and masculine forms (3rd and 2nd person singular) are used for the inclusive generic person (Henkin 2019).

8.1 Transcription

The transcription proposed here represents the phonological rules of the dialect under examination, including areal features, i.e. long vowels become short (and are represented as such) in open unstressed syllable (Bauer 1926; Blanc 1953; Elihai 1977; Jastrow 2004). However, allophonic variants are transcribed instead of their relative phonemes with regard to the elements discussed in section 6, i.e. the allophones [č] and [k] of the phoneme /k/ (6.2); the different pronunciations of final *imāla*, including prosodic variants (6.3), epenthetic vowels and their prosodic variants (6.4), and the 3rd masculine singular suffixed pronoun and its prosodic variants (6.5). The phoneme /q/ is always pronounced [k] and written as such in the traditional variety spoken by grandmother, like the plosive allophone of the phoneme /k/ (6.1). Taqwa pronounces the phoneme /q/ with pharyngeal

emphasis. The affricate [ǧ] is the common reflex of OA /ǧ/.²⁹ The symbol {z} is used here to simply represent the interdental fricative, voiced, emphatic phoneme (without spirantisation). Since prosodic norms are active in the traditional dialect and produce allophonic alternations, the text is marked for minor breaks (|) and major breaks (||).

Taqwa:

- 1 *as-salām* ‘alēkum | *sitti*. || *čif ḥālič?* || *dāčri qiššat* ‘Ġbēne | *lli ḥarraftīni iyyāha*
 2 *w-ana šǧīri?* || *hassa* | *ḥarrfīni iyyāha oḥra marra!* ||

Grandmother:

- 3 *ḥarraftič iyyāha* | *w-ⁱnta šǧīr...* || *hassa ḥatyārit* ||³⁰

Taqwa:

- 4 *ṭayyib* | *sitti* || *ḥarrfīni iyyāha oḥra marra* | ‘*ašān* ‘*alay taslīm waḏīfi* ||

Grandmother:

- 5 *fī ha-l-mara*³¹ | *ma l-hā-š*³² *ulād* || *fī yōm* | *likyat bāb* ‘*s-sama*³³ *maftūh*³⁴ ||
*willa hi*³⁵ *bitkūl:* |

²⁹ According to Procházka (2021), the dialects of the Marǧ ibn ‘Āmir area also exhibit this feature, though Behnstedt and Geva-Kleinberger (2019: map 63) notes both [ǧ] and [ž] for Mqēble. The dialect of the Ḥūla Valley predominantly features a voiced sibilant [ž], with some instances of [ǧ], reflecting the Galilean situation reported by Behnstedt and Geva-Kleinberger (2019: map 64).

³⁰ This sentence opens with a second singular feminine form and shifts to the use of the masculine instead, as detailed at the beginning of this section.

³¹ In this text, the determinative article *-l-* is almost without exception accompanied by the residual demonstrative particle *ha-*. It seems that the form *hal-* is undergoing grammaticalization and the article *-l-* is being replaced by the new *hal-*.

³² In this example of negative existential sentence, the enclitic personal pronouns (feminine singular, in the example) is lengthened and stressed, as described in Jastrow (2004: 174).

³³ The epenthetic vowel associated with the definite article is systematically articulated as a short schwa [ə].

³⁴ Lit. ‘she found the sky’s door/direction open’. This is a variation on the common expression ‘to face toward the sky’s door/direction’, used to refer to praying to God for the realisation of a desire.

³⁵ The short *hi* form, instead of the long *hiyya* form, is the regular one in this variety. *Hiyya* is also found, in this variety and in this text, for particular uses, such as the pragmatic topic marking ‘it was she who ...’ (line 78).

- 6 *ʿya*³⁶ *raḥḥī!*³⁷ || *tanṭīni*³⁸ *binēt!*³⁹ || *miṭʿl kurṣ ʾǧ-ǧībin!*⁴⁰ ||
 7 *kammal*⁴¹ *ʾl-mara* | *simi*^c *mīnnha rabbna* | *w-ḡallat ḥibla* || *ǧābat binʿt*⁴² | *miṭʿl*
*kurṣ ʾǧ-ǧībin*⁴³ ||
 8 *hassa* | *čibrat ha-l-binit* || *ʿazamūha ʿala ʿiris* || *biddha trūḥ ʾl-binit* ||
 9 *rāḥat l-imm-ha* | *kālat ʾl-ha:* |
 10 *ʿimm Ğbēne!* | *ḥalli Ğbēne trūḥ maʿána ʿa-l-fārde!* ||⁴⁴
 11 *kālat ʾl-ha* | *ʿrūḥi kūli l-abū-ha!* ||
 12 *ʿabū Ğbēne!* | *ḥalli Ğbēne trūḥ maʿána ʿa-l-fārde!* ||
 13 *kāl:* | *ʿkūlu la-sʿyīd-ha* ||

³⁶ The pronunciation of *yā* is short (*ya*) throughout the text, similarly to what was found in Belinkov’s data (2014: 24).

³⁷ The vowel length in the unstressed open syllable here is not the original morphological length of the suffixed possessive pronoun. Indeed, it is regularly shortened in this variety because it is unstressed and found in an open syllable. In this case, the lengthening is due to the position of the syllable at the end of a prosodic unit. The syllable is particularly emphasised by the final rising intonation of the invocation, which preserves the articulatory height of the vowel /i/, preventing its lowering, and it is heard as stressed because of the prosodic rising pitch. This is thus a pausal form, and it is transcribed accordingly. The *r* and the double *b* consonants in the invocation of God are pharyngealised in accordance with a typically Bedouin linguistic practice.

³⁸ The verb *anṭa* ‘to give’ (Seeger 2022: 1017) is often used in this traditional variety instead of *aʿṭa*.

³⁹ This pausal form has some interesting peculiarities. The epenthetic vowel is clearly lowered /i/ > [e], prosodically lengthened, and stressed. These traits correlate with a particular emotional load expressed in the intonation. This is not the only case in which the epenthetic vowel is stressed in this text. Other instances are *maʿána* (line 10), *ḥālt-ha* (line 21), and *ʿam-mīt-ha* (line 23). The stressed epenthetic vowel is reminiscent of Cairene Arabic forms, such as *ʿindína* ‘at our place’ (Woidich 2006: 141).

⁴⁰ The routine pausal form of *binʿt* is *bīnit*, with the epenthetic vowel fully articulated with the same length as a morphological short vowel. Interestingly, the vowel in *pausa* is not lowered toward [e].

⁴¹ The 3rd person masculine singular form *kammal* seems to be used with a feminine subject, ‘the woman finished talking’. This time the unmarked form might have been triggered by the sentence initial position. One of the reviewers suggests a different interpretation: ‘God granted the woman(’s wish)’, in which case the masculine verb would regularly agree with God (m.s.) as the implicit subject. The verb *kammal* is indeed habitually used in contexts of fulfillment of wishes.

⁴² The regular, non-pausal, form *binat* appears here.

⁴³ Pausal form of *ǧībʿn*, showing a fully articulated short -i- vowel, without lowering.

⁴⁴ In the oral transmission of the tale, subjects might have been often altered and substituted. So, the plot should be reconstructed *ad sensum* in some passages, keeping in mind the different versions of the tale. In Muhawi and Kanaana’s version (1989) a group of couples asks Ğbēne’s family members to let the girl go with them. Here, too, it is clear from the construction scheme of the requests that it is some plural subject asking Ğbēne’s mother to let the girl go with them, and not the girl herself.

- 14 ‘sʔyīd ʔĞbēne! | ḥalli Ğbēne trūḥ ma‘ána ‘a-l-fārde!’ ||
 15 *kāl:* | ‘kūlu la-sitt-ha’ ||
 16 ‘sitt⁴⁵ ʔĞbēne! | ḥalli Ğbēne trūḥ ma‘ána ‘a-l-fārde!’ ||
 17 ‘kūlu la-ḥāl-ʔha’ ||
 18 ḥāl ʔĞbēne! | ḥalli Ğbēne trūḥ ma‘ána ‘a-l-fārde!’ ||
 19 ‘kūlu la-‘amm-ʔha’ ||
 20 ‘amm ʔĞbēne! | ḥalli Ğbēne trūḥ ma‘ána ‘a-l-fārde!’ ||
 21 ‘kūlu la-ḥālīt-ha’ ||
 22 ḥālīt ʔĞbēne! | ḥalli Ğbēne trūḥ ma‘ána ‘a-l-fārde!’ ||
 23 ‘kūlu la-‘ammīt-ha’ ||
 24 ‘ammit ʔĞbēne! | ḥalli Ğbēne trūḥ ma‘ána ‘a-l-fārde!’ ||
 25 *kāmat* ʔĞbēne⁴⁶ | rāḥat ma‘áha⁴⁷ ‘a-l-fārde. ||

Taqwa:

- 26 *saʔalu* kull ʔl-‘ēli?⁴⁸ ||

Grandmother:

- 27 ʔā! || *kull*⁴⁹ ‘elīt-ha⁵⁰... || rāḥat ma‘áha... ma‘áhum ‘a-l-fārde || raččabūha
 ‘a-ğ-ğamal |
 28 *w-ḥattat immha b²-rakabātha ḥarazāt* || šāyfe?⁵¹ || ḥattat... || *hadōl* ʔl-
 ḥarazāt⁵²... byiḥčēn⁵³ ||

Taqwa:

- 29 *čēf* byiḥčīn? ||

⁴⁵ Length in *i* is clearly audible, even though the genitive construction represents one prosodic word, *sitt ʔĞbēne*, which is stressed on the *ē* in *Ğbēne*.

⁴⁶ The use of the verb *kām* here might have preserved its original sense of ‘getting up’ or ‘standing up’ or expressed an inchoative sense of beginning of the action.

⁴⁷ Lit. ‘she went with her’. The pronoun is corrected in line 27 to ‘she went with them’, according to the original plot.

⁴⁸ In the variety spoken by Taqwa, there is no sign of alternation between internal and pausal forms.

⁴⁹ The word *kull* is the only case in the text where */k/ is pronounced as a plosive sound. According to Jastrow (2004), back vowels can block the shift to the affricate realisation of /k/. This word is probably part of the conservative lexicon that did not undergo the affrication that stemmed from Bedouin influences (Palva 1984; Procházka 2021).

⁵⁰ The long *ē* is shortened because the accent is on the epenthetic vowel, realised as a fully articulated -*i*- vowel.

⁵¹ This pausal form has a lowering of final -*i* to -*e*. The final vowel undergoes prosodic lengthening.

⁵² Stylistic emphasis expressed by prosodic lengthening.

⁵³ This pausal form, with final -*i* lowered to -*ē*, should be compared to the same verb in non-pausal position in line 30.

Grandmother:

- 30 *byihč̄in yaⁿⁱ*. || *in hād katalha w-nādat ʿala immha | bitrūd ʿaliha immha*. || *hattathin*
 31 *bi-rakbātha ʿimmha* | ... *ħarazāt. tayyib*. || *rāħat*. || *šārat ʿl-ʿabde*.⁵⁴ || *w-hī tišħab*
 32 *b-ha-ğ-ğamal*. || *tkülha*: | *ʿnizli, nizli!*⁵⁵ || *ana dōri biddi arčab.*’ ||
 33 *čān kālāt*.⁵⁶ | *ʿē*, | *yumma*, | *ē!* || *ʿl-ʿabdi biddha tnazzilni | w-tirčab mōzāʿi!*⁵⁷ ||
 34 *čān kālāt ʿl-ha*: | *ʿsūki*, | *ya ʿabdi | yā turṭamaniyyi*, | *sūki!*’ ||

Taqwa:

- 35 *šū turṭamaniyyi?* ||

Grandmother:

- 36 *sōda!*⁵⁸ ... || *ʿsūki*, | *yā ʿabde!* || *sūki bi-ha!*’ || *yiruddēn ʿl-ħarazāt*. ||
 37 *tayyib*. || *zallat timši, timši, timši | ta wuṣlīn*⁵⁹ *ha-l-ʿēn*. | *ṭāħin b²-ha-l-ʿēn* | *biddhin yukʿúdin*⁶⁰
 38 *yīšrāben*.⁶¹ || *tayyaħatha tišrab* | *kammⁿ*⁶² *ʿl-ħarazāt sakātin*⁶³ *b²-l-ʿēn*. || *tayyib*. ||

⁵⁴ Pausal form of *ʿabdi*, with lowering of the final *-i* to *-e*.

⁵⁵ Probably from an original form **inizli*, according to a pattern attested in the paradigms proposed for ʿArʿara by Zuʿbi (2021: 54–55). The helping vowel, realised in Bāḡa l-Ġarbiyye as a fully articulated short vowel, is stressed and the word-initial epenthetic vowel falls.

⁵⁶ The verb ‘to be’ in the 3rd person masculine singular form is used as a phrasal verbal construction, accompanying another inflected perfect form. Here it is not translated. The result of the entire construction is translatable as a preterite (Blau 1960: 121).

⁵⁷ Length persists in the first syllable despite the stress on the second, a fully articulated epenthetic vowel realised as *-a-* in an (emphatic and) pharyngeal environment. The final *-i*, originally a long enclitic 1st person singular possessive pronoun, is regularly shortened as it is found in an open, unstressed syllable. It receives a prosodic lengthening as it is found in a *pausa*.

⁵⁸ The informant seems unnerved by the interruption and probably embarrassed or surprised by the question. The final *-a* is prosodically lengthened.

⁵⁹ In chronological order, from **wúṣlīn* > *wúṣlīn* > *wuṣlīn* > *wuṣlīn*. Consistently with the phono-syntactic treatment of the help vowels as fully articulated short vowels in the variety presented here, the 3rd person feminine plural forms of the perfect are stressed on the penultimate syllable instead of the first one (Jastrow 2004: 171).

⁶⁰ Consistently with note 59, the 3rd person feminine plural forms of the imperfect are stressed on the penultimate syllable instead of the first one (Jastrow 2004: 171).

⁶¹ A pausal form, with lowering of the fully articulated help vowel (see notes 59 and 60).

⁶² Local form of the quantitative/temporal syntactic connector ‘until’ (see also line 44).

⁶³ See note 59 on the stress position.

- 39 *kāmat*⁶⁴ ʿa-ṭ-*tarik*, | *kālat* ʔl-*ha*: | ʿtaʿ-*āli*. | *tīhi*, | *dd*⁶⁵ *arčab muṭrāhič*.⁶⁶ ||
 40 *nādat* ʿala *immha*, | *raddēn*⁶⁷ ʔl-*ḥarazāt min* ʔl-ʿ*ēn*. || ʔā. | *raddat nādat* ʿala
immha, | *ab*ʿ*adin*
 41 ʿan ʔl-ʿ*ēn* | *baṭṭalat trudd* ʔl-*ḥarāze*⁶⁸ || ... *baṭṭalin* ʔl-*ḥarazāt yiruddēn*. || *kā-*
mat, | *masčatha* |
 42 *w-nazzalatha* ʿan ʔḡ-*ḡamal* | *w-rāḥat*. || *ḡābat* ʔš-*šḥār* | *w-šahḥaratha* | *w-hi*
rāḥat ʿala *ha-*
 43 *š-šīd*, | *tbayyazat*, || ʿ*imlat ḥālha bēza miṭl* aš-*šīd*, || *šwayy*⁶⁹ t ʔš-*šīd* | *w-bayyazat*
ḥālha |
 44 *w-ričbat hi* ʿa-ḡ-*ḡamal*. || *rūḥ ya yōm*, | *tā*⁷⁰ *ya yōm*⁶⁹, || *kamm*ⁿ *faw... futin*
 ʿa-*dār*...
 45 *fatin*⁷⁰ ʿa-*dār*... *amīr*. ||
 46 *wak*^t *ma fatin* ʿa-*dār* ʔl-*amīr*, | *kāmat haḏič*,⁷¹ | *šāfha bēza*, | *kām* ʿ*tḡawwa-*
zha.⁷² ||

Taqwa:

- 47 ʔl-ʿ*abdī*?⁷³ ||

⁶⁴ In this case, the verb *kām* may have an existential interpretation.

⁶⁵ The pseudoverb *bidd* ‘to want, to wish’ appears several times in this text, used with suffixed pronouns to express volitional or deontic functions (e.g. ‘to wish, to have to’). However, as suggested by one of the reviewers, *dd-* is in fact the shortened form of *widd*, i.e. the Bedouin version of the same word ‘to want, to wish’ (*bidd* is its sedentary version). Thus, the form *dd-* reveals the presence of a further Bedouin linguistic feature.

⁶⁶ The word is stressed on the penultimate syllable, consistently with the phonotactic rules of this variety.

⁶⁷ The *-ē-* is the local regular outcome for the perfect forms of the C2=C3 verbs.

⁶⁸ Pausal form for *ḥarāzi*.

⁶⁹ See note 115 for a comment on this expression and its translation.

⁷⁰ In this sentence, both *fatin* and *futin* appear. The two alternative forms of the 3rd person feminine plural perfect of *fāt* ‘to enter’ are representative of the behaviour of the category of the verbs with a second *w*. The form *futin* reflects the Old Arabic state of the art. According to a more recent development, *fatin* is the regular 3rd person feminine plural perfect and *futin* is the feminine plural imperative (Jastrow 2004: 173; see also Benmamoun [1995]) on the origin of the imperative forms in Arabic). The stem vowel resulting from the C2 *w/y* and the thematic vowel, originally long, is regularly shortened in the 3rd person feminine plural perfect form, as described by Jastrow (2004).

⁷¹ This (f.), the servant.

⁷² Here, the phrasal verb *kām* may express an *Aktionsart*, ‘immediately married her’.

⁷³ Strong prosodic lengthening and rising in questions characterises the speech of Taqwa and her generation.

Grandmother:

- 48 ʾā! || tğawwaz ʾl-ʿabde! || hassa | wak^{it} ma tğawwazha | kāmāt haḏiĉ,⁷⁴ |
 49 rāḥ, | ḥatt ʾl-ha wazz, w-ʾğmāl, w-dinya... | w-rāḥ ḥatt ʾl-ha | w-šārat tir^{ʿa}
 taḥ^{at} šağara. ||
 50 hassa | taḥt ha-š-šağara | naşbat ʾğ-ğorbaḥiyye,⁷⁵ || w-šārat titğarbaḥ. | w-hī
 titğarbaḥ...
 51 šu tşir tkūl...?⁷⁶ ||
 52 ʿya ṭyūrīn tāyre⁷⁷ || ya wuḥūşīn dāyre⁷⁸ || sallūmin⁷⁹ ʿa-immi w-ʿa-abūy. | w-kū-
 lu: |
 53 ʾġbēni rā^{ʿyi}⁸⁰ || tir^{ʿa} wazz w-tir^{ʿa} nūk | w-tkayyil tiḥt ʾd-dālyi.⁸¹ || ĉun⁸² ġīn⁸³
 ha-l-wazzāt
 54 w-ha...nūk...⁸⁴ ha-ğ-ğmāl.’ ||

⁷⁴ The verb *kām* may have an existential sense here.

⁷⁵ Interestingly, the verb *naşab* means ‘to stand, to stand up, to rise’ (Seeger 2022: 1010), and the word *ğorbaḥiyye* is related to the action of pulling oneself up, *tğarbaḥ* ‘sich hochziehen’ (Seeger 2022: 148). I interpret this word as ‘(song of) consolation’.

⁷⁶ The phrasal verb *şār* can be interpreted here as an inchoative *Aktionsart* or not be translated (Blau 1960: 121).

⁷⁷ The feminine ending *-i* is lowered to *-e* due to the effect of the *pausa*.

⁷⁸ The plural nouns *ṭyūrīn* and *wuḥūşīn* both end with a final *-in*. The *-in* syllable is short and not accented, the stress is clearly audible on the *-ū-* in both words. The final *-in* seems thus not connected with the plural ending *-īn*, but rather reminiscent of a nunated form. In Bedouin dialects, ‘*tanwīn* residues’ in the form of *-in* occur often, especially in poetry (Cerqueglini 2022d).

⁷⁹ Jastrow (2004: 173) comments on this form that it represents the preservation of an Old Arabic feature. Interestingly, the animals are addressed in the feminine plural form consistently throughout the tale.

⁸⁰ The pausal lowering is prevented by the presence of the *y* consonant before the feminine ending, as in *dālyi* (line 53).

⁸¹ The pausal lowering is prevented by the presence of the *y* consonant before the feminine ending, as in *rāʿyi* (line 53), with which the word rhymes.

⁸² As one of the reviewers suggested, the form *ĉun* for the 3rd person masculine singular imperfect has been explained for Bedouin and Bedouinised Galilean varieties as derived from the imperfective **y(i)kūn* > *y(i)ĉūn* by apheresis and has influenced **kān* > *ĉān* at a later stage. Indeed, in Bedouin dialects **k* > *ĉ* seems to have occurred first near front vowels, and later mixed in all vocalic environments. The text here shows *ĉun* (with a short *-u-*) in a syntactic context where a phrasal perfective form is required (*ĉān*). In fact, *ĉun* instead of *ĉān* is frequently found in the traditional Muṭallaṭ varieties, especially in phrasal constructions. The *-ū-* > *-u-* shortening may be due to prosodic reasons, i.e. the phrasal verb and the following conjugated verb are pronounced as one stress unit.

⁸³ The form *ġīn* is the local 3rd person feminine plural perfect form from *ğā* ‘to come’.

⁸⁴ This hesitation shows that the word *ğmāl* is preferred over *nūk*, typically Bedouin, outside the metrical and traditional constraints of the refrain.

- 55 yuk'údin bhaddha | w-iṣṣīn⁸⁵ yi'ayyīṭin ma'áha. || w-hī t'ayyīṭ. | ka'dat t'ayy-
iṭ hī wiyyāhin. ||
- 56 ṣarin⁸⁶ ha-ġ-ġamal w-ha-l-wazzāt | kull ma akálin⁸⁷ | yiṣ'áfen⁸⁸ || kull ma aká-
lin | yiṣ'áfen, ||
- 57 kull ma akálin | yiṣ'áfen... ||
- 58 kāl yōm: | 'bididi arūḥ ašūf | šu⁸⁹ bti'mal⁹⁰ hāy b-ha-l-wazz w-b-ha-ġ-ġamal. ||
- 59 lēš hēč byiṣ'áfen' ||
- 60 rāḥ | tḥabba fōk ʔš-šaḡara lli btiṭḡarbaḥ⁹¹ 'alēha. ||
- 61 kāmat taḥ'at 'al-ha-l-'ēn | w-hī ġbēne 'simha || willa hī | šu ma kallīc illa kur^us⁹²
ḡbin || bēza bēza ||
- 62 lībsat awa'īha, | w-raddat riḡ'at | w-ka'adat titḡarbaḥ. || ma ka'adat titḡarbaḥ,
|
- 63 šarat tkūl: | 'ya tyūrīn tāyre || ya wuḥūšīn dāyre || sallīmīn 'a-immi w-'a-abūy.
| w-kūlu
- 64 'ġbēni rā'yi, || tīr'a wazz w-tīr'a nūk | w-tkayyil tīḥt ʔd-dālyi.' ||

⁸⁵ The personal prefix *yi-* is simplified to *i-*.

⁸⁶ In this case, the verbal form from a C2 = *w* root shows a shortened stem vowel *-a-*. The meaning of this phrasal verb can be interpreted as inchoative: 'the animals started to become weak, no matter what they ate'.

⁸⁷ 'Whatever they ate', 'no matter what they ate'. The verbal form resembles the one shown in the paradigms proposed by Zu'bi (2021: 333) for the hamzated verbs in the 'Ar'ara variety. Yet according to Zu'bi's transcription, the epenthetic *-i-* vowel is not realised in 'Ar'ara as a fully articulated short vowel, implying that the stress rules are different there than in the variety of Bāḡa l-Ġarbiyye analysed here.

⁸⁸ The fully articulated epenthetic vowel *-i-* in the last syllable is clearly lowered to *-e-*, probably due to the effect of the *pausa*. This behaviour contradicts the cases of the pausal forms *binīt* and *ḡbin*, where the epenthetic vowel becomes fully articulated as a short vowel and is not lowered. It seems to me that the verbal forms represent an older wave of full articulation of epenthetic vowels, integrated as such in the system and thus lowered in *pausa*. The epenthetic vowels in the nominal forms are very short inside prosodic units and lengthened only in *pausa*, so their pausal forms are not (yet) integrated into the morphology as the basic forms are, and therefore they are not lowered. This preliminary (not conclusive) modelling of subsequent diachronic changes in the articulation of the epenthesis entails the hypothesis that the fully articulated *-in* of the feminine plural verbal form represented the original pausal form for *-in*. Furthermore, pronominal morphology can undergo cross-class influence. Regarding the 3rd person feminine plural enclitic pronoun after preposition, for example, Zu'bi (2021: 326) reports for 'Ar'ara *'alēhin* > *'alēhen* ||. The pausal form could have spread from enclitic pronouns to verbal subject-suffixes. More comparative research should be conducted on this topic.

⁸⁹ The interrogative pronoun is pronounced shortly.

⁹⁰ This is one of the few *b-* imperfective forms used in the text. Two *b-* imperfective forms are used in this direct speech, clearly representing the marking strategy for the present tense.

⁹¹ This is another example of *b-* imperfective form, in this case marking a repeated action such as 'she used to find comfort'.

⁹² In this word, the epenthetic vowel is adapted to the stem vowel by vowel harmony.

- 65 *ka'ádin b-ħaddha ha-l-wazzāt, w-ha-ğ-ğamal | w-šarin yinhúkin. ||*
 66 *hassa | rāh 'ala dārhum, | saħab ħālo | w-rāh l-ammu w-kāl-lha: ||*
 67 *'akullič | hassa ruddi mayyi | w-biddič tħammami mar'ati, |*
 68 *biddič tħammamihin 'a-tintēn.' ||*
 69 *kālat 'l-ha: | 'ta'āli, | ta'āli biddi aħammamič.⁹³ ||*
 70 *kālat 'l-ha: | 'lā?! || biddiš tħammimīni, | ya mart 'ammi! || hassa 'tħám-
 mam't.⁹⁴ ||*
 71 *kālat 'l-ha: | 'lā?! || kāl-li ġōzič | 'ħammimīha?! || ana biddi aħammimič. ||*
 72 *kāl: | 'law ma raddatiš 'tħammimīha, | hassa bakta' rāsič!' || 'tħammami!' ||*
 73 *ma dārat 'aliha šwayyit ha-l-mayyi, | willa hī kālbi sōda sōda. || šāyfe:? ||*

Taqwa:

74 *hmm...*

Grandmother:

- 75 *ṭayyib. || ħaṭṭat-ha 'a-ğānəb. || ġābat hadič | 'ğbēne l-... 'a-s-siħ. || ħaṭṭat
 'alēha l-m'ayye. ||*
 76 *min awwal ma ħaṭṭat 'aliha⁹⁵ šwayyit⁹⁶ ha-l-m'ayyi | ma akallič | illa kalbat
 mi't⁹⁷ kur's*
 77 *ğibin. || bēza. || kāl-ha: | 'enti, lēš enti 'āmlī hēča b-ħālič?' ||*
 78 *kālat lo:⁹⁷ || 'hiyya,⁹⁸ | 'l-'abdi, | 'imlat biyyi hēč! || hī 'imlat biyyē.⁹⁹ ||*
 79 *dārat 'alay ana šħār | w-hī dārat 'a-ħāl-ha šīd. || w-šū ana biddi a'mal?¹⁰⁰ ||*
 80 *kāl-ha: | 'ħalaš!' || ħaṭṭi¹⁰¹ | masač 'l-'abdi | w-ħarākha.¹⁰² ||*

⁹³ Deontic use of *bidd-*. See note 121.

⁹⁴ The *pausa* seems not to have any effect on the regular, very short realisation of the epenthetic vowel or the stress.

⁹⁵ The form *'alēha* is the regular one, yet in this case *'aliha* appears.

⁹⁶ After *-y-* the articulation of the epenthetic vowel is *-i-*.

⁹⁷ The enclitic *-u* pronoun of the 3rd person masculine singular (see line 66) is lowered to *-o* by effect of the *pausa*.

⁹⁸ Long form of the 3rd person singular feminine independent pronoun, used in alternation with the basic form *hī*. In this context, the use of the long form could mark a 'presentative' intention, translatable as 'it was her'. The final *-a* could go back to a predicative accusative, cross-linguistically widespread for presentative pronouns, as in English 'it was *me, her, them*' or Florentine Italian '*Te tu se' grullo!*' ('The crazy one is you!').

⁹⁹ In this line, it is possible to see the internal and the pausal form of *biyyi* 'to me'.

¹⁰⁰ Deontic use of *bidd-*.

¹⁰¹ Here the verb 'to put' seems to have a phrasal function, which could be ingressive/inchoative, and is nonetheless translatable, in my opinion, with the adverb 'immediately' rather than 'he started ...'

¹⁰² The vowel is stressed because of the suffixed pronoun.

Taqwa:

81 *ħar^akhá:ʔ*¹⁰³

Grandmother:

82 *w^ʔlla*¹⁰⁴ | ... *masačha* | *kaṭa^c rāsha* | *w-ramāha*, | *w-tğawwaz ʔğbēne* ||

83 *w-kālha* | ‘*wīn ahlič?*’ || *dallatu ‘ala ahīlha*. || *rāħ*, | *raččabha* | *w-rāħ* |

84 *hū w-iyyāha ‘ind ahīlha*. ||

85 *likyat...* | *liki immha w-abūha w-l-‘imme*. | *min čuṭur ma humme*¹⁰⁵ *m‘ayṭīn*
‘aliha |

86 *ma humme ma‘lumīn-š*¹⁰⁶ *innha ġbēne*. ||

Taqwa:

87 *tāb...* | *ma aħaḍūha ‘a-l-‘irš...* | *muš...* *ma rağğ‘ūs...* ||

Grandmother:

88 *ma rağğ‘ūs ‘alēhen*.¹⁰⁷ || *ma aħaḍūha ‘a-l-‘irš...* || *raħin...* ‘*ind ʔl-amīr*
| *w-ḡallēn ‘ind ʔl-amīr*.¹⁰⁸ ||

Taqwa:

89 *ṭayyib*

Grandmother:

90 *min waktīn ʔl-‘abdi ma ġawwazat ʔl-amīr...* | *biddha tirğa^c ‘a-l-fārde*.¹⁰⁹ ||

Taqwa:

91 *ṭayyib*

¹⁰³The rising intonation and the lengthening correlate with surprise and questions in the koineised variety of the youth, especially among young women.

¹⁰⁴The final -a is prosodically lengthened.

¹⁰⁵Zu‘bi (2021: 335) reports *hummi* in ‘Ar‘ara, while Jastrow (2004) reports both *hum* and *hummi* as alternative forms.

¹⁰⁶The original -ū- is shortened because in the negative construction it ends in an open syllable and loses its stress.

¹⁰⁷The form ‘*alēhin* is found here in its pausal form ‘*alēhen*, with lowering of the last vowel. Zu‘bi (2021: 326) reports the same pausal form in ‘Ar‘ara.

¹⁰⁸Ġbēne and the slave had remained at the *amīr*’s place since they arrived there on their way to the *fārde*. Ġbēne was already living in the groom’s house when the wedding was organised.

¹⁰⁹Ġbēne is the subject of this sentence, whose sense is difficult to interpret in relation to the plot.

Grandmother:

92 *rawwaḥat*. || *likyat immha w-abūha byišufūs*¹¹⁰ ||

93 *massaḥat hēč* ‘inēn | *immha kāmāt fattaḥat* | *massaḥat* ‘inēn | *w-abūha fattaḥ*
| *w-^əl-amīr aḥad*

94 *immha w-abūha* | *w-rāḥ ka^{ca}dhum*¹¹¹ ‘indo.¹¹² ||

95 *w-hāy ḥurraḥṭi*¹¹³ || *w-^{ca}alēč ^əbdālha*. ||

8.2 Translation

The translation is as close as possible to the original. Since the story is well known and the grandmother has certainly told it many times, often the subjects are implied, and the listener must deduce them from the context of the narration. In these cases, additions have not been made in the body of the translation but in footnotes.

Taqwa:

- 1 Hello, grandmother. How are you? Do you remember the story of Ġbēne that you told me
- 2 when I was small? Now tell it to me once again!

Grandmother:

- 3 I told you when you were small. Now you are grown old ...

Taqwa:

- 4 All right, grandmother. Tell it to me once again, as I have to complete an assignment.

Grandmother:

- 5 There was this woman who had no children. One day she found heaven’s direction open, and so she said:
- 6 ‘Oh God! Give me a daughter! Like a piece of cheese!’
- 7 The woman finished talking, our Lord heard her, and she got pregnant. She gave birth to a daughter like a piece of cheese.
- 8 Now, the daughter grew up, and they invited her to a wedding party, to which the girl wanted to go.
- 9 She went to her mother and told to her:

¹¹⁰The stress is on the last syllable, as described by Jastrow (2004: 174).

¹¹¹The phrasal verb *rāḥ* can express intentionality and future action. In this case it seems to retain its original meaning ‘to go’.

¹¹²Pausal form of ‘*indu*’.

¹¹³The stress is clearly audible on the penultimate syllable.

- 10 ‘Oh Ğbēne’s mother! Let Ğbēne go with us to the *fārde*!’
 11 She said to her, ‘Go ask her father!’
 12 ‘Oh Ğbēne’s father! Let Ğbēne go with us to the *fārde*!’
 13 He said, ‘Ask her grandfather!’
 14 ‘Oh Ğbēne’s grandfather! Let Ğbēne go with us to the *fārde*!’
 15 He said, ‘Ask her grandmother!’
 16 ‘Oh Ğbēne’s grandmother! Let Ğbēne go with us to the *fārde*!’
 17 ‘Ask her maternal uncle!’
 18 ‘Oh Ğbēne’s maternal uncle! Let Ğbēne go with us to the *fārde*!’
 19 ‘Ask her paternal uncle!’
 20 ‘Oh Ğbēne’s paternal uncle! Let Ğbēne go with us to the *fārde*!’
 21 ‘Ask her maternal aunt!’
 22 ‘Oh Ğbēne’s maternal aunt! Let Ğbēne go with us to the *fārde*!’
 23 ‘Ask her paternal aunt!’
 24 ‘Oh Ğbēne’s paternal aunt! Let Ğbēne go with us to the *fārde*!’
 25 And so Ğbēne set off with her to the *fārde*.

Taqwa:

- 26 They asked the entire family?

Grandmother:

- 27 Yes! All her family. So she went with her ... with them to the *fārde*. They put her on the camel
 28 and her mother put pearls in her harness. Do you see? She put ... Those pearls could speak.

Taqwa:

- 29 How come they could speak?

Grandmother:

- 30 They could speak, just like that. If someone would try to kill her and she cried to her mother, her mother could talk back to her. She put them
 31 in her harness, her mother, pearls. Well. She went. The servant started to pull
 32 the camel. She says to her, ‘Get down! Get down! Now it is my turn to ride.’
 33 And she said, ‘Ah, mother, ah! The servant wants to get me off the camel and ride in my place!’
 34 And she told to her: ‘Drive, o slave, o *ṭurṭamaniyyi*, drive!’

Taqwa:

- 35 What is *ṭurṭamaniyyi*?

Grandmother:

- 36 Black! 'Drive, o servant, drive her!' echoed the pearls.
 37 Well. She kept going, going, going, until they reached the spring. They
 went down to the spring, in order to sit
 38 and drink. She made her lower, until the pearls sank into the water. Well.
 39 She went back to the path, she told her, 'Come, get down. I want to ride
 in your place.'
 40 She called her mother, the pearls replied from inside the spring. Yes. She
 called her mother again, as they went far
 41 from the spring, the pearls stopped replying ... stopped the pearls reply-
 ing. She¹¹⁴ immediately took her
 42 and got her down [from] the camel, and went to bring some coal, and she
 blackened her. Then she went to the
 43 lime and made herself white. She made herself white like the lime, just
 a bit of lime and made herself white.
 44 And she rode the camel. So on and on,¹¹⁵ until ent ... entered the house ...
 45 entered the house ... of an *amīr*.
 46 Just as they entered the house of the *amīr*, this (f.) stood up, he saw her
 white, and immediately married her.

Taqwa:

- 47 The servant?

Grandmother:

- 48 Yes! He married the servant. Now, when he married her, this (f.) was
 there,
 49 he set off to give her [a] herd, camels, and land, he set off to give her
 (these) and she started grazing [them] under a tree.
 50 Now, under the tree a song of consolation arose, and she started to cheer
 up ... and she cheered up.
 51 What did she start saying ...?
 52 'O flying birds, o wandering beasts! Greet my mother and my father and
 say:
 53 'Ġbēne is a shepherdess. She grazes sheep and grazes camels and lies
 down under a vine.' The sheep

¹¹⁴The servant gets Ġbēne down from the camel.

¹¹⁵The Arabic *rūḥ ya yōm, ṭā' ya yōm* means 'go one day, reach another day', with two imperative masculine singular forms. This construction is similar, for instance, to the Italian expression: *E cammina cammina...* (lit. 'and go, go ...', i.e. 'going on and on ...') characteristic of the language of folk tales. Such use of the imperative can be described as an expression of the narrative imperative noted by Henkin (1994) in the traditional Negev Bedouin narrative style.

- 54 and the camels ... The camels came around,
 55 sat next to her and started crying with her. And she cried. She kept crying,
 she and them.
 56 The camels and the sheep started losing weight, no matter what they ate.
 Whatever they ate, they lost weight.
 57 Whatever they ate, they lost weight.
 58 One day he said: 'I want to go and see what she does to the sheep and the
 camels.
 59 Why are they losing weight like that?'
 60 He went to hide in the tree from which she found consolation.
 61 She was there under ... at the spring. And her name was Ğbēne. And she
 was indeed no less than very white.¹¹⁶
 62 She put on her clothes, went back again, and sat cheering up. And she sat
 cheering up.¹¹⁷ As soon as she sat cheering up,
 63 she started saying: 'O flying birds, o wandering beasts! Greet my mother
 and my father and say:
 64 'Ğbēne is a shepherdess. She grazes sheep and grazes camels and lies
 down under a vine.'
 65 The sheep and the camels sat beside her and started braying.¹¹⁸
 66 Now¹¹⁹ he went to their home, followed his decision, and went to his
 mother and told her:
 67 'I tell you, bring some water now. I want you to wash my wife.
 68 I want you to wash both of them.'
 69 She told to her¹²⁰: 'Come. Come as I will wash you.'¹²¹

¹¹⁶*ma akallič*, lit. 'no less than you (f.)'. This expression is repeated in the bath scene. It is simply translatable as 'no other than', omitting the enclitic personal pronoun. In any case, the presence of the enclitic II feminine singular pronoun symbolically explicates the ideal relationship between the character of the tale and the girls to which the tale is addressed, revealing the ethical messages hidden in the story.

¹¹⁷Repetitions are frequent in the narrative style of this informant. They represent repetition or extended duration of an action.

¹¹⁸'To bray', usually attributed to donkeys, is the actual translation of the Arabic verb (See-ger 2022: 1036).

¹¹⁹The temporal adverb *hassa* 'now' is used as a discourse marker. In this case, it is used to signal a scene change in the narrative sequence.

¹²⁰The *amīr*'s mother speaks to the servant.

¹²¹'I will wash you' is a compromise translation. The generally accepted English translation of *biddi* is 'I want', lit. 'my will (is)'. Nonetheless, in this and other cases in this text, *bidd-* does not express a personal wish, but a more generic intentionality, variously interpretable either as a future action that will take place shortly or, even better, as a deontic expression, i.e. 'I have to', 'I should'). Another example of deontic use of *biddi* is found in line 79.

- 70 She told her:¹²² ‘No! I do not want you to wash me, o wife of my paternal uncle!¹²³ I just washed.’
- 71 She told her: ‘No! Your husband told me: ‘Wash her!’ I will wash you.
- 72 He told: ‘If she does not want you to wash her, here I cut your head. Wash!’
- 73 As soon as she poured some water on her, she turned truly very black. Do you see?

Taqwa:

- 74 Hmm ...

Grandmother:

- 75 Well. She put her aside. She brought this, Ğbēne, to the water tank. She put water on her.
- 76 From the very moment she poured a bit of water on her, she turned out just like a piece
- 77 of cheese. White. He told her: ‘Why did you do this to yourself?’
- 78 She told him: ‘She, the servant, did this to me. She did to me!’
- 79 She sprinkled me with coal, while she sprinkled herself with lime. What should I have done?’
- 80 He said to her: ‘That’s it!’ He took the servant and burnt her.

Taqwa:

- 81 He burnt her?

Grandmother:

- 82 Of course! He took, cut her head [off] and threw it away and married Ğbēne.
- 83 And he told her: ‘Where is your family?’ She directed him toward her family. He went. He put her on horseback and went
- 84 he and her to her family.
- 85 She found ... He found her mother and her father and the maternal aunt. Because of their great crying for her,
- 86 they could not recognize that she was Ğbēne.

Taqwa:

- 87 well ... What is the reason they took her to the marriage? They did not ... They did not come back ...

¹²²The servant replies to the *amīr*’s mother.

¹²³As in traditional Arab Bedouin societies, couples are created from paternal cousins, the wife of the paternal uncle coincides with the mother-in-law.

Grandmother:

88 They did not come back to them. They did not take her to the wedding party. They (f.) went to the *amīr* and stayed at the *amīr*'s place.

Taqwa:

89 OK.

Grandmother:

90 Since the servant married the *amīr*, she wanted to go back to the *fārde*.

Taqwa:

91 OK.

Grandmother:

92 She went back home. She met ... Her mother and her father could not see
 93 she wiped her eyes, so her mother stood up, opened and wiped her eyes
 and her father opened (his eyes) and the *amīr* took
 94 her mother and her father and went to set them up at his place.
 95 And that was my tale, and now it is your turn to reciprocate.

9 Further linguistic observations and conclusions

To the best of my knowledge, this is one of the very few texts transliterated from the original traditional Muṭallaṭ Arabic, especially from Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye. The informant narrated the tale, once learned by heart down to the smallest details, even in terms of vocabulary and intonation, as if each element had a value to be handed down. At some points, the narration accelerates and becomes elliptical—subjects are not explicated and it is necessary to understand from the context who is doing what—precisely because the story was well known and preserved in everyone's memory.

The transliteration and translation of this text has allowed me to systematically analyse the functioning of some linguistic features described by Jastrow (2004), Cerqueglini (2021; 2022a; 2022b), Zelinkov (2014), and Zu'bi (2021) regarding the Muṭallaṭ dialects in general and the variety spoken in Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye in particular, in comparison with other, typologically and/or geographically related, dialectal types. With reference to the preliminary observations set forth in section 6, some preliminary conclusions can now be drawn regarding the dialect of Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye, although obviously a more extensive corpus is needed for a definitive description of this dialectal variety. Concerning the phonological aspects (sections 6.1 and 6.2), here it can only be said that the pronunciation of */q/ is systematically non-emphatic, while the pronunciation of */k/ is systematically affricate, with few exceptions listed in the notes. Further observations

and hypotheses should be proven by a broad survey that includes the dialects of Muṭallaṭ and the surrounding areas, through which it is possible to reconstruct the diachronic phases of the development of the phonetic and phonological system of Muṭallaṭ Arabic.

Concerning the final *imāla* of the feminine singular nominal morpheme (section 6.3), we can conclude that it undergoes a lowering in pause from the regular form /-i/ to [-e]. In the text reported here, there is no evidence of the ‘*midrasa* vs. *m‘allimi*’ pattern mentioned by Cerqueglini (2022a). However, an examination of a larger corpus reveals traces of it. This is not surprising. The final *imāla* originally characterised Bedouin dialects and then came to characterise rural dialects that assimilated and sometimes reinterpreted, Bedouin features. As observed regarding the affrication of */k/, the absorption of the Bedouin rules is not complete, and it is often re-analyzed, and traces of rural sedentary systems prior to Bedouinisation are still present to different extents across the different Muṭallaṭ varieties from north to south. An extensive analysis of these forms and their importance for the reconstruction of the diachronic developments that occurred in this linguistic region is not possible in this paper and will be undertaken in future studies.

Regarding epenthetic vowels (section 6.4), their distribution appears very clearly in this text. The help vowel is generally realised as a very short schwa [ə] and often appears in dental/frontal consonantal environments as [ɪ], while close to pharyngeal sounds /ʕ/ and /ħ/ the epenthetic vowel rather sounds [a]. Phonologically, epenthesis in this variety may stretch back to an original /i/ whose described realisations represent allophones. Epenthetic vowels can undergo processes related to word-internal vowel harmony, which is particularly evident in the proximity of a /u/ vowel.

It is worth emphasising that in many cases help vowels are treated as fully articulated short vowels (examples are detailed in the footnotes) and are often stressed, and therefore their presence impacts morphophonology. Nonetheless, not all epenthetic vowels are treated as fully articulated short vowels. From a relative chronological perspective, this may mean that the epenthetic vowels date back to different times, and some have undergone adaptations while others have not. A more specific exploration of this topic is needed.

Interestingly, epenthetic vowels undergo processes of lengthening in *pausa*, in general from [ə] to the fully articulated short [i]. Extra lengthening and lowering can be heard in cases of emphasised *pausas* to [é:]. Emphasised *pausas* can be produced because of emotional load, as in the case of the word [*binét* ||] that appears in the title of this article. The 3rd person singular masculine enclitic pronoun (section 6.5) is pronounced [u] within prosodic units and lowered to [o] in *pausa*.

The analysis of this text has yielded consistent data for the TMA variety spoken in Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye regarding the pausal forms of the nominal feminine sin-

gular marker, epenthetic vowels, and the 3rd person singular masculine enclitic pronoun. In all these cases, pausal forms productively oppose prosodic unit-internal basic forms.

In the cases of the nominal feminine singular marker and the 3rd person singular masculine enclitic pronoun, pausal forms are achieved by lowering the point of articulation of the vowel (/i/ > [e]; /u/ > [o]). This process brings to mind the findings of Shachmon and Faust (2017) on pausal forms in Galilean Arabic varieties.

As regards the epenthetic vowels, they are realised in pause as fully articulated short vowels and, depending on the type of intonation and on the emphasis of the expression, can also undergo lengthening and be stressed.

Furthermore, as Jastrow (2004) noted, long vowels in open unstressed syllables are regularly shortened, while they remain long in closed syllables. The same is true for long vowels in final word position (Farwaneh 2016). Therefore, in the expression ‘O God! Give me a daughter’, which also appears in the title of this article, the word ‘my God’ has a short final vowel (*rabbī*). The original enclitic long *-ī*—the possessive morpheme of the 1st singular person—has been shortened in an open unstressed syllable. Nonetheless, the same word appears in *pausa*, and so the vowel is prosodically lengthened. Furthermore, due to the rising pitch of the intonation, the final vowel is perceived as stressed. Therefore, I used the notation *raḅḅī: ||* ‘my God!’.

Another interesting aspect of this text is the abundance of phrasal verbs that contribute to giving aspectual nuances to the actions. However, as specified for the individual cases in the footnotes, it is not always possible to definitively determine whether the verb has preserved its original meaning or has been grammaticalized as an aspectual marker, as there are no evident morphological cues.


A final linguistic note must be devoted to the use of feminine verbs and pronouns in reference to the animals that frame the scenes of Ğbēne’s lament. The choice of the feminine grammatical gender could simply be due to the particular non-human, collective status of the animals in question. In any case, in the first part of line 88 of the text, *ma raḡḡ‘ūs ‘alēhen*, lit. ‘they (m.) did not go back to them (f.)’, the choice of the feminine plural enclitic pronoun is not clear to me. It may represent an occurrence of the use of *-hin* (*-hen* in *pausa*) for a masculine referent (i.e. Ğbēne and the *amīr*). We know from Procházka (2021) and Behnstedt and Geva-Kleinberger (2019: maps 89, 127–129) that the dialects of the nearby Hūla Valley possess no gender distinction in the plural with verbs or pronouns. The dialects of the Jezreel Plain have feminine plural forms, consistently used with verbs, but not always with pronouns. At least in the 3rd person, the speakers in some villages (for instance, Na‘ūra, Qūmye, Ṭamra, and Dabbūrye) do not distinguish between feminine and masculine plural pronouns and use either *-hum* and *-hin* as free variants or *-hin* for both genders. The hypothesis is seductive, yet this ambiguous example is not sufficient to support it, and a larger

corpus should be examined for Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye. In fact, even though the Ḥūla and Jezreel valleys are geographically close, they show many aspects of difference from the central Muṭallaṭ area. Differences are found even between Bāḳa l-Ġarbiyye and ʿArʿara, as the comparative observations sketched in the footnotes that accompany the transcription and translation of the text examined here demonstrate.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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