WIENER ZEITSCHRIFT

FÜR DIE

KUNDE DES MORGENLANDES

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON
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SPECIAL ISSUE

What is Bedouin-type Arabic?
Fresh Perspectives and New Data

EDITED BY
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115. BAND

WIEN 2025

IM SELBSTVERLAG DES INSTITUTS FÜR ORIENTALISTIK

OFFPRINT

This special issue of the *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* was edited within the context of the Advanced Grant WIBARAB project (2021-2026), which is funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement no.101020127).

doi: 10.25365/phaidra.684_03

Sociolinguistics and the Bedouin/Sedentary split: Jordan as a case study

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Abstract: The article focuses on the terms 'Bedouin' and 'Sedentary' that have been widely used to classify Arabic dialects, arguing that their usefulness as social categories in Arabic sociolinguistics is limited and can be misleading. The discussion is illustrated through analysis of sociolinguistic developments in Jordan, highlighting the multiple social meanings that these terms can assume as they interact with gender, religion and religiosity, occupation, state formation and national identity.

Keywords: Arabic sociolinguistics, Bedouin–Sedentary split, Jordanian Arabic

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0 Introduction[1]

Terms such as 'Bedouin' and 'sedentary', which are used to classify types of Arabic dialects, may have been originally coined as objective descriptions of social categories based on lifestyle (nomadic versus settled). These terms are currently widely used as labels or abstract notions, often with vague meanings that are disconnected from the current lifestyle of the people concerned. Moreover, the linguistic characteristics associated with the Bedouin and sedentary norms overlap, especially in segmental phonology. Thus, we find a voiced reflex of *qāf* in non-Bedouin varieties; interdental sounds in sedentary varieties; fricative and affricate reflexes of *jīm* in both norms, and so on. By way of illustration, consider the dialects of Ḥōrān, the region that stretches from south of Damascus to Amman. This group of sedentary south Levantine dialects share the following features with dialects that are quintessentially classified as Bedouin: /g, θ, ð, ðˤ, ʤ/, in addition to the conditioned affrication of /k/ (see Behnstedt, 1997; Herin & Al-Wer, forthcoming).

Typically, the social meanings associated with social categories, Bedouin and sedentary included, are mutable. This is a crucial observation especially in cases where social categories correlate with linguistic usage since, from a sociolinguistic perspective, social forces configure linguistic variation and propel linguistic change. In Al-Wer et al (2022a) we demonstrate, through analysis of several examples of recent linguistic changes in Arabic vernaculars, that change

[1] In preparing this article, I have benefitted from discussions with Khaldoun Gharaibeh, Firas Smadi, Jehad Al-Muheisen, Tariq Tell, Michael Jones, Bruno Herin and Uri Horesh. I am grateful for their time and insights.

does not always follow expected phonological trajectories, even in cases where older changes have operated along so-called universal patterns, such as the reversal of the historical shift from affricate /ʦ/ and /ʤ/ to velar [k] and [g], respectively, in the vicinity of front vowels in Najdi dialects.[2] These and similar developments present empirical evidence of the primary role played by social factors in directing language change, and hence the importance of understanding the evolution in the meanings of social categorisation.

In addition to being mutable in response to changes in the community's circumstances, social categories and their meanings over time become increasingly non-discrete. Consider the evolution in the treatment of basic categories such as social class, age and gender in sociolinguistic methodology and analysis. For instance, allocation of social class through indices has introduced more nuanced distinctions and ones that require a continuous measure.[3] The treatment of 'age' as a social variable also went through considerable refinements, from a model that grouped speakers arbitrarily into age cohorts according to predetermined equal intervals, to one that groups speakers according to some shared experience of time, related to life stage or history (Eckert 1998: 155). The analysis of gender went through quite a transformation, from a category with a binary distinction based on biological sex to being treated as a continuous variable whose components are socially constructed (see Queen 2013; Al-Wer 2014). The take-home message is that prefabricated, off-the-shelf categorisations that may work in some communities do not necessarily work in others; and meanings that once prevailed may have mutated even within the same community.

A further important aspect of the analysis of social factors as sociolinguistic variables is interaction between different variables. For instance, in research conducted over the past fifteen years or so by members of the Essex Sociolinguistics Research Group, it was found that rather than having independent effect on variation in Arabic, age and gender almost always interact, in such a way that it is not possible to make generalisations about gender groups without specifying the age cohort to which speakers belong.[4] Furthermore, in several studies it was necessary to look at the interaction of three or four predictors to

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[2] Such developments appear to contradict the time-honoured Principle of Least Effort (see Labov 2001).

[3] For an account of social class as a social category in sociolinguistics, see Ash 2013. For a comprehensive analysis of 'the concept of class in sociology, see Edgell 1993.

[4] For illustrations of this pattern, see, *inter alia*, Al-Qahtani (2015); Al-Hawamdeh (2016); Al-Bohnayya (2019); Alaodini (2019); Hussain (2016); (AlAmmar (2017); Cotter & Horesh (2015).

interpret the results accurately, e.g. socialisation patterns, mobility, contact and opportunity of access to target features.[5]

The bulk of this article is focused on a discussion of Bedouin versus sedentary in Jordan. The aim is to trace and explain the multiple ways in which these terms interact with other social categories, such as gender, and their correlation with linguistic usage. In doing so, I shall also analyse evolutions in their social meanings and relation to state formation.

1 Bedouin versus sedentary in sociolinguistic research

While Bedouin versus sedentary as categories of classification of dialect norms have been widely used in Arabic dialectology, it is difficult to find sociolinguistic studies in Arabic-speaking communities that used them as predictors of linguistic variation and change. One exception is the study by Abeer Hussain in Medina, which included samples from two Medini groups; one group was called the urban group and the other Bedouin. The latter was represented by members of a particular clan, Banū Masrūḥ of the Ḥarb tribe (Hussain 2017). Naturally, since these two Medini groups originally spoke dialects that are akin to different norms, the data from each group were analysed separately; thus, urban versus Bedouin was considered a factor (an independent variable) in the analysis. The results showed that both groups were moving along the same trajectory regarding the linguistic variables investigated, namely resyllabification (precipitated by syncope or epenthesis) and lenition of /ʤ/ (to [ʒ]), with the urban group leading change towards a koineised Hijazi norm based on the dialect of Jeddah, but no indication that the lead or lagging have anything to do with affiliation to either social group *directly*. Rather, Hussain's interpretation of the lead by the urban group is based on the ethnography she conducted, which revealed that the urban group have maintained closer social relations with the Jeddah community and therefore have had more regular and frequent contact with speakers of the target features. The correlation found between community as an independent variable (Bedouin versus urban) and linguistic usage is thus a statistical artefact created by differences in socialisation patterns. Hussain further clarifies that the primary source of innovation in the Bedouin group's speech is immediate contact with the urban group in the context of Medina, i.e. that they access the target feature through daily contact in schools and the workplace with urban Medinis. The Bedouin group are thus neither conservative linguistically nor an isolated group within the city.

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[5] For analyses and examples from the work conducted by members of the Essex Sociolinguistics Research Group, see Al-Wer et al 2022a; Al-Wer et al 2022b; Horesh et al (2022).

In contrast, we occasionally come across statements that purport to explain the maintenance of certain linguistic features as being due to Bedouin pride, faithfulness and social conservatism. Such explanations of linguistic behaviour appear to be based on popular stereotypes associated with traditional Bedouin communities, rather than on evidence that can be substantiated empirically. For instance, some early sociolinguistic studies on Jordanian varieties, which (erroneously) classified the traditional mainstream Jordanian dialects, such as the dialects of the old cities of Salt, Ajlun and Kerak[6], as Bedouin, have interpreted the maintenance of the local Jordanian features, such as [g] for /q/, the interdentals, and the affricate variant of /ʤ/ in this manner.[7] Here we encounter 'Bedouin' being used not merely as a macroscopic description of a bundle of features to distinguish between the two norms, but as an interpretive tool that implies some sort of innate inclination towards linguistic conservatism. A curious aspect of the use of the term Bedouin in several studies of Jordanian dialects is that they do not make a distinction between what dialectologists straightforwardly label as Bedouin dialects because they historically originated in or were affiliated with Bedouin dialects spoken in Najd, such as the dialects of Bani Hassan and Bani Saxir[8], and those that are classified as sedentary, which are akin to the south Levantine dialect group and spoken by a large majority of the population in various cities, towns and villages. So, 'Bedouin' in this case is used to mean Jordanian, collectively. This norm, Bedouin, is then slotted into the widely used trichotomy urban-rural-Bedouin, which works quite well in societies which have clear social and linguistic distinctions between the three categories, e.g. Palestinian and Syrian. The traditional Jordanian dialects, however, are not amenable to the distinction urban-rural. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the dialects of the old cities, *ḥawāḍir il ʔUrdun*, namely Ajlūn, Salt and Kerak, are not different from the dialects spoken in the villages in each one of the regions surrounding these cities (see al-Wer 1991). The differences between the dialects within the group of Levantine or sedentary Jordanian dialects is geographical, not social, and often the villages are socially more prominent than the city.[9] I would argue that the projection of the trichotomy urban-rural-Bedouin onto Jordanian dialects created a dilemma. Abdul-Jawad (1981) for instance, in his Amman study, defines 'urban' as the dialects spoken in cities such as

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6 The correct classification of these dialects is sedentary of the south Levantine dialect group (see Herin & Al-Wer, forthcoming)

7 See for instance Abdul-Jawad's 1981 study on Amman. Curiously, on the classification of Hōrāni, Al-Khatib (1987: 21) writes: "the Horani dialect can be considered nomadic (*gelet*-dialects group)."

8 See the series of articles by Heiki Palva that describe some of the Bedouin Jordanian dialects.

9 In Herin & Al-Wer (forthcoming) sedentary Jordanian dialects are classified as Ḥōrāni (north; including Balgāwi), and Moābi (south; including Adūmi).

Jerusalem, Nablus, and Hebron, and 'rural' as the dialects of the Palestinian villages located around these cities.[10] With one category left, all local Jordanian dialects had to be classified as Bedouin.[11] More recent research has remoulded the definition of urban and rural to localise them within Jordan but falls into a similar trap of labels; for instance, if the speaker lives in Irbid, which is now a large city, they are called urban while a speaker who lives in Huṣun, a village five kilometres away, is classified as rural, even though both speak the same dialect. It may well be that speakers who live in Irbid show different patterns from those who live in Huṣun but this will need to be investigated rather than simply assumed on the grounds that Irbid is administratively designated as a city, *madīna,* while Huṣun is a village or town (*balda*).

2 The fateful trichotomy, social structure and dialect configuration

It is in fact not surprising that the Jordanian sedentary dialects are not demarcated along the lines of urban-rural given the social structure of the traditional Jordanian society, cultivator and pastoralist alike, which is broadly egalitarian tribal rather than hierarchical.[12] Additionally, until the 1930s and the introduction by the British Mandate power of the so-called 'land registration', land tenure was communal (in Arabic *mašāʕ*) (see Tell 2013; Abu Jabir 2009). In this social system, individuals derive status from membership in the tribe, regardless of place of residence, town, or village, and regardless of economic ability. So, individuals can differ in wealth but not in social status or prestige as members of the same tribe/clan. This leads to a situation where there are no social barriers between individuals of varying wealth and perhaps therefore no linguistic differences according to economic ability or place of residence. Therefore, in such a social system linguistic variation may cut across socio-economic differences.

The same line of reasoning applies to the social values that are associated with dialect norms. The oft-repeated cliché that rural dialects are stigmatised while

[10] At the time, the West Bank was administratively part of the Kingdom of Jordan. Jordan renounced its sovereignty over the West Bank in 1988.

[11] Al-Khatib's study (1988) in Irbid uses the following criteria: Horani-Fellahi-Urban but defines these norms similarly to Abdel-Jawad's definition, with 'Fellahi' representing rural Palestinian dialects. He writes further (p 21) "Using the Nomadic-Sedentary criterion to differentiate between these three dialects we find that while the Fellahi and the Urban dialects can be classified as sedentary (*qeltu*-dialects group), the Horani dialect can be considered nomadic (*gelet*-dialects group)". This classification is obviously false as these dialects have nothing to do with the *qeltu-gelet* groups.

[12] In his analysis of the local order in Jordan at the beginning of the twentieth century, Tariq Tell writes "Despite the diversity of its sources of livelihood and mode of living, the population of Trans-Jordan was everywhere tribal, and both *Fallah and Bedouin* recognized the authority of customary law and prominent *shaykhly* houses." (Tell 2013: 31).

urban dialects are prestigious does not sit comfortably with a situation where there are no significant linguistic differences between town and village. Furthermore, in traditional Jordanian dialects, the terms *ḥaḍar, ḥaḍari, ḥaḍariyye,*[13] which equates to townsfolk, signifies social and religious conservatism. For instance, a woman who is *ḥaḍariyye,* implies a woman whose dress code is conservative and may also cover her face; she does not socialise with strange men; and does not receive male guests, etc. Additionally, she is peripheral to her family's mode of production; her obligations are confined to the home sphere. While recently this sort of conduct has become almost the norm for a good many Jordanian communities, it used to be anomalous. Outside this frame of reference to social conduct or habits, the term, *ḥaḍar* is not used in sedentary Jordanian dialects.[14]

The term *midin/madani* refers to urbanites. This term too is imbued with social meanings in the local dialects. During a recent fieldtrip near Tafīle in south Jordan, accompanied by two local friends, I commented on the increase in the number of women wearing the niqāb in the town. In response to my comment, one of these local friends replied sarcastically: *tmaddanin* 'they, the women of Tafīle, have adopted urban ways'. There is probably a parallel between this use of *tmaddan* and the traditional concept *ḥaḍari*. In this example, *tmaddan* connotes a new expression of religiosity which in turn is connected with urbanisation and modernisation.

The association of new, more conservative religious practices with urbanisation and modernisation makes sense given that such practices were first introduced and consolidated in large heterogeneous cities before infiltrating the countryside and provincial towns; in other words, their introduction was associated with urban people and urban ways of observing religious practices. An interesting observation about the association of urbanisation with conservative social conduct, here dress code, is that it contradicts the classic stereotypical image of urbanites as being liberal. So, what we seem to have is a more nuanced and more complex understanding of urbanisation. This should lead to a fresh look at the meanings of urban linguistic features. Rather than treating 'urban' as a single parameter per se, we need to look at the various factors which are associated with urban society and the ways in which these contribute to linguistic variation. This is illustrated in the emergence of religion as a sociolinguistic signifier in Jordan. As we demonstrate in Al-Wer et al (2015), in Jordanian communities which became increasingly ethnically mixed as a result of the arrival of refugees from neighbouring countries, Christians tend to be linguistically more conservative with respect to the local dialects, whereas Muslims tend to be innovative. This tallies with a widespread perception that Christian Jordanians

[13] In standard Arabic *ḥaḍar, ḥaḍarī, ḥaḍariyya.* Jordanian Arabic has [ðˤ] for /dˤ/ and raises the feminine ending /a/ to /e/ after /j/.

[14] This information is based on fieldwork in several locations in Jordan, conducted by Bruno Herin and Enam Al-Wer.

adhere to local customs and values more consistently. The following extract from our fieldwork in Madaba (30 kms south of Amman) contains comments to this effect. The speaker is a local Muslim young man:

> *ir-rāʔiḥa il ʔurduniyye l xāliṣa la ʔahl l ʔurdun tlāšat ʔilla min byūt l masīḥiyyīn fi l ʔurdun, faqaṭ. walla l bāgi kullo tamm talwīṯo. bass tudxul bēt masīḥi bitšimm rīḥit l ʔurdun fi ṭ ṭaʕām wi l gahwa wi l ʕādāt w ṭarīgt t tarḥīb w ṭarīgt l kalām. ʔil*
>
> *gahwa l kuḥul ʔilli kānu yiʕmalūha l ʔurduniyyīn zamān ʔilli thizz il finjān w hī fī btušʕur ʔinha ṣabġa, ḥatta l mansaf lam yabqa hū l mansaf l ʔurduni ʔilla fi l gura wi byūt l masīḥiyyīn*
>
> The pure scent of Jordan has disappeared except from the homes of Christians in Jordan. The rest have been contaminated. When you enter Christian homes, you smell Jordan, in the food and coffee, in customs and ways of greeting, and in ways of speaking. The dark coffee that Jordanians used to make, so dark that it dyes the cup when you shake it.

At first sight this seems anomalous insofar as Christians overall tend to be socially progressive and on average more prosperous; in other words, they belong to a social group which is typically at the forefront of linguistic innovation. Linguistic innovation in Jordanian dialects tends to be in the direction of a pan-Levantine norm, represented by speakers of urban Palestinian and Syrian dialects. The vehicle of this innovation is the massive influx of refugees from Palestine, the vast majority of whom are Muslim. For this reason, intermarriage between Jordanians and Palestinians is much more widespread within the Muslim community. This, in turn, leads to the emergence, within the Muslim communities, of religion as a symbol of common identity that cuts across ethnicity. Christians, on the other hand, have a much more restricted choice of partner, typically confined to the indigenous Jordanian population, since cross-religious marriage is a social taboo. As a result, the Christian population retains Jordanianism as its symbol of common identity and with it the maintenance of traditional Jordanian dialectal features. Given the perceived association between Islamicism and urban communities, the pan-Levantine innovations are perceived as 'urban', even when they have permeated to rural areas. By the same token, the traditional linguistic features, typical of Christians, are perceived as 'rural' or even 'Bedouin' even though the majority of Christians are city-dwellers. This shows that the simple dichotomy between urban and rural is deceptive, since it masks other distinctions based on religion and identity, which are at the root of linguistic variation.

3 Gender in practice

Another popular tendency in Jordanian Arabic is for the pan-Levantine linguistic features, such as [ʔ] for /g/, to be prevalent among women, and there is a strong pressure on women working in private sector jobs, e.g. banks and retail, to use these features in their professional life. This can be seen as a consequence of the perception of the traditional features as being localised and crude, and therefore unsuitable for women, particularly in sectors where a cosmopolitan image is important. On the other hand, in the public sector, e.g. army and police, maintenance of the traditional Jordanian linguistic features is the norm, even among women. The maintenance of Jordanian features in the public sector can be seen as a reflection of the mission of service to the nation. So, gender in this case is intertwined with occupation. A woman police or military officer needs to appear more aligned with her male colleagues, while a man working in retail, a bank, private telecommunication companies, modern tourism outlets, etc., may need to align with his female colleagues in response to the linguistic market of these workplaces. In my data from Amman, there are several examples that demonstrate such alignment on the part of male speakers. Below are extracts from two exchanges in a fashionable shop that sells a famous brand in Amman. While shopping for nearly three hours, the researcher observed and made notes of conversations among male sales assistants, as well as their exchanges with customers in the shop. All sales assistants were in their early to mid-20s. It was noticeable that in conversations among themselves the sales assistants used identifiably traditional dialects, but when interacting with the customers they diverged to a norm that approximated Ammani:

(i) The first extract depicts an exchange at the cashier with the researcher paying for the merchandise. Notice that in this extract the sales assistant uses typical Ammani features, none of which were used when conversing with his colleagues. These are: [ʔ] for /g/ in [ʔirʃ] 'piaster'; [t] for /θ/ in [tamaniːn]; [ʒ] for /ʤ/ in [tarʒːʕ]; [a] for /ɑ/ in [maʕik] (rather than traditional [mɑʕik]).
(R = researcher[15]; S = sales assistant).

S: *tisʕa w tamanīn w ʔarbʕīn ʔirš*
Eighty-nine (dinars) and forty piasters
R: *tafaḍˤḍˤal*
Please (customer (researcher) hands over payment card)
R: *gaddēš maʕi wagt ʔiḍa biddi ʔarağğiʕ ʔaw ʔabaddil?*
How long do I have if I want to return or exchange?
S: *tanzilāt tarʒīʕ w tabdīl maʕik ʔusbūʕ*
Sale items return and exchange you have one week

[15] The researcher herself speaks a traditional Jordanian dialect in these extracts; she thus uses [g], [ʤ], [ðˤ], [ð].

(ii) The second extract comes from a friendly chat between the researcher and a sales assistant. The extract depicts the speaker's response where the researcher tried to tap into his choice of dialect in different contexts.

R: *int min man?*
Which tribe/family are you from?
S: (names his family and tribe)
R: *lāḥaḏˁit innak btiḥki ʕammāni, hēk btiḥki maʕ ʔahlak?*
I noticed you speak Ammani. Is this how you speak with your family?
S: *lā maʕ ʔahli baḥki lahǧitna hōn baḥki ʕādi*
No, with my family I speak our (tribal) dialect, here (at work) I speak normally (conventionally)
R: *wlēš hōn ġēr?*
And why do you speak differently here?
S: ʕašān iz zabāyin w hēka
Because of the customers and so on

In addition to confirming a conscious divergence that is prompted by the linguistic market of his job, the speaker in the second extract assigns the social value /ʕaːdi/ 'normal/conventional' to the Amman dialect. This is an indication that the Amman dialect is undergoing a process of normativisation, whereby, in certain contexts, the norm and values associated with it acquire the status of a prescriptive standard. [16]

Once again, we see that a simple, gender-based dichotomy is interconnected with a host of local issues, and also with perceptions of different varieties.

4 Bedouin

Just as the labels 'urban' and 'rural' present us with a host of meanings once analysed in the context of the speech community, so does the term 'Bedouin'. Contrary to the stereotypical, publicised image of the Jordanian society, most of the indigenous population is not Bedouin but quintessentially consisting of agrarian communities.[17] It is not possible to find precise figures of the proportion of the population who may be described as Bedouin, however defined. Abu Jabir (2009) traces the population of Jordan in Ottoman records to the 16th century, which give a figure of 10% as Bedouin, 22% as *ʕurbān* and 68% as sedentary. No information is available in the Jordanian census, but even those that present themselves as Bedouin are in fact settled agrarian communities for the most part. During the Ottoman era, Transjordan was one of the largest regions exporting

[16] On the notion of normativisation as a sociological process, see Jedlikowska 2016

[17] On this point, Ababsa (2013: 218) writes: "It is a common misconception that Jordan is a country of Bedouins. Sedentary groups have always outnumbered the Bedouin, and half the Bedouin themselves were semi-nomadic at the time of the creation of the Emirate of Transjordan."

wheat and grapes; most of Palestine's wheat needs were supplied from this region. Jordan's production of grain was only weakened by the British Mandate Authority flooding the market with imported wheat (see Abu Jabir 2009).

Given the figures and facts cited above, the question is: why is Jordan perceived as a Bedouin society?

5 Bedouin, national identity and further developments

For the most part, the Bedouin in Jordan settled in villages and towns in their own tribal land, rather than being integrated within the wider community. As a result, the label 'Bedouin' now refers to communities with shared linguistic features and their place of residence, i.e. it refers to geographical and linguistic notions, rather than lifestyle.

At the same time, the agrarian population have similar social structure and customs to the (now settled) Bedouin, i.e. tribal structure, as explained earlier. Additionally, the Jordanian agrarian communities for the most part owned the land they cultivated, initially on a communal basis then individually after the policy of land registration. This is another characteristic shared with the Bedouin communities. Furthermore, unlike the peasantry in Syria and Palestine in general, who relied on the Ottoman authorities to protect them against Bedouin raids, the Jordanian cultivators themselves launched or participated in raids to defend themselves and their villages, especially since the Ottomans did not have full control of the southeastern region of greater Syria, as is well-known.[18] These similarities in turn led to the popular perception which subsumes the rural population under the label Bedouin. As a further development following the migration of rural dwellers to the new cities, the label 'Bedouin' extended to the urban population with the result that outsiders often perceive the entire indigenous population as Bedouin.

This development also has a political dimension. Under the British Mandate, the authorities recruited Bedouins into the army to the exclusion of the agrarian population. This was partly a strategy to gain their loyalty and at the same time to compensate for the depletion of their pastureland following the surrender of Wadi Sirhan to the Saudi regime, whose Wahhabi fighters had raided Jordan on a number of occasions during the 1920s.[19] This policy was also reinforced by a certain mistrust of the sedentary population, who had frequently rebelled against the regime.[20] Following full independence in 1946, the regime promoted the Bedouin identity as a manifestation of national solidarity, a process which reached its peak in the 1970 clash with the Palestinian guerrilla movement. The indigenous sedentary population were complicit in this policy insofar as it gave Jordan a

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18 On this point, see Tell (2013, chapter 2).

19 On further details of these events, see Tell (2013, chapter 4); Al-Muheisen 2020.

20 See Al-Assaf 2015.

distinctive national identity and ethos as an antidote to the perception of Jordan as part of greater Palestine or as an artificial buffer zone.

In more recent times, particularly since the accession of King Abdullah II, we see a gradual reversal of this policy in favour of a more globalist view, which has culminated in a state-driven promotion of the so-called *ʔal hawiyya l ǧāmiʕa* 'the collective identity'. This can be attributed to two related developments. Firstly, privatisation led to the emergence of a new power base, dependent on wealth as opposed to public service within the community. Many of the new powerful elite are Palestinians. Secondly, the breakdown of the peace process has led to pressure to recognise the Palestinian refugees as permanent residents with full political rights, and hence the prospect of Jordan becoming a substitute Palestinian homeland. The nationalist movement, and the institution of retirees and veterans, vehemently reject the phrase *ʔal hawiyya l ǧāmiʕa*, insisting that it is a ploy; a play on words aimed to dismantle and reconstruct the Jordanian state according to an anti-Jordanian agenda.[21] Below is an example (translated from Arabic) of the rhetoric disseminated on the social media that targets the concept of the 'collective identity' and its supporters, accusing them of treason, practically:

> *What happened and is happening in terms of the true Jordanian identity and the rich and authentic Jordanian heritage is nothing but a very natural reaction to the advocates of the collective identity. This country does not accept division into two. Jordan is for Jordanians, and whoever wants to turn it otherwise, Jordanians will not let him roam free, no matter how powerful he may be and how many supporters he may have. This country was built from clay kneaded with the pure blood of its people. It has not and will not be a pasture for others on its soil, for its soil only drinks the blood of its sons.*

6 Concluding remarks

We have thus seen that in the Jordanian context the term Bedouin has a variety of values. In its narrowest sense it refers to the nomadic sector of the population. However, it has assumed various wider values based on identity of different forms, ranging from the settled Bedouins, identified by their dialect, through the agrarian population as a whole, identified by common ethos, and finally as a symbol of national identity. These different iterations of the term are based partly on self-perception, partly on the perceptions of others and finally on deliberate policies to foster different forms of allegiance.

These developments have linguistic consequences. As indicated earlier, the settled Bedouin communities preserve their traditional dialects, especially within their local communities. Bedouin linguistic features are often adopted by non-Bedouin individuals as an expression of common national identity (e.g. the

[21] The discussion of these issues is controlled in the official media. Open and free debates are for the most part restricted to various platforms on the social media.

gaháwa syndrome). In the media, we notice a surge of initiatives by individuals who make a point of using local dialects including broad versions of traditional dialects. In several such programmes, it is noticeable that the dialect is the focus of interest, in other words the 'medium is the message'. The Bedouin dialect seems to be becoming fashionable in certain quarters, perhaps in contrast to the normativisation of the pan-Levantine norm referred to earlier.

To sum up, we see that in the context of Jordan, the classic three-way distinction urban-rural-Bedouin cannot be simply understood as identifying distinct social groups according to location or lifestyle, but must be taken in combination with other factors, such as religion, gender, national identity, occupation. As we have seen, in some cases the trichotomy can be misleading.

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