

REVIEWS

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SERGIO BALDI. 2008. *Dictionnaire des emprunts arabes dans les langues de l'Afrique de l'Ouest et en swahili*. Paris: Éditions Karthala, 617 pp.

Arab influence in Africa has been present since the conquest of Egypt in the 7th century. Since then the Arabic language has continued to spread and have an impact on a number of African languages. The book under review, which is a crowning achievement of the author's extensive investigations published in numerous articles, is the first comprehensive account of this influence of this type. In this valuable dictionary, the author lists words in around 130 languages of West Africa plus the most important East African language, Swahili, that have been borrowed from Arabic and traces them back to their etyma. Here, the term 'Arabic' refers to both Classical Arabic and Arabic dialects (Nigerian, Chado-Sudanese, and the Ḥassāniyya), although the etyma representing the latter category are by far less numerous.

As the author assures in the introduction (p. 13), the Arabic etymology for languages which he has investigated by himself provide "a certain degree of certainty". As for other authors' works he consulted, he has preferred to rely on experience rather than on their indications. However, he has decided to be "assez large" and to include even words the etymology of which is dubious. These are indicated by question marks. The author says he has not followed manifestly erroneous views and, in addition, pointed out some errors.

The book is composed of an introduction with a list of the examined languages accompanied by the abbreviations of works consulted for each language (pp. 9–14), an independent list of abbreviations (pp. 15–17) – thus every abbreviation can be conveniently found in two places – a bibliography (pp. 19–34), and the dictionary (pp. 35–522) with addenda (pp. 522–527). The addenda are followed by three indices: an index of Arabic words (pp. 529–558) arranged according to the alphabetical order of the Latin letters (which makes it easier for a non-specialist to use the dictionary), an index of the French keywords (pp. 559–613), and a (short) index of the Latin scientific names of plants and animals (p. 615).

The organization of the essential part of the book, i.e. the dictionary, is very clear. It is organized as a list of Arabic entry words written in Latin transliteration arranged according to the order of the Arabic roots (therefore *abadī* 'eternal' is followed by *ibra* 'needle'¹) – such a root-based order is the best solution in dictionaries of this kind. Original transliteration used in the sources consulted is retained. Entries are numbered for ease of reference. Each entry begins with the Arabic etymon, sometimes in more than one version, which may be, for instance, a Classical Arabic and a dialect word, two synonyms, or two different parts of speech. The Arabic etyma are followed by their French translations and the source abbre-

¹ In this review, I give translations of Classical Arabic words in English (following Wehr's dictionary). In all other cases I retain the author's French translations.

viation. Then, the African languages and, frequently, their different dialects are listed in the alphabetical order followed by the source indication. Finally, the loanword and its French translation are given. In some cases information concerning an intermediary language is provided in brackets.

There are 3034 entries with Arabic etyma to which loanwords in around 130 languages of Western Africa and Swahili are traced back. The loanwords are predominantly nouns although other parts of speech, even particles, do occur as well. There are many borrowings related to Islam, for instance *baraka* ‘blessing’ (211) has been borrowed to 45 languages and *ṣadaqa* ‘alms’ (1571) to 51 languages. There are, however, also non-religious domains of life affected by Arabic influence, which can be exemplified by words borrowed from Arabic *dunyā* ‘world, life’, *‘āfiya* ‘(good) health’ (1894), the names of the days of the week, words of politeness, e.g. from *ḡafr* ‘pardon’ (2027), and many others.

The addenda contain words that other authors have believed to be of Arabic origin but in Baldi’s view are not. Here one can find, on one hand, Arabic words that other authors believed to be the sources of borrowings in African languages but in reality they are not because these borrowings are taken from a different etymon in another language. This concerns, for instance, the words for ‘camel’ in Wolof, *gēléem*, and in Kanuri, *kalímo*, which have been borrowed from Berber *l-γ-m* (pp. 524–525). On the other hand, the addenda contain Arabic words that are themselves borrowings from an African language, e.g. *ašana* ‘alumette’ in Nigerian Arabic, from Yoruba via Hausa (p. 522), or *ḡugarnam* ‘plaies syphilitiques’ in Chado-Sudanese Arabic (p. 524), which, as one reads, is borrowed from a Kanuri word and not the other way round. It may be observed that almost all Arabic words listed in the addenda are dialectal.

One of the many laudable aspects of Baldi’s dictionary is that, insofar space allows, it provides the reader with some linguistic explanations concerning the changes that have affected a word in the borrowing process. For instance, it is explained in the introduction that the reason for the presence of the prefixes *k-* in some Kanuri borrowings from Arabic lies in the Kanuri grammar. For instance, Kanuri *kənásar* ‘victoire’ comes from Arabic *naṣr* ‘victory’ (pp. 13–14). Other explanations are scattered throughout the dictionary, where they can be found at the relevant entries. For instance, when one learns from entry 1335 that the Arabic noun *salm* ‘peace’ has been borrowed into Wolof as a verb *sēlmal* ‘clore la partie rituelle de la prière musulmane’, an explanation is given that “Le *-al* final en wolof est un morphème verbal d’actif-causatif” (p. 252).

There are also some useful remarks concerning phonetics, for instance, on metathesis in borrowings from Arabic *lauḥ*, *lauḥa* ‘board’ (2567), cf. Bambara *wàlaha*, *wàlan* ‘planchette des élèves des écoles coraniques’ or Yoruba *wàlää* ‘ardoise musulmane’, among many others. Interesting formal modifications have affected the Arabic word *kafan* ‘shroud’ (2455) in the process of borrowing. Namely, a change of [f] into [s] has taken place, e.g. in Fulfulde *kasaanke* and Mandingo *kasaŋge* (p. 434). Such a change of a fricative into another, the author says, may also be encountered in other words, for instance in some borrowings from Arabic *ṣābūn* ‘soap’ (Here, however, [s] has changed into [f], which means that the direction is opposite). This change of [f] into [s] permits the seemingly unrelated Bobo (bɔbɔ) word *sāngē* ‘habiller un défunt’ to be linked to Arabic *kafan*. According to Prost quoted by the author, *sāngē* has originated after the initial syllable *ka-* has been interpreted as a “particule

de liaison” (*ka-sanke* “pour ensevelir”) and left out. All these examples show what a fascinating task tracing the fate of Arabic loanwords in African languages may be.

The author has also added some comments concerning semantic shifts between the etyma and the borrowings. For instance, in 853 he points to a semantic change of Arabic *kinzīr* ‘swine’, which has been borrowed into Buduma as *kinjer* and Kanuri as *kānzār* with the meaning ‘girafe’, supposedly because both the pig and the giraffe are animals whose meat is forbidden. One of the interesting shifts discussed by the author concerns entry 38: the Arabic word *mu’addib* ‘educator’ is listed here as the source of words in a number of West African languages, generally with the meaning ‘Muslim’, e.g. Bambara *mori* ‘marabout; musulman’ and Mandingo *mōri*, *mōru*, *mōdi* and *mōdu* ‘musulman’. The lexical distance between ‘educator’ and ‘Muslim’ is explained by the fact that the first Muslims to appear in this part of the world were people who knew how to read and write. The etymon *mu’addib* is preferred by the author to Arabic *murābiṭ* ‘Marabout’, due to phonetic considerations. Interestingly, in almost all borrowing languages a reduction of the final part of the word has taken place (the long form has been preserved in Fulfulde *moodibbo* ‘homme très savant, docteur en sciences coraniques’). Another case where the author’s choice is guided by phonetics concerns the etymon of Hausa *māsalahā* and *māsālahā* ‘réconciliation’ (1347). The author prefers to see it in Arabic *maslāh* ‘object of amusement; entertainment; consolation, comfort’ rather than in *muṣālaḥa* ‘peace, conciliation; compromise’, although the latter is semantically closer to the loanword than the former. However, he adds that in this case one may be dealing with a cross of both Arabic words.

All these comments are of great interest and one might wish there were more of them. There are, namely, cases that may not be obvious to some readers. For instance, the semantic relationship between Arabic *biḍā’a*, pl. *baḍā’i* ‘goods, merchandise’ (248) and the Songhay word *albaadia* ‘vendeur de lait’ may seem distant. However, in most cases establishing such a relationship between a loanword and its etymon may be left to the imagination of even a non-specialized reader (for instance, why Arabic *ṭabīb* ‘doctor, physician’ has been borrowed into some languages with the meaning ‘European’, ‘White’, or ‘French’).

One of the difficulties in making such a dictionary is determining by which ways a word has entered a language. In Baldi’s dictionary, relevant information is provided in some places after the French translation. A particularly interesting phenomenon are loanwords that had made a long way before establishing themselves in a West African language or Swahili. For instance, the word for ‘paper’, ‘letter’, or ‘book’ in many languages has its origin in Greek *χάρτης*, which via Latin *charta* entered Arabic as *qirṭās* and *qartas* (2270). Then, via Tamasheq *tākardē* ‘feuille (de papier); feuillet (d’un livre ou d’un cahier)’, it passed into other African languages, cf. Hausa *takàrdā* and *takàddā*, and from there to still others. A similar case is that of Greek *σάπων*, which has entered many West African languages and Swahili via Arabic *ṣābūn*.

As always in etymological matters, there are things in the dictionary that could be up for discussion. The Dangaléat word *àssirè* ‘presser (au propre ou au figuré)’ in 67 is linked by the author to Arabic *asr* ‘capture; captivity’, but it could be possibly related to Arabic *ʿasr* ‘pressing, squeezing’. In 172 the words *badingîn* and *badijîn* in Kanuri and *bàdītù* in Ngizim with the meaning ‘commencer’ are said to have been borrowed from Arabic *bada’a* ‘to introduce, originate, start, do for the first time, invent’, although I think there is a strong

probability that its etymon is Arabic *bada'a* 'to begin, start'. It cannot be ruled out that the Hausa word *wahàmi* 'doutes; présomption, vanité' in 2897 has been borrowed from Arabic *wahm* 'delusive imagination; illusion; doubt' rather than from Arabic *waḥam* 'a craving for certain food during pregnancy; appetite, craving, longing, ardent desire'. Swahili *tuhuma* 'soupçon, accusation' in 3003 is closer, in both form and meaning, to Arabic *tuhma* 'accusation, charge; suspicion' and there seems to be no need to look for its origins in Arabic *tawahhum* 'suspicion; imaginative power; imagination'. Similarly, Swahili *ghera* 'jalousie' in 2054 seems to me to have been borrowed from Arabic *ḡaira* 'jealousy' rather than from the less frequent and phonetically more distant *ḡār* 'jalousie'.

To sum up, this dictionary of Arabic loanwords in West African languages and Swahili is a carefully prepared work in which an impressive amount of material is gathered and insightfully elaborated. One can be sure that it will not pass unnoticed by specialist academic circles. Also, it can definitely be recommended not only to those who want to learn about the origins of a significant part of West African and Swahili vocabulary but also those who are interested in the history and development of words in general.

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