



# LUND UNIVERSITY

Review of Holes, C. "Dialect, culture, and society in Eastern Arabia. Vol. 3, Phonology, morphology, syntax, style."

Persson, Maria

*Published in:*

Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes

2017

*Document Version:*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Persson, M. (2017). Review of Holes, C. "Dialect, culture, and society in Eastern Arabia. Vol. 3, Phonology, morphology, syntax, style.". *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 107, 417-420.

*Total number of authors:*

1

## General rights

Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

## Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117  
221 00 Lund  
+46 46-222 00 00



Trotz alledem können ein paar Kritikpunkte an Diems Buch formuliert werden.

Der erste Punkt betrifft die bereits erwähnte Vernachlässigung des griechischen bzw. koptischen Materials. Zumindest eine Bezugnahme auf die griechischen Fürsprachebriefe, die in die arabische Zeit hineinreichen, hätte der Arbeit einen weiteren interessanten Aspekt hinzugefügt, genauso wie die Genizah-Texte, die durchaus auch eine längere Behandlung verdient hätten.

Außerdem fehlt im theoretischen Teil eine Positionierung der Fürsprachebriefe gegenüber der Petition. Es wäre durchaus interessant gewesen zu sehen, wo Diem den Übergang zwischen den beiden Gattungen sieht bzw. ob und wie er die Abgrenzung vornehmen würde.

Manche Erklärungen zu Formulierungen im abschließenden Übersetzungsteil werden nicht durch Quellen belegt. Dies ist unzweifelhaft deswegen der Fall, weil der Autor die angewandten Kunstkniffe der Stilistik aus seiner reichen Erfahrung heraus zu erklären weiß. Zahlreichere Belege würden allerdings eine gute Hilfestellung für die eigene Editionsarbeit einiger potenzieller Leser darstellen.

Alles Gesagte tut jedoch Diems Leistung keinen Abbruch. Abgesehen davon, dass wohl kaum jemand anderer dieses Buch hätte schreiben können, einfach weil kaum jemand sich in der gleichen Intensität mit Briefen im Allgemeinen beschäftigt hat, hätte kaum jemand anderer eine derart präzise und ausführliche Untersuchung vorlegen können. Nicht umsonst gilt Diems Editions- und Analysearbeit als unangefochtener Höchststandard in der Arabischen Papyrologie und dies stellt er hier wieder eindrucksvoll unter Beweis. Es kann durchaus behauptet werden, dass Diem mit *Fürsprachebriefe* wieder ein Referenzwerk vorlegt, das nicht nur in der Arabischen Papyrologie, sondern auch in Gebieten wie Studien der Diplomatie eine breite Leserschaft finden wird.

Ursula Bsees (Wien)

Holes, Clive: *Dialect, Culture, and Society in Eastern Arabia*, vol. 3: Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Style. Leiden: Brill, 2016 (Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 1, The Near and Middle East. Vol. 51/3). 490 pages. ISBN 9789004302631. € 149,00.

With this volume, *Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Style*, Holes concludes his comprehensive work on the “Dialect, Culture and Society in Eastern Arabia”, which also comprises a *Glossary* (vol. 1), 2001 and *Ethnographic Texts* (vol. 2), 2005. The aim of the series, as stated by the author, is to provide “a detailed description of the Arabic dialects and culture of the island state of Bahrain of the pre-oil era, as spoken and remembered by uneducated Bahrainis who were aged forty or over in the mid-1970s” (p. vii). The study can also be seen as a conclusion of the large scale enquiry into generational language change in Bahrain for which a substantial part of the material used here was originally collected, and as a result of which the author has published extensively, mainly within sociolinguistics, during the 1980s and 90s.

The present volume, focusing on the linguistic description of the dialect(s), also features a relatively comprehensive introduction to the historical and social setting. The following chapters contain detailed descriptions of phonology, morphology, and syntax, which are all amply supplied with examples from the data base, as well as a chapter on style in spoken discourse. Furthermore, the volume includes a minor diachronic study describing changes that have taken place from the time of the recording until today and,

finally, a continuation of the addenda and corrigenda to volume I which was begun in volume II.

A key methodological point of this particular study is the choice to only include the “least educated half” of the informants, giving a total number of circa 100 informants, “divided approximately equally by sex and sectarian allegiance into ‘Arab (= indigenous Bahraini Sunnis) and Baḥārna (= indigenous Bahraini Shī‘a)” (p. viii). The importance of this decision, to concentrate on the uneducated informants, cannot be overstated in light of the rapid language change that the dialectal area covered has undergone. The varieties of the dialect described in Holes’ study have died with the speakers. This makes the data published by Holes indispensable both as a preservation of linguistic heritage and for future diachronic work. Another important methodological decision was to let other Bahrainis, known to the informants, do most of the interviews, as well as to disclose to the informants the fact that they were being recorded only (in many cases) after the interviews were done. In this way, Holes secured, as far as possible in field work such as this, that the recordings reflect authentic speech. In addition to Holes’ own data, a limited number of Bahraini radio plays and interviews from the late 1970s, and selections from two collections of Bahraini dialect poetry were included in the study. Holes’ motivation for the former is that the type of discourse found in this material – particularly arguments between people – are hard to obtain in other ways. As for the poetry, it forms an important part of the language competence of the informants’ generation.

The main chapters of the book – the content of which are reflected in the title of the volume – are characterized by meticulous detail in the description and ample exemplification. In particular, the detailed description of the differences between the main dialectal groups; the ‘Arab (A dialects) the urban Baḥārna (BU dialects) and the village Baḥārna (BV dialects) and, furthermore, details on mixed varieties and particularities down to village level, make the descriptions of phonology and morphology useful for classifying and tracing the history of later stages in the development of these and related dialects. Moreover, details down to the level of individual informants allow the reader to evaluate both the extent of variation possible within a specific dialectal area, and the extent of generalizations that are possible – or not – from each piece of information provided by the author who, himself, neither conceals exemptions from discernible rules, nor is tempted to generalize from small corpora.

The discrepancy between the geographically restricted data on which the study is based and the geographical area specified in the title - “Eastern Arabia” – was noted by Palva, in his review of volume I (Palva 2003). For that particular volume (Glossary), however, Palva, was convinced by Holes’ argument that the title was justified by the similarities between the dialects of the Gulf Littoral. For the present volume, this argument appears less valid. Here, Holes goes into specific details on what distinguishes, not only Bahraini dialects from other varieties Gulf Arabic, but also what differentiates the A varieties of Bahraini Arabic from the B varieties, and the BU varieties from the BV varieties, and even, at some instances, features specific of the dialectal variety of a particular town or neighbourhood within one of these groups. Thus, Holes’ statement in volume I (p. xv), that “a good deal” of his description is applicable also to the dialects of the neighbouring countries, is not equally valid for the bulk of the present volume. Nevertheless, the author throughout the volume provides ample data for comparison, both modern and old, in par-

ticular from the dialects of Oman and Najd, but also other dialectal areas such as Levantine, Iraqi, and Egyptian varieties of Arabic, and further afield in geography or time such as Algerian and Andalusian Arabic, in addition to comparisons with other Semitic languages. The interests of the intended audience of “fellow synchronic Arabic dialectologists and social historians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Gulf” (p. ix) are, thus, richly met.

Moreover, an agenda that is additional to the stated aim of synchronic description shines through on the pages of this volume. As a conclusion to the introduction of the volume, Holes describes his increased conviction that the speech of his illiterate informants of Arabia “provides a direct link with the ancient Arabic dialects, as recorded by the mediaeval philologists and lexicographers” (p. x). He finds that “a study of the vocabulary of the material culture, and of certain popular beliefs and customs common in the area, points to the survival of ancient links with the pre-Islamic cultures of eastern Arabia, Mesopotamia and even further afield” (p. x). Hence, he envisages, as a fruitful direction for future research, “dialectological ‘digging’” in order to “provide evidence for the continuity of cultural practices complementary to, and supportive of, that of archaeology and the written historical record” (p. x). Holes himself, in the first chapter of the volume, provides us with an introduction to such ‘digging’, as he makes an “attempt to relate the Bahraini dialects historically and geographically to those of southern Iraq, central and southern Arabia, and to the central Asian Arabic dialects, with some attention to ancient substrate features” (p. ix). In doing this, he draws extensively from the works of other scholars on related dialects and languages, both modern and classical, in addition to using data from his own fieldwork and experience. Throughout the work, comments, arguments, and sometimes speculations, regarding the origin and development of various dialectal features are interspersed among the descriptions of the Bahraini dialects. A few times, such passages on the development and possible genealogy of a particular phonological or morphological phenomenon even dominate the exposition, temporarily assigning the descriptive part a somewhat more backgrounded role. Thus, in addition to providing a synchronic description of the dialect(s) recorded, Holes contributes to placing them in the historical and geographical setting of linguistic development of the area. His suggestions on the origin of a particular expression, or on the extent of influence of other languages and dialects – whether Akkadian, Persian, South Arabian, or Sumerian; or other Arabic dialects – may, of course in each instance, be accepted or rejected by the reader, but are consistently supported by thorough cross referencing to both old and modern works on Semitic languages in general and Arabic dialects in particular. This results in a comprehensive bibliography, the compilation of which, by and in itself, constitutes a valuable contribution to the field.

As reviewers of previous volumes (Palva 2003, Ingham 2005, Kaye 2006) have rightly stated, Holes’ three volume work of high scholarly standard constitutes a much needed well of information on the dialect, and dialectal area, described. Furthermore, by his extensive references and comparisons, and by inviting the reader to excursions on the origin and development of linguistic features, and on mutual linguistic influence in the area, Holes succeeds in also making this, essentially descriptive volume, into a teaser for anyone interested in comparative Arabic dialectology and historical Semitic studies.

Maria Persson (Lund)

**Bibliography**

- Holes, Clive (2001). *Dialect, Culture & Society in Eastern Arabia, vol. 1: Glossary*. Handbook of Oriental Studies, 51/1. Leiden, Brill.
- Holes, Clive (2005). *Dialect, Culture, and Society in Eastern Arabia, vol. 2: Ethnographic Texts*. Handbook of Oriental Studies, 51/2. Leiden, Brill.
- Ingham, Bruce (2005). "Dialect, Culture & Society in Eastern Arabia, 1: Glossary", by Clive Holes, Leiden 2001. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 15/1, 93-95.
- Kaye, Alan (2006). "Dialect, Culture, and Society in Eastern Arabia, vol. 2: Ethnographic Texts", by Clive Holes, Leiden 2005. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 126/2, 283-284.
- Palva, Heikki (2003). "Dialect, Culture & Society in Eastern Arabia, 1: Glossary", by Clive Holes, Leiden 2001. *Studia Orientalia*, vol. 95, 439-442.

Jalaly, Az Eddine: *Initiation à l'arabe parlé au Maroc. Niveau intermédiaire*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2015. 187 Seiten. 1 Audio CD. ISBN 9782343068282. € 25,00.

Dieses Lehrbuch des marokkanischen Dialekts ist der zweite Teil zu *Initiation à l'arabe parlé au Maroc* desselben Autors, das im Jahr 2012 erschienen ist. Der Verlag L'Harmattan hat schon mehrere Einführungen in maghrebinische Dialekte publiziert, wie z.B. *Parlons l'arabe tunisien* (2002) oder *Parlons maltais* (1999) ebenso einen weiteren Band zur Einführung ins Marokkanische, nämlich *Parlons l'arabe dialectal marocain* (2001).

Das Erscheinen eines Lehrbuchs für Fortgeschrittene ist durchaus ein Desiderat, zumal es inzwischen zwar schon eine Reihe von Basiskursen gibt, zuletzt Jan Hooglands *Marokkanisch-Arabisch. Ein Lehrbuch für Selbststudium und Unterricht* (2016) aus dem Niederländischen ins Deutsche übertragen, Lehrwerke für Fortgeschrittene allerdings sind rar und meistens schon einige Jahrzehnte alt: Abdel-Massih, E.T.: *Advanced Moroccan Arabic* (1974), Alami, W.A.: *Moroccan Arabic. Intermediate Reader* (1969) oder gar, um noch ein herausragendes Beispiel aus der Kolonialzeit zu nennen Aldécoa, M.de: *Cours d'arabe marocain* (1916-18) in drei Teilen. Selbstverständlich ist der Umfang von diversen Basislehrbüchern sehr unterschiedlich und ebenso auch die Progression, wobei hier die frühen Werke deutlich schneller im Lernstoff vorangehen: Man vergleiche Brunot, L.: *Introduction à l'arabe marocain* (1950) mit oben erwähntem Lehrbuch von Hoogland. Ein großes Plus der neueren Lehrmaterialien ist natürlich die Möglichkeit der Wiedergabe von Lektionstexten und Übungen auf AudioCD bzw. MP3 oder als Download aus dem Internet, was für die Aussprache und das Hörverständnis von enormer Hilfe ist. Hierbei hat sich auch die Tonqualität im Allgemeinen merklich verbessert. Man vergleiche die alten Kassettenaufnahmen von Abdel-Massih mit der Aufnahme des zu besprechenden Lehrbuchs von Jalaly.

Az Eddine Jalaly unterrichtet seit mehreren Jahrzehnten am *Institut National des Langues et Civilisations orientales (INALCO)* in Paris. Abgesehen vom ersten Teil des zu besprechenden Lehrbuchs ist mir keine Veröffentlichung des Autors bekannt.

Das Lehrbuch ist in sechs Abschnitte/Lektionen (*sequences*) gegliedert und fängt mit der *sequence 7* an, setzt also mit der Zählung nach dem Basislehrbuch fort. Einleitend beginnt der Autor mit einer kurzen Darstellung des Lernziels gefolgt von einer Liste weiterführender Literatur, die in Grammatik und Lehrbücher sowie Wörterbücher unterteilt ist. Dem Abschnitt 7 ist noch ein doppelseitiges *tableau comparatif des consonnes et des*