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# ***The Anthropological Role of Arabic Socio-Linguistics: The Touat Speech Community as an Example***

## **Introduction**

Personal names, terms of status and titles inform about the function of language and the social relations that characterise any speech community. Forms of address provide information about both linguistic variation and social differentiation. They illustrate the complexity of social interaction, as it is subject to variation according to addressee/addressor, context of communication, distance and/or intimacy between speaker and interlocutor, as well as their social background.

In the next sections, we describe the Touatian society from both sociological and anthropological viewpoints to have an idea about the various components of the local social hierarchy. The terms of address are also dealt with to show that there are rules that govern the naming process of the latter community.

## **1. Sociology**

The sociological description is essential to reveal the traditional human hierarchy (Chorfas, Mrabtines, Zawayas, slaves, and Harratines). The socio-historical structure of the Touat is necessary to reveal local history and its immediate counterpart, *i.e.* society. As Abdallah Laroui says: "the masters changed; their race, religion and language changed but not so the structure" (76).

The Touatian social hierarchy is based on "Caste" criteria (Searle-Chatterjee). The castes are composed of the Chorfas (or the Nobles), the Mrabtines (or Marabouts), the Zwi (or people of the shrines) who define themselves through Muslim affiliation, and the

slaves and Harratines who are not wealthy, and do not have any prestige.

Scheduled mobility within the system is permitted to those belonging to the same caste-membership. It takes the form of inter-marriages within the closed caste-membership arrangement. Nevertheless, all layers of the Touat social stratification respect the principles of Islam: unity, kindness, solidarity, etc.

### *1.1 The Chorfas / The Nobles*

The adjective "Chorfas" refers to the highest class of the Touat hierarchy. It is used to demarcate the people who descend from Prophet Mohamed's (*pbuh*) family. That is, they are the children of El Hassan and El Hussein, sons of Caliph Ali and Fatima, daughter of Prophet Mohamed (*pbuh*). They are sometimes referred to as "Alids," as "Idrissids," and as the "Hassanids" of Morocco.

The Chorfas are black or white. The formers are referred to as "Negroid Shurafa" (Trimingham 98). Their father is As-Saqli, a Cherif who visited the King of Timbuktu and married one of his daughters. When the Cherif died, he left the first dynasty of black African Chorfas. Years later, his children travelled towards the oases of central Sahara looking for refuge. In the Touat, the black Chorfas founded the village of Kali. Nowadays, the Chorfas do not have much effect on local social mobility. Yet, they still have the admiration of society for their piety, the traditional teaching of the Koran and the precepts of his Prophet (*pbuh*). Present Touatian social stratification considers the Chorfas as its highest sphere. This group represents the most respected and the most influential class of the people of the Touat.

### *1.2 The Mrabtines / Marabouts*

Along with the Chorfas, the Marabouts constitute the second layer of the highest spheres of the Touat social stratification. They are both the nobility and the local aristocracy. The Marabouts come from the Almoravid dynasty which ruled northern Africa and a part of Andalusia for centuries. According to J. Cuq (in Benhsain and Devisse

2000: 14; see also Taibi 2000) the "Murabitun" were the people who received a theological teaching from Imam Al-Farsi, and were depository not only of his knowledge but also of his "Baraka" or holiness. In the Touat, they are the "Imams," the religious scholars, and the Koranic teachers. Their sole aim is to preach the word of God and the precepts of his Prophet. In the Touat, the Marabouts are respected, for they are the "Sheikhs" of the shrines. They can also marry with people from the other highest spheres, such as the Chorfas and the Zwi.

### *1.3 The Zwi/ People of the Shrines*

The Zwi are of Berber "Sanhadja"-Moorish origin. They are nicknamed "Mulattamun" or the "veiled" people because they used to wear a blue veil on the face. They are also called "Tolba" in Algeria and "Zanaja" in Morocco. Both in Algeria and Morocco, the Zwi had to pay collective tributes to the Chorfas or to the Alids who protected them from any dangers. They were thoroughly arabicised right from the first centuries of the Muslim conquests of North Africa.

### *1.4 The Slaves and the Hartanis*

The slaves fall into two categories: the original slaves and the Harratines. The original slaves are black people who were brought from the Sudan (kingdoms of Mali, Ghana and Songhay) to The Touat as prisoners, and were sold to rich families and merchants in the Touat markets of slaves. They had to perform the most difficult tasks such as digging, cleaning and maintaining hundreds of Foggaras.<sup>1</sup> Their work also consisted in building the numerous citadels and Ksour. The slaves worked in their masters' fields along with their families.

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<sup>1</sup> Ancient forms of aqueducts.

#### 1.4.1 The Slaves

The slaves, who were taken or brought from Bornou, Boure, Kano, Kanem, Katsina, Hausaland and Timbuktu, were taught the Koran and the precepts of Prophet Mohamed (*pbuh*) (Levtzion). They were exchanged for gold, salt, and fabrics such as silk. After two or three generations, the slaves could be integrated into their masters' families. Their children were sent to Koranic schools where they were taught the Koran and the "Sira" (Prophet Mohamed's sayings and deeds). Others were restricted to work on the fields. Some slaves were considered as freeborn Muslims and were allowed to marry free women. Yet, the stigma of their servile state remained vivid. As such, they were not granted social mobility up the local social stratification. They were always considered as the lowest-backward classes.

#### 1.4.2 The Hartanis

The other category of coloured people considered as slaves is that of the Harratines. In fact, they are freeborn slaves. The etymology of the name is improbable and controversial. For the natives, this word means "second generation of free slaves," for the word is composed of Arabic {harrun} "free" and {thani} "second." According to Al-Nassiri (in Batran 4) in the Maghrib the term Harratin is used to mean "a manumitted man, or a free man of secondary rank." Another definition is {harrarta} "you freed" and Arabic first personal singular pronoun {ana}, i.e. harrarta + ana = harrartani "you freed me."

Another definition given to the word Harratines is the Arabic noun for cultivators {harratin}. This idea could account for the clarification of the origin of the name, since most Hartani people are agriculturists. The Harratines do not constitute a well-demarcated African tribe; rather they are a scattered population amongst Arabs and Berbers. Socailly speaking, the Hartanis are classified between the slaves and the free men; hence their appellation of "free man of second rank." The Harratines became landowners after the independence of Algeria thanks to the Agrarian Revolution of the 1970s (Ca-

pot-Rey 235). They owned pieces of land and became rich. As such, they got the opportunity to climb up the social ladder.

In the next section, we deal with forms of address used within the Touatian community. These, as already mentioned above, are subject to local rules of address which set distant and intimate relationships among the speakers.

## **2. Forms of Address**

Forms of address have long been of interest to sociolinguists, anthropologists, and social psychologists as they reflect complex social networks, and shed light on systems of relationships between members of a given speech community (Paulston). Address terms are not static but vary according to the social context, occasion and situation of communication (Brown and Yule 54; Lakoff). The social context affects the choice of forms of address, which are used between people for communicative purposes, or when the addressor wants to attract the attention of the interlocutor, or when communicators want to establish their personal social position in relation to the addressees. (Evans-Pritchard: 1929; Evans-Pritchard: 1964). Forms of address can be used in two different manners. First, they are employed to address people directly, during a conversation for example. The use of the terms is dependent on several social factors, among which:

- family norms of address between children and parents at different stages;
- audience (who is listening?);
- social context (is it formal or public, or private and personal, for instance) (Holmes 2001: 14).

Second, they are used to refer to people who are either present or absent during the speech event. While referring to people, the speakers also have to respect factors such as the relationship between the speaker and the person referred to. The addressor's use of forms of address to refer to an absent person depends on whether he knows the person well or not.

The linguistic forms used illustrate the complex social relationships that exist between the members of the speech community. Some address terms, titles of status in particular, function as honorifics and carry the idea of politeness, power and solidarity between the interacting people. When used along a personal name, they often reflect humility and humbleness on the part of the speaker as a way of showing "positive politeness" (Watts 2003: 86).

In matter of social distance/intimacy, the degree of formality of context is a determining factor. The forms used to address friends and family members differ according to the formality of the social context. (Keshavarz: 2001). In this case, relational honorifics (Farghal: 2002; Farghal and Shakir: 1994) can be split into intimate and distant honorifics. The former are used to address close relatives, while the latter are appropriate with other people.

Social intimacy and social distance between members of a speech community vary according to such features as age, sex, social class, and social roles. Terms of address used between people who work together, or who are members of the same family, or who belong to the same social class are not similar to those used with others. These terms identify both participants to the speech event. Terms of address correspond to the individual's own characteristics. Language, then, varies according to the social characteristics of the speaker and according to the social context where the speech event occurs. Terms of address identify the regional and social background of the addressee or addressor. Personal names, as true terms of address, are not bestowed freely upon a person. They are given according to several criteria such as birth, descent, prestige, social class, etc.

Since forms of address reflect complex social networks, local speech community does not consider naming a person as an arbitrary process of identification, but rather as a means of identifying the social background of the person named. First and full official names, for instance, are considered as address forms, since they enable speakers to identify their interlocutors, or to be identified.

Names constitute a symbol of personal identification. The link between name and bearer is part of the individual's identity. As such,

the act of naming a person denotes expectations or objectives of the namers.

## *2.1 Implications of Personal Names*

As forms of address (Parkinson 1985: 43; Leyew: 2003), names are not only a linguistic but also a cultural manifestation of any given speech community. They carry information about people and their social behaviour, and function as a symbolic system of personal and group identity. Names vary according to age, sex, and social class membership of bearer.

In general, all societies share the common background that each individual holds at least one name. However, differences may exist between individuals and societies concerning their ways of naming children, particularly if the names denote social characteristics, regional belongings, and historical events. Most names are arbitrary words used to identify and differentiate between a person and another in a given place at a given moment. They are chosen from a local stock, and correspond to various happenings. Sometimes, names reflect local social hierarchies (Salih and Bader: 1999) and perform the act of identifying reference.

In the following lines, we give a few details about "first" and "full official" names, as well as "titles of status" used by the Touat speech community. Names are not bestowed upon a person randomly; they are a reflection of deep social networks of which the nominal stock is restricted by standards of use.

## *2.2 Personal First Names*

Names reflect the "conceptual and sociocultural reality" of society (Akinaso 1980: 277, qtd. in Salih and Bader 1999: 30). The Touat community respects Muslim and Arab traditional patterns of bestowing first and last names. Arabic onomastics and anthroponomy (Al-Qalli: 2002) show that there are standards of use of male and female first names. These norms are the following:



- Theophoric names with prefix "Abd-el-..." Abdelkader, Abdallah, etc.
- Names of Prophet Mohamed: Mohamed, Ahmed, Mustapha, etc.
- Names with Prophet Mohamed's epithets: Adel, Amine, Bachir, Burhan, Mounir, etc.
- Names of prophets: Aissa, Mousa, Ibrahim, Idriss, Ismail, Younes, Youcef, etc.
- Names of the Prophet Mohamed's family/descent and companions: Aoubakr, Aicha, Ali, Hamza, Khadidja, Omar, Othmane, etc.
- Names of the Koran's verses: Anfal, Ikhlas, Imran, Kawthar, Mariam, etc.
- Names prefixed to "...-eddine": Chamseddine, Kheireddine, etc.
- Names of famous places; Marwa, Muna, etc.
- Names with prefix "Abd-en- (apart God)": Abdennebi, etc.
- Names of Muslim months: Chaaban, Rabia, Rabiaa, Rajab, Ramadan, etc.
- Names of days: Achour, Achoura, Boudjemaa, Djemaa, Khemis, etc.
- Names of occasions/events: Aid, Belaid, Belaida, Harbi, Miloud, Mouloud, etc.
- Names of colour: Kahlouche, Samra, Souidani, Zarqa, etc.
- Names of planets: Badr, Chihab, Hilal, Qamra, etc.
- Names of animals: Abbas, Fahd, Tawas, etc.
- Names of plants: Khoukha, Nakhla, Warda, Yasmina, Zahra, Zhor, Zohra, etc.

As a way of illustration, a few examples of first names are instanced. The data are gathered throughout a questionnaire whereby university students (n = 100) were asked about their parents and grand-parents' first names. Another set of data is collected from the university's board of registration (n = 217) on which the names of the students and their parents are reported.

Some people bear two different names; the first is a term of status. The second is a personal name. Muslim names, such as "Has-san, Mulay, Al-Ouafi, As-Said, Hiba, Malluk," and theophoric names with the prefix "Abd-al..." as "Abdelkader, Abdallah" are frequently used (Mecheri: 2003 273ff).

Table 1: Examples of Male First Names

Criteria	Names
1. Theophoric names	Abdallah, Abdelkader, Abdelkrim, Abdelmoula, Abderrahman, Abderrahim
2. Prophet Mohamed's names	Ahmed, Boufeldja, Boumedienne, Bouamama, Mohamed
3. The Prophet's epithets	Al-Ouafi, Amine, Chafi'i, Cherif, Habib, Mabrouk, Mahmoud, Sadek, Tahar, Tayeb, Yacine, etc.
4. Prophets' names	Daoud, Driss, Ibrahim, Ismail, Moussa, Salah, Slimane
5. The Prophet's house/descent and companions	Abbas, Aboubakr, Ali, Hamza, Hassan, Hussein
6. Names with prefix 'Abd-el- (apart God)':	Abdennebi, Abdelhadi, Abdelfodil
7. Names of Muslim months	Chaabane, Ramdane
8. Occasions/events	Belaid, Miloud, Mouloud
9. Names of colour	Lahmar, Lakhdar
10. Names of planets	Nadjem
11. Names of days	Achour, Boudjemaa, Khemis
12. Names of animals	Abbas, Fahd

The table shows that, although Adrar's naming system respects the general Arabo-Muslim patterns of bestowing names upon children, it does not completely act in accordance with it. For example, we do not find first names prefixed to "-eddine," or that refer to the verses of the Koran.

Male names can be used either alone or in connection with another term, particularly a status term. The other terms can also be used alone without the name depending on the situation and context. If a speaker addresses a person, he can choose among the following options:

- The name alone: as in Abdelkrim, Youcef, Hasan
- The name with a status title: Mulay Abdelkrim, Sidi Youcef, bba Hasan
- The title alone: Mulay, Sidi, bba.

These three choices convey different social meanings. They reflect intimacy and/or lack of respect between speakers as in the use of name alone. They also express acquaintance and respect between the participants, as in the use of name + status title. The third option means no acquaintance but respect to the person addressed.

The women have their personal first name system. The following table reports some female names used by Adrar speech community. We notice that the female name system does not follow the same criteria as those of the men:

*Table 2: Examples of Female First Names.*

Criteria	Names
1. The Prophet's epithets	Al-Ouafia, Amina, Cherifa, Fadoul, Habiba, Mabrouka, Mebarka, Mimouna, Rokaya, Safia, Tahra
2. The Prophet's house/descent and companions	Aicha, Asma, Batoul, Khadidja, Oul-kalthoum, Saadia, Zeinab, Zeinaba
3. Names of days	Djemaa
4. Names of Muslim months	Achoura
5. Occasions/events	Belaida, Milouda
6. Names of colour	Khadra, Samra
7. Names of planets	Souhair
8. Names of plants	Warda, Yasmina, Zahra, Zhor, Zohra

We can find some female first names which are seldom used in northern Algeria. For instance, we have Alkhadem "the servant," Mardijja "satisfied," and Tayaa "the obeying." First names such as Aminata, Embirika, Fatimata, and Yaminata are still used in Aoulef as Muslim-African proper names (Schottmann 2000: 82).

### 2.3 Full Official Name

Family names may be a "laqab," that is a "family name', which can be appended, at will, in place of the grandfather's, or the great-grandfather's name, or after them both. This is usually not a first name but rather some distinguishing characteristic of the family" (Parkinson: 1985 48). In the Touat, we can note that family names are chosen according to Arabo-Muslim patterns. Among these, we have:

*Table 3: Some Family Names Used as "Laqab"*

Honorific Arab tribal names	(Al-)Alaoui, Al-Hachemi, Al-Maghili, Al-Omari, Al-Tidjani, Mahrax and Maharzi, Mansouri, Hallali, Yaichaoui, Yaichi, Ouled Abbas, Ouled Abbou, Ouled Ba Mahdi, Ouled Bouhafis, Ouled Khodeir, Ouled Othmane, etc.
Honorific place names	Al-Bekrawi, Al-Bekri, Al-Kounti, Al-Maghili, Al-Reggani, Al-Tamantiti, Al-Tinboukti, Al-Tinilani, Al-Touati, Yamani, etc.
Names referring to former slaves	Abid, Aboud, Benabid, etc.
Names referring to an occupation	Segai "the (water) pourer," Kiyyal "water measurer," Haddad the blacksmith," Moqaddem "person in charge of a Zawya."
Names referring to a religious occupation	Zaoui "Zawya teacher," Mrabet the Marabout."

### 2.4 Foreign names

In The Touat, a number of African names are assimilated to local reservoir. For example Ahmadou, Bahou, Bakhou, Chankla/Changla, Fendou, Fendaoui, Fullane, Foulani, Forma, Kamju, Kentaoui, Kikmu/Kigmu, Kounta, Kounti, Niklou, Nigilou, Tambou, Tambouli,

Tambaoui, Touki, Oukkadou and Couma/Gouma are originally sub-Saharan family names.

### 3. Titles of Status or Status Terms

Speech communities may have rules concerning the use of terms of respect or of status which are particularly used between speakers of equal and unequal ranks (Trudgill: 2000). Speech between these people is more formal than if the participants are equal peers, friends, brothers and sisters. The use of titles of status preceding the first personal name respects the notion of personal "face" as well as "politeness" (Brown and Yule: 1996 60; Lakoff: 1972 909; Watts: 2003 86; Affui: 2006).

The category of social honorifics can be split into relational and absolute honorifics (Levinson: 1983). Absolute honorifics are used to address people of certain social rank and position, such as [Hakim] for a Doctor, [Siderrajas] for a Judge, and [HaDaraat] for a police officer. They are fixed both in form and allocation.

The category of relational honorifics can subdivide into distant and intimate relational honorifics. Titles of address pertain to the first sub-category. They are linked to a certain class of addressees, and set distant relationships between speaker and addressee. The second subcategory, relational social honorifics, reflects direct relationships between speakers and addressees.

In the Touatian speech community, systems of terms of status exist. Their use creates levels of distance/intimacy and formality/informality between speakers. A kinship term, such as [bba], functions either as a distant or as an intimate absolute kin term when addressing or referring to a person. When used before a personal name to address or to refer to the person, it is a distant absolute kin term whose value is that of a title of address. When it does not occur next to a first name, it is an intimate absolute kin term.

In the Touat, titles of status are used both to address and to refer to people of the same Class/Caste, but are prohibited for the other levels of the social hierarchy. Chorfas have their own titles; they employ them between themselves exclusively. When communicating

with, or are saluted by the other levels of the social ladder (the Arabs, Lajouad, Harratines, slaves, etc.) they require that their status-titles, such as "Mulay" (My Master) and "Sidi" (My Lord) for the males, "Lalla" (My Lady) and "Moulate" (My Mistress) for the females, be prefixed to their personal names so as not to be diminished or minimised.

The status title "Mulay" is now borne by Chorfas children as a proper name, and is registered on their birth certificates, identity cards, and passports. The Chorfas address their kids with the titles "Sidi" and "Mulay" preceding their personal names. Status terms can be used following a certain pattern. For example, a Cherif is never addressed with the diminutive term "Si," which comes from Arabic "Sidi" – "My Master." He is called with the full status term "Sidi" either alone or preceding his proper name. As an illustration, we report the following examples:

Bba Messaoud, Bba Maarouf,  
Cheikh Sidi El-Bekri Benabdelkrim Tamentiti,  
Cheikh Mulay Abdallah Reggani,  
Cheikh Sid El-Mokhtar El-Kounti,  
Cheikh Sidi Bba Hamou Ben-Hnini,  
Cheikh Ahmed Ben Sidi Bba Hamou,  
Cheikh Sidi Ahmadou,  
Cheikh Mulay Lahcen,  
Sidi Mohamed Essalem, Sidi Mohamed Essalah,  
Sidi El-Hadj Bou-Ahmed, Sid El-Hadj Bou-Lghait.

At the level of titles, old white Chorfas women are addressed exclusively as [Cherifa- Safia- Lalla- Moulate- Setti]. Nowadays, Chorfas women are named with the titles "Lalla" and "Moulate" (from CA /mawlaati/ "My Mistress") prefixed to any personal name, for example: "Lalla Aicha," "Lalla Zahra," "Moulate Aicha" and "Moulate Zahra."

## Conclusion

The preceding sections show that the Touatian speech community is still stratified. It does not allow for any crossing over of its hermetic social stratification; and this is obvious in the naming structure which is prevailing among the members of the community. Moreover, the use of titles of status is a clear illustration that the Touatian speech community has a discriminatory designation system which sets rigid rules for bestowing names onto children. The titles of status which are appended or prefixed to proper names instantiate the complexity that characterises the Touatian speech community in matter of verbal communication. The fact that titles of status are reported on identity cards is a clear manifestation that the community is not about to change its secular human organisation; on the reverse, the community is reinforcing its rigidity and is not ready for any change.

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