

The g/ğ issue in Egyptian Arabic: Some methodological considerations
Magdalen Connolly, LMU Munich

The contemporary coexistence of fronted and plosive reflexes of ġīm excites much scholarly interest: does the voiced velar stop [g] reflex prevalent in some urban areas of Egypt constitute a continuation of the Proto-Semitic phoneme /g/; or is it a recent phenomenon, the result of a process of ‘de-affrication’ which stabilised in Cairo and its surrounding provinces as late as 1800–60 CE? Following the influential work of Blanc (1969, 1981) and Hary (1996a), the latter interpretation has become the established consensus among scholars of Judaeo-Arabic, but is rejected by scholars of Arabic historical dialectology. Blanc’s thesis relies on (i) the use of the diacritic with gimel denoting ġīm and (ii) occurrences of assimilation, metathesis and substitute graphemic representations of ġīm. In questioning the assumption of the diacritic’s phonetic significance, demonstrating its unreliability as a source from which to reconstruct the historical phonetic reflexes of ġīm, and re-examining oft-cited instances of assimilation, metathesis, and graphemic substitutions in light of new evidence, this paper establishes that Judaeo-Arabic orthography makes a much more limited, albeit valuable, contribution to the field of historical Arabic linguistics in this regard than has previously been suggested. It also examines why two branches of Arabic historical linguistics (historical dialectology and Judaeo-Arabic studies) have arrived at such different conclusions.

Connolly, Magdalen M. 2019. Revisiting the Question of ġīm from the Perspective of Judaeo-Arabic. *Journal of Semitic Studies* 64(1):155–183.

Woidich, Manfred & Liesbeth Zack. 2009. The g/ğ-question In Egyptian Arabic revisited. In Enam Al-Wer & Rudolf de Jong (eds.), *Arabic Dialectology*, 41–60. Brill.