

Note on transcription/ transliteration

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Pages x–xii of

The “Broken” Plural Problem in Arabic and Comparative Semitic: Allomorphy and analogy in non-concatenative morphology

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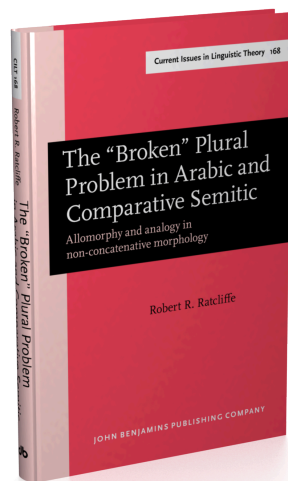
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NOTE ON TRANSCRIPTION/TRANSLITERATION

The transcription system employed for Arabic is the modified IPA system devised by the Arabic Linguistics Society and employed in the eleven volumes of the *Perspectives on Arabic Linguistics* Series published by John Benjamins since 1990. The only significant points of difference between this system and the IPA are the representation of the 'emphatic' (velarized or pharyngealized) consonants with an underdot rather than a squiggly line, and the representation of length by a double writing of the character (/aa/ rather than /a:/). The first modification is motivated by ease of printing and readability, the second by linguistic considerations that should be clear to anyone who has read Chapter II of the present monograph or is familiar with the research upon which it is based. The transcription system employed allows for allography in the case of high glides, which can be represented either as 'vowels' [u, i] or as 'consonants' [w, y]. For the languages discussed here there is no qualitative difference between 'u' and 'w' or between 'i' and 'y'. The only difference between a 'glide consonant' and a 'high vowel' is in the relative sonority of the surrounding segments and hence in the way the segment will syllabify. I have used the consonant symbol [w, y] for a glide falling in onset position, the vowel symbol [u, i] for the same segment in nucleus position; but for coda glides I have used the consonant symbol in the case of diphthongs [aw, ay] but the vowel symbol in the case of long vowels [uu, ii]. This discrepancy is purely a matter of following conventional practice. It has no linguistic significance, and I hope it will not lead to confusion.

Since the approach here is comparative, it would be ideal to represent all of the languages discussed using a uniform system. Unfortunately, a number of obstacles have prevented the realization of this ideal. For the classical and epigraphic Semitic languages I have tried where possible to replace idiosyncratic symbols employed only by specialists with an equivalent standard IPA symbol. Yet in some cases this procedure is inappropriate. Transliteration is not transcription, since doubts may sometimes exist about the phonemic realization of particular graphemes. In such cases, simply replacing a conventional transliteration symbol with an IPA symbol might mistakenly lead to an impression of phonemic accuracy much higher than is in fact possible. For spoken languages I have had no qualms about modifying the transcription systems of the sources for the sake of uniformity. Otherwise, I have followed the sources as closely as possible, although this allows for another type of idiosyncrasy since different linguists may transcribe according to different priorities. Thus one linguist may favor phonetic accuracy over phonemic consistency. Another may favor a transcription

system which highlights morphological or etymological regularities at the expense of accuracy in phonemic or phonetic representation. As a rule the transcription system employed for each language is explained in a footnote where data from that language is first introduced.

