

Morphosyntactic differences between proper names and common nouns in Riffian

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The Riffian language is spoken in the Rif mountains and belongs to the Berber language family. Riffian has a noun category and Berber linguists consider that proper and common nouns as subgroups of this part of speech (Penchoen 1973). I will add that proper names may also be divided between anthroponym and toponym. These two classes, which are subdivisible into other groups yet, are lied to because one can become the other by derivation processes. The onomastic study that I have carried out proposes to enumerate the morpho-syntactic differences between these categories in order to discuss their classification. The table below resumes our results:

		Morphology					Syntax		
		Pronomi-nalisable by <i>wi-</i>	Pronomi-nalisable by <i>manay-</i>	Annexion state	Prefix <i>bu-</i>	Plural <i>ayt</i>	Plural ext./int.	Syntactic functions Obj.	Nominal Ind. syntagma
Common noun	animate noun	X		X	X		X	X	
	inanimate noun		X	X	X		X	X	
	anthroponym	X		(X)	X		X	X	(X)
Proper noun	toponym			X	X	X	X		X
	ethnonym			X	X	X	X		
	demonym with <i>-i</i>			X			X	X	
	demonym with <i>u-</i>				X	X		X	

Table 1: Morphosyntactic differences between proper names and common nouns in Riffian.

As we can see, there is not a clear evidence that proper and common nouns are totally different. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions. Thus, there is the ‘annexion state’ that we do not find used intensively in the personal names. Additionally, regarding the syntactic unity, the personal names can be utterances (e.g. *ta aytmas* ‘She has brothers.’), yet, this particularity appears to be archaic (Chaker 1985). I also notice that the inanimate demonstrative pronoun *manay-* is reserved for inanimate nouns, whereas the plural morpheme *ayt* is solely used with the proper nouns. So they meet within one category which might be considered as an indication that they are two distinct categories. However, these morphemes are excluded from some subgroups, consequently, it seems that semantic constraints must force the association of *manay-* and *ayt* with subgroups and not others. Our conclusion is that there is no evidence supporting that they are two different paradigms.

References: • Chaker, S. 1985. Onomastique berbère ancienne (Antiquité/Moyen-Âge): Rupture et continuité. In S. Lancel (ed.), *Actes de 11^e colloque international sur l’histoire et l’archéologie de l’Afrique du Nord*, 483–497. Paris: Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques. • Penchoen, T. G. 1973. *Tamazight of the Ayt Ndhir*. Los Angeles: Udena.