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Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies

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The Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies

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The current issue is the third of the tenth volume of the *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies (AJMS)*, published by the [Athens Institute for Education and Research](#).

Gregory T. Papanikos
President
ATINER



Athens Institute for Education and Research

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The [Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs](https://www.atiner.gr) organizes the 18th Annual International Conference on Mediterranean Studies, 14-18 April 2025, Athens, Greece sponsored by the [Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies](https://www.atiner.gr). The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers from all areas of Mediterranean Studies, such as history, arts, archaeology, philosophy, culture, sociology, politics, international relations, economics, business, sports, environment and ecology, etc. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2025/FORM-MDT.doc>).

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- Abstract Submission: **17 September 2024**
- Submission of Paper: **17 March 2025**

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- Abstract Submission: **7 May 2024**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **20 May 2024**

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The Political and Media Landscape in Greece and Italy: Populism and the Public Sphere

By Gennadiy Chernov*

The goal of the current study is to explore how media experts and members of the general public view the level of inclusion of populist discourse in public sphere. After all, if certain segments of the public feel that they have no access to the expression of their views, it could lead only to their further radicalization. Greece and Italy were selected for this study as these countries both had Right-wing and Left-wing populist movements. Neglecting either of the extremes may allow for making the picture of populist landscape less complete and balanced. Two methods were used: qualitative interviews with communications experts, and focus group discussions with randomly selected participants. There were three specific questions asked to both the experts and focus group participants. The preliminary results indicate that experts agree that there are some limitations on the freedom of speech related to populist movements, but these limitations are due more to the provisions of the hate speech law than to deliberate stifling of undesirable views. The focus group discussion concurred with experts on the broad latitude of acceptance of what and how ordinary people are able to express their views, however, the participants pointed at doubts on their behalf about actual possibilities that these expressions may lead to any change in political life and legislation related to the concerns of ordinary citizens. They also think that in regards to populism, younger populations are more concerned with their economic status while older populations worry more about threats to cultural identity.

Keywords: *populism, the public sphere, mainstream media, democracy*

Introduction

The growth of social movements broadly addressed as populist has led to multiple efforts in understanding it both as a phenomenon and a potential threat to democracy (Betz 2004). Populism is at the intersection course with the public sphere mediated by the general and social media. Populism, especially right-wing populism, is considered to be the Revolt against Liberal Democracy (Eatwell and Goodwin 2018).

It seems as though an ideal solution for any frictions inside society could be the idea of “the public sphere” proposed by Habermas (1989). The public may be able to have their voice heard through different modes of communications creating a communicative space. New political transnational institutions may meet the public through the networks. This may allow for a transnational discourse in new communicative spaces (Volkmer 2014). Public space as it was understood by Habermas must be consensus-oriented and rational (Habermas 2001). Populist

*Associate Professor, University of Regina, Canada.

movements and their discourse often do not possess these characteristics. Media often either ignore or negatively cover populist leaders and their ideology (Aalberg et al. 2016). However, some scholars believe that these attitudes only invigorate populist adherents, and that “...both exclusion and inclusion of right-wing populist voices wield counter-productive effects” (Korstenbroek 2022, p. 68).

The goal of the current study is to explore how media experts and members of the general public view the level of inclusion of populist discourse in the public sphere. After all, if certain segments of the public feel that they have no access to the expression of their views, it could only lead to their further radicalization.

Italy and Greece were selected for this study as these countries both had Right-wing and Left-wing populist movements. Not giving special attention to either of the extremes may allow for the picture of the populist landscape to become less complete and balanced.

There are three specific questions:

- 1) Do the media treat populist movements and their sympathisers negatively and or/ignore them?
- 2) Is there a difference in media coverage of Right-wing and Left-wing populist movements?
- 3) Do ordinary people think that those with populist views may have a limited access to express their views, especially in social media?

Populism

Populism has become a buzzword over the last decades (Rooduijn 2019). The number of scholarly articles and books dedicated to this phenomenon is increasing (Aalberg et al. 2016). Its definitions vary, and many researchers disagree over how broadly this term may apply to the phenomenon. Jagers and Walgrave (2007) gave a description of the populism types that are often used in literature: 1) Complete populism appeals to the people, it is directed against elites and excludes out-groups. 2) Excluding populism appeals to the people and excludes out-groups. 3) Anti-elitism populism appeals to the people and anti-elitism, and 4) Empty populism appeals to the people only.

Despite the main focus being on the right-wing populism, the left-wing populism not only has a strong presence in some countries (Aalberg et al. 2016), but both right and left-wing branches also can have a unified impact on the democracies during crises (Podobnik et al. 2019).

When it comes to covering populism, the media face two problems: covering populist movements too much or trying to ignore them. Even negative coverage of the populist stances, players, and events puts populists in the spotlight of attention. “Right-wing populists receive more attention and voter support if the issues they are strongly associated with receive a lot of coverage” (Krämer and Langmann 2020, p. 5645).

Public Sphere

The public sphere creates space and opportunities to express the views circulating in society and to form what is called public opinion (Habermas 1991). Rational debate is the format that could lead to a consensus in a society. However, in the public sphere mediated by media and institutions there may be limited space for a debate. “Publicity is not about debate but about public relations to win the public *acquiescence*” (Perez 2013, p. 17). It is also far from being rational, especially when we evaluate discussions happening in social media. “The Habermasian model... disallows emotions a place within the political. Yet, this distinction hinges on a rather narrow and ultimately exclusive understanding of the political as a realm of merely purposeful, rational and public deliberation.

“And this becomes problematic when confronted with the nature of contemporary public and political life that (increasingly) contains a private and emotional dimension.” (Korstenbroek 2022, pp. 76–77). The same author also suggests that the disfranchisement of right-populism followers should be considered seriously, and warns against completely shutting them out from the public sphere and debate.

In Europe, the public space issue is complicated because it comprises both national states and transnational agencies and institutions embodied in the European Union. Wessels (2009) states that the public sphere is shaped by people’s participation, the state and communications’ outlets of different types. However, the author laments a lack of European identity in all three components. It is even more pronounced at the level of populist movements and individuals. Populists are often critical of any European institutions or media. It is not surprising that populists are limited in their participation in the public sphere. “The idea of publicity’ underpinned the public sphere and pointed to the public use of reason, free of manipulation and coercion” (Wessels 2009, p. 154). Those who have difficulties with entering the public sphere may feel alienated, but this alienation becomes part of a broader process in which citizens feel distrust in their nation states and transnational institutions (Wessels 2009). However, both distrust and alienation contradict the very principle the public sphere is based on. “The concept of the public sphere would thus be inclusive, as everyone should be able to participate and interact together in a debate (Bee and Bello 2009, p.131).

Schlesinger (2002) noted that populists’ sentiments are fed by groups losing their social weight reflected in lost self-esteem and “a corresponding lack of voice” (p. 1551). Although the author considers right-wing populism as a dominant form, he also mentions left-wing populism sharing some characteristics of the former. The deep structure that leads left-wing populism to radically distinguish between friends and enemies is shared with that of right-wing populism (p. 1551). Populism’s place in the Internet age is not only leads to important consequences for the public sphere. The current societal instability makes the question what kind of the public sphere we have: the public sphere referred to as either “disrupted public sphere” (Bennett and Pfetsch 2018) or a “post-public sphere” (Schlesinger 2020). “The idea of a post-public sphere designates the breakdown of an existing

model, signalling uncertainty about how long it will take for another ensemble to develop.” (Schlesinger 2020, p. 1554).

Populism and the Public Sphere: Research Problem

Democracy is interrelated with the public sphere. To participate in any democratic process means to have an access to the public sphere for expressing citizens’ views and being exposed to the views of the others. The mainstream media and the political establishment in many European countries either ignore or criticize rising populism movements and their adherents. The question is whether it also affects access to the public sphere for the ordinary people who may share some of the views supported by the populist parties and their leaders.

Methods

The current study relied on qualitative methods – focus groups and in-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews method involved open-ended questions and were done face-to-face. In-depth interviews were conducted with the researchers who deal with the issues of political populism and the public sphere.

A focus group discussion was conducted to assess the participants’ views on 1) how the political processes related to populist movements were covered by the media, and 2) whether they are able to express their views openly in the public sphere including social media.

The Case of Greece

Two mainstream parties, the center-left PASOK and the center-right New Democracy party, determined the political landscape of Greece for nearly 40 years (Nevradakis 2018). However, the unabated economic crisis which started in 2008 led to the crumbling of the influence on behalf of the established parties. The general population was unhappy with a series of austerity measures and protested a long-term fall in living standards. This mainly economic discontent pre-empted the rise of the left-wing populist movement called Syriza. The party won the elections in 2014 promising to reject austerity measures implemented under pressure from lending institutions of the European Union. However, the coalition led by Syriza failed to materialize its promises to the Greek society. The key demands on behalf of the lenders were fulfilled. A failure to deliver unrealistic promises backfired, and Syriza lost to the New Democracy in 2019 (Mavrozacharakis 2019). Recent legislative elections in 2023 demonstrated a resurgence of the right populism as well. Spartans and Greek Solution, which were relatively new political parties, won about 9% of the popular vote and are presented in the Greek parliament (Reuters 2023).

The mainstream media and social networks are well developed in Greece, and they both reflect the variety of opinions and give the expression platform for people to participate in the public sphere. However, social media broadened the access to the public sphere and opened the channels for marginalized groups including those who share the views of populism movements (Nevradakis 2018).

Results

Interview

The interview was conducted with Gregory T. Papanikos, a well-known expert in the field of media and communication, the President of Athens Institute for Education and Research in Greece, Honorary Professor of Economics, University of Stirling, UK; and Professor, MLC Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Dr. Papanikos considered the connection between populism and the public sphere in a broader context. The notion of freedom of expression in a democratic society permeates this connection. He revoked the terms of “*isegoria*” and “*parrhesia*” from the Greek intellectual tradition.

Isegoria evolved over the centuries, but in its essence, this term denotes an equality to speak for all people publicly. That act encompasses the right to speak at the assemblies, but also the media expression falls under this definition. According to Pananikos, both the general media and alternative and social media in Greece enjoy a substantive level of freedom of expression. Not only mainstream views could be expressed. In addition, the views of fringe groups could be covered by the media and people may share them in social media. However, there is a noticeable restriction to such a right. This restriction makes freedom of speech qualified by Greece’s legislation that criminalizes “hate speech” leading to the incitement of violence or hatred. These incitements are prohibited if they lead to violations of public order and endanger freedom and the lives of other people. Another term, “*parrhesia*”, also deals with freedom of speech. It is about the freedom to speak anything, especially honestly and even critically about different aspects of public life. Populist movements often criticize different policies and those who are in power. Criticism is the core of politically engaged journalism. The left-wing populist movement Syriza benefitted from this type of freedom of speech in 2014 when Greece lived through enormous political and economic crises in 2014. The party had more electoral success than mainstream or right wing parties. One of the reasons for the party’s success lay in the fact that the crises had mostly economic roots, and left-wing populists make economy and equal distribution their main tenets.

Dr. Pananikos stressed that it is not only large political parties that enjoy a relatively broad freedoms of speech in both the media and in their public campaigns. Smaller parties and fringe parties enjoy a similar level of freedom. There is no legal suppression for fringe parties in terms of their access to the public space and freedom to speak freely about their positions. The followers of such parties have similar freedoms in expressing their views in social media.

Large parties have more mainstream media coverage. This happens in part because they usually command more public interest and their views may seem to be more acceptable for the established media. However, smaller parties still have their share of media attention. Nevertheless, social media is the main place for small parties. It is relatively easy and fast for such parties to set up their presence, to mobilize supporters and sympathizers, and to react immediately to breaking news and important events.

Dr. Pananikos concluded that populist movements emerged when mainstream parties did not manage economic, social and political challenges in a timely manner. The populist movements offer rather easy fixes and simplistic solutions which helps them attract certain segments of population. However, when in power, the populist movements may fail to deliver their promises, demonstrating that such simplistic solutions could not resolve complex issues in practice. Such failures lead to losses of support and power. That what happened with the Syriza-led government.

Focus Group Discussion

Five participants took part in a focus group discussion. They were recruited through newspaper advertisements. However, due to the COVID limitations, the discussion was conducted via zoom. All participants were under the age of 40. It was not an intentional choice. Only participants in this age group responded. The main issues they face were the current state of economy and living costs. They believed that they mostly had free speech when they wanted to express their views. They mostly express their views on social media. They felt limited only by the criminal laws. They considered the media to be mostly free and often partisan in their political views. Participants do not feel that political parties are genuine in their promise to protect the social and economic interests of the populace. They often used a general term “politicians” to refer to those in power with the disconnect between words and deeds. The media in general are characterised as serving political interests with social media as the key entry point into the public sphere for most of the people.

In terms of populism, none of the participants claimed their adherence to either right-wing or left-wing populism. They are aware of their existence, but not certain that these parties have either leverage or will to change things for the better. In terms of their political views, participants seem to be more on the Left, and they were mainly concerned with economic issues. All participants claimed that cost of living was high, education was expensive and did not necessarily led to decent jobs. Some complained that their salaries are low and stagnant. Some participants characterised economic problems as the key issue in the country even if they did not complain about their personal situation. One person raised an immigration issue. This issue is one of the most dominant issues in the right-wing populism discourse. The participant listed potential consequences of the uncontrolled immigration: fear increases in crime rate and the possibility of “stealing jobs” by immigrants. However, none of them was considering joining extreme left-wing or right-wing movements. Nevertheless, they may join one of these movements if the

situation will worsen. This thought was expressed when the participants considered a scenario of worsening economic condition would worsen.

The participants think that they are not barred from the public sphere. They do not think that there is no freedom of speech for any political group or ordinary citizens. They think that political parties and the general media are able to address any issues facing the country freely. The participants believe that they may express their views as well using social media.

On the other hand, the participants doubted that whatever they think or express in the public may change or influence the current situation. Their message could be expressed simply: they can speak what they think, but the elites don't listen and do not care. It means that at some point these people may become radicalized.

The Case of Italy

Political and Media Landscape

Political parties in Italy have experienced a significant shift from a more or less predictable competition between mainstream established parties ranging from left-of-center, social democratic to right-of-center, business oriented sides of a continuum. This process is common to most of the Western European countries. However, it was especially characteristic for Italy by the time that this study was conducted. The 2018 elections led to a unique situation where the most successful parties - MP5, more on the left, and Lega, firmly on the right - could be legitimately classified as populist. They pushed back more established parties such as the Democratic Party and Forza Italia. This dramatic shift gave a chance for the general public to observe how the populist rhetoric could translate into actions.

Mainstream media in Italy traditionally had their preferences in politics based on the political divisions and representations over the decades. The private empire led by Silvio Berlusconi consisted of a set of broadcasting companies, and supported their boss and broader right leaning forces. The leading national dailies *Il Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica* criticized right wing parties and governments, and expressed support to left-of-center established political parties (D'Arma 2015).

The government formed after the elections was dominated by populists Di Maio and Salvini. Aside from being populists, these politicians differed mostly in their political program and aspirations. However, these populist movements had another common feature: they did not rely on the established media in their communications with potential electorate. They preferred to appeal to their constituencies directly through public gatherings, and relied heavily on the social media based on the interactive platforms. If the mainstream parties still heavily relied on the mediating role of the established media in their interactions with the citizens, the populist movements and their leaders relied more on decentralized dialogue with their followers in social media. The logic behind this strategy is based on seeking popularity not among journalistic establishment, but among like-minded supporters. The populist discourse is also not modified by journalistic

gatekeepers (Mazzoleni and Bracciale 2018). Moreover, this discourse allows for populist leaders to claim to be the only democratic discourse including voices that are not heard by the elites including the media.

Interview

Gianpietro Mazzoleni has been a professor of sociology of communication and of political communication at the University of Milan (Italy) until his retirement. He is a prominent researcher in the field of political communication. The interview took place in Milan at the end of 2018.

Dr. Mazzoleni stressed the fact that populist parties, the Five Star Movement (M5S) and the Lega have risen to prominence recently spurred by the deep disappointment in mainstream parties on behalf of a large segment of Italian society. M5S was a new party with many populist features, some of which could be characterized as left-leaning. The Lega was not strictly new. But it turned into a national party before the elections. It had been a regional party for most of its history.

The mainstream left-wing and center media initially tried to either ignore or criticize both movements. The media depicted them as dangerous forces threatening a democratic setup of the country. The mainstream right-wing media which was mainly controlled by a former Prime Minister Sylvio Berlusconi, also attacked the M5S, however, it did not spare the Lega from criticism as well. The reason was that the populist party led by Salvini threatened to sway some supporters of the established Forza Italia to their side. When both populist parties entered the government, they both toned down their criticism of the parties which were closer to them on political spectrum.

Dr. Mazzoleni also noted that the populist narrative about the irreconcilable schism between political elites and ordinary people nearly disappeared from their discourse as these parties themselves became political elites. The populist parties had some support from a few sources aligned with mainstream media, but in general they continue to rely on the direct contact with the supporters in gathering and, most of all, in social media.

Dr. Mazzoleni also expressed an interesting thought that these populist parties are limited by the constitution and the existing laws in what they can do. They can still keep their revolutionary rhetoric, but they cannot act as radical as they claim during the electoral campaign.

Dr. Mazzoleni also emphasized relative freedom of speech entertained both by the media and the population entering the public sphere in their gathering and social media expressions. These expressions are limited by criminal laws, but if the expressions in the public sphere are within the constitutional rights, these views are not prohibited even if they are in support of populist parties.

Focus Group Discussion

Four participants took part in focus group discussion. They were recruited through newspaper advertisements. The discussion was conducted in November, 2018 in person. This discussion took place several months after general elections in Italy. All participants were under the age of 40. Again, only participants at this age group responded.

The participants characterized mainstream media as mostly partisan. The main national newspapers and RAI which is the public broadcasting company in Italy, gravitated to the left politically. Key television stations owned by Silvio Berlusconi (Mediaset) have right-wing political leanings. However, the participants thought that the general media is mostly free in expressing its political and cultural positions.

The participants also generally agree that the established media both on the right and on the left has been mostly critical of the populist movements both before elections and after those parties formed the government.

They point at the seriousness of the issues which propelled both branches of populism in power. The M5S focuses more on economic and social problems, and Lega concentrated on the illegal immigration. The discussants agree that these issues are very prominent, and the general public was concerned about them. The actions of the populist government obviously had more coverage than before, but the tone is still mostly negative. Populist parties relied more on the social media than on the mainstream media in promoting their message both before and after the elections.

Although admitting that previous mainstream governments failed to meaningfully address these issues, the participants stress that populist parties mostly promised to solve many of these problems, but they didn't offer clear and coherent solutions. The populist government consisted of people who don't have any experience in governing the country.

Responding to the question whether ordinary people have access to the public sphere and freedom of expression of their views, the participants confirm that they are not only able to access the public space, but also have enough freedom to express their thoughts in the social media. Their main concern is that the governments do not fulfill their obligations, and the elites including the mainstream media do not treat the concerns of the ordinary people seriously.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study looked at whether the political crises in Greece and Italy had an impact on the populist movements in terms of the limitations on freedom of speech. It also explored whether the general public enjoyed unhampered access to the public sphere, especially to the social media, and whether the ordinary people had sufficient freedoms in expressing their views on social media.

This study explored how the media and general population treat the rise of populism in Greece and Italy, two Southern European countries having both left-

and right-wing populist parties. These parties were successful in the general elections in 2010s, and were the main forces in the governments of these countries. Another question investigated whether ordinary people have free access to the public sphere, especially whether they can freely express their political views on social media.

To answer these questions, leading experts from the scientific community of these countries were interviewed, and the focus group discussions with randomly selected participants were conducted.

The experts maintained that the mainstream media tended to be more supportive of more established parties, depending on their political stance: the media leaning right tended to support the parties right of center, and the media leaning left gravitated more to the left-wing parties. However, the mainstream media usually either ignored or covered the populist parties negatively regardless of their own political leaning. When the populist parties came to power, the media couldn't ignore them, but still criticized them, especially if the populist parties were with opposite political leanings.

Interestingly, both experts were sceptical about real achievements of the governments with dominant populist influence. They come to power making multiple promises and offering easy solutions, and they fail to materialize their promises because the problems they face are extremely complex and difficult for them to solve to the same extent as they were difficult to solve by the established parties.

Both experts agree that the ordinary people in general have broad access to the public sphere and they are mostly free in expressing their political views regardless whether they support established or populist parties. The key restriction they face is when certain speech falls within the criminal law.

The participants of focus groups in both countries singled out the key public issues - economic downturn and immigration. The cost of living, low salaries, unemployment and other issues belonging to the economic realm, are even more important for them. The reason for this could be their young age and personal experience in struggling with economic problems.

The participants think that the mainstream media cover populist parties more negatively than the established parties, but they also stress the gap between any politicians and the electorate. In general, the participants are sceptical about politicians' ability and desire to really change lives of the ordinary people for the best. None of the participants said that they belong to any populist movements, but they also claim that the longer the societal problems persist, the longer the established parties demonstrate their helplessness in solving them the more people will turn to populists.

As for their own access to the public sphere, they contend that they feel free to express their views in public and on social media. However, they also claim that the political elites, media and other institutions do not care about their concerns and ignore what people think. As one of the participants put it, 'we can say, but nobody listens to us'. This perceived helplessness is a worrying sign because democracy is not only about access to the public sphere, to the public debate, but

also a form of governance where people feel that their participation leads to positive changes for them.

This study has certain limitations, related to the selection of the participants. First of all, there were only nine of them, four in Italy and five- in Greece. These numbers are marginally acceptable for focus groups, but generalizations based on these numbers may be limited. Another limitation is the participants' age. They all were under the age of 40, meaning that a very large portion of the older population is not included in the study. The older people could have different points of views, and have more diverse experiences with the media and the public sphere.

One of the implications of the study could be another investigation with larger numbers of participants. Similar studies may include surveys as a methodological tool which may strengthen its generalisability. It could be illuminating to see how people evaluate whether the populist parties are successful in delivering their promises, whether their messages change and whether the media cover them in different ways. It could also be interesting to see whether being in power makes populist parties more moderate and more acceptable.

It could be concluded that the world experiences growing complexity and faces multiple challenges. Failures to address them in a satisfactory manner lead to multiple political crises. These failures may also breed such political phenomena forms as populism. As Pananikos (2022) stated, "Despite the differences in the practice of democracy it seems that populism cannot be avoided" (p. 90). Democracy will continue to evolve and its success to a substantial degree will depend on the honest and representative role of the media and broad access of the citizens to the public sphere.

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The Ustica Tragedy in 1980 Italy: War in the Mediterranean?

By *Mariele Merlati**

On June 27 1980, during the night, a civil airplane (DC-9 Itavia) flying from Bologna to Palermo in Italy blew up and disappeared into the Mediterranean Sea next to Ustica island. All 81 passengers on board died. The most complete inquiry conducted by Judge Rosario Priore concluded in 1999 that the DC-9 accident “occurred following military interception activity”. It did not, however, identify any guilty party. In 2007 Francesco Cossiga, who was Prime Minister in 1980, declared that the DC-9 was mistakenly shot down by a French missile, so leading to the reopening of the case with new international information requests. More recently Giuliano Amato, a PSI leader and Prime Minister in 1992, partially confirmed Cossiga’s words, speaking about a NATO covert action aimed to strike a Libyan aircraft (because of the alleged presence of Qadhafi on board) which was hiding itself under the Italian civil airplane. More than forty years after the events, however, we still do not know exactly what the reasons underlying the tragedy were and which countries were guilty and the Ustica tragedy is still one of the biggest unsolved mysteries of Italy. The aim of the present paper is not, of course, that to reach a complete conclusion as to who is directly to blame for the tragedy. As an international historian, the aim of the author is instead to turn back to the events of that time trying to put together the many pieces of the puzzle and to provide a plausible international framework for the tragedy. It is not possible, in fact, to isolate what happened in Italy on June 27 1980 from the patchwork of international tension of that time (from Afghanistan and Iran to Middle East, North Africa and Malta just to mention the main arc of crisis) as well as from the traditional dual track of Italy’s foreign policy, the Atlantic one and the Mediterranean one.

Keywords: *Ustica, Italy, Libya, War, Cold War*

Introduction

On June 27, 1980, during the night a civil aviation plane flying from Bologna to Palermo in Italy blew up and disappeared into the sea next to Ustica island. All 81 passengers on board died. We still do not know today what exactly happened that night and the Ustica tragedy is still one of the biggest unsolved mysteries of our country.

Last September, Giuliano Amato, former Prime Minister in 1992, in an interview in the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* explicitly described a scenario of a covert war in the Italian sky and called upon the Macron government in France to collaborate in the search for the truth on the Ustica tragedy and apologize to Italy for France’s role in it (Fiori 2023).

*Associate Professor, University of Milan, Italy.

Amato's statement reopened a wide-ranging debate in Italy, dividing public opinion into those who applauded his courage and those who questioned his motives and the timing of his words, assuming reasons of self-interest (Abbate 2023, Bobibi 2023, Tobagi 2023, Vecchio 2023, Ginori 2023, Cappelli 2023, Noto 2023, Tonacci 2023).

It was the President of the Association of the Ustica victims' families, Daria Bonfietti, who apparently closed the September debate stating that, in any case, Amato's declaration marked a step ahead in the direction of the search for the truth, after 43 years in which "it was exactly that lack of truth which was depriving Italy of its dignity" (Bonfietti 2023).

The Ustica affair may be considered from a variety of perspectives. The intent of this paper is to analyse it from a historical point of view.

For many years I have had the privilege of being a member of a Scientific Committee of historians involved in extensive research around the Ustica tragedy on the basis of new declassified primary sources, in collaboration with the Association of the Ustica victims' families.

What contribution can history make? I would like to start my reflections quoting Luca Alessandrini, who is the coordinator of the above-mentioned Scientific Committee:

Can history repair things? No, it can't. It cannot give lost lives back, it cannot give back those decades of missed reconstruction of responsibilities, it cannot relieve the private pain of families and the public pain of citizens. History, in any event, can place the issue in a bigger framework, in a more complete collective past, so raising awareness. It is something like a grieving process. There is pain, a vacuum, loss – in this case of loved ones, of public truth, of State, of justice and democracy. The loss cannot be filled, but the grieving process can help with acceptance of the idea that it happened and can help those affected to live with it (Alessandrini 2020, p.10).

I will organize the analysis into three parts. Firstly, after attempting to put together the many elements useful to reconstruct the event, I will endeavour to summarize the main steps taken by the Italian justice and political systems in the search for the truth. Secondly, I will go deep into the international framework of the Ustica tragedy, describing international relations and Italy's foreign policies at that time. Doing so, I will propose the main hypotheses formulated up to today in an attempt to explain the most plausible scenarios of the tragedy. In conclusion, I will say a few words about the process of public memory building in these 44 years, starting from the setting up of a memorial museum in Bologna, where the wreck of the plane is preserved.

From a methodological point of view, starting from considering the main theses proposed by scholars as well as by journalists to explain the Ustica tragedy, the essay will summarize the most significant conclusions of the original research conducted by the author as well as by the other members of the above-mentioned scientific Committee. This research is based on both secondary and primary sources, with particular reference to newly declassified diplomatic documents in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Malta and Italy. It is worth mentioning here the important turning point represented, from the perspective of

the archival research in Italy, by the Renzi Directive, the executive order by which the then Italian President of the Council of Ministers, Matteo Renzi, in 2015 requested the many Italian public Administrations to release documents relating to the Ustica tragedy and to other dramatic episodes of recent Italian history¹. Notwithstanding the many limits of this documentary declassification process, the Directive represents an important step in the direction of the building of a more transparent political system.

The Event, the Italian Justice and the Political System

As I mentioned before, the night of the 27 June in 1980 a DC-9 Itavia civil aviation plane disappeared from the air traffic control radars near Ustica. At Palermo airport they waited for the aircraft for the whole night. It was just the next morning that bodies and fragments of the plane were discovered in the sea. 81 passengers died, including 13 children aged from a few months to 12 years. Only 38 bodies were ever recovered. Immediately, numerous inquiries started and a variety of hypotheses were formulated. Foreign advisors were consulted, air traffic control notes and radar records were looked for (some were found to be incomplete, some others concealed, some others destroyed).

Initially, a structural failure of the aircraft was supposed. Then other hypotheses prevailed: that of a terrorist attack (there could have been a bomb on board), that of a missile deployed by a military aircraft or that of a collision during the flight (Ranci 2020, Biacchessi Colarieti 2002).

Last but not least, what happened in the sky over Ustica on June 27 was linked by many people to the recovery two weeks later, on July 14, of a Libyan MIG aircraft on the Sila mountains in Calabria, in the South of Italy, not far from where the Itavia plane crashed into the sea (Tucci 1980). Some depositions suggested in fact that the Libyan MIG crash could have happened some days before and so could be directly linked to the DC-9 tragedy.

In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, Itavia was taken as the scapegoat for what happened, up to the point of forcing the company to close under economic pressure, notwithstanding the first inquiry report transmitted to the Italian parliament excluded the hypothesis of a structural failure of the aircraft (Ranci 2020, p. 104 ss.).

After that, silence falls: a “Wall of Rubber” (“Muro di gomma”) – to cite the apt expression from a Dino Risi movie of 1991 – symbolizing the impermeability of the political system. Neither the Parliament, nor the political parties, nor public opinion developed a specific interest in the Ustica tragedy, with the only exception of some Italian newspapers, first of all the *Corriere della Sera*. It’s worth mentioning here the important contribution of Andrea Purgatori, the recently

¹Renzi Directive. Archivio Centrale dello Stato. Rome: <https://acs.cultura.gov.it/tag/documentazione-declassificata/>.

deceased Italian journalist, who was the first to put forward the missile theory and did much to keep public interest alive².

The first turning point was in 1986, when the Committee for the truth on the Ustica tragedy was established. The President was Francesco Bonifacio, former President of the Corte Costituzionale and it was composed by leading personalities including Adriano Ossicini (vice President of the Senate), the members of Parliament Antonio Giolitti (Socialist Party), Pietro Ingrao (Communist Party) Pietro Scoppola (Cristian Democracy Party) and Stefano Rodotà (Independent Left) and by the sociologist Franco Ferrarotti. The Committee signed an appeal to the then President of the Republic, Francesco Cossiga, requesting to put an end to the silence and to cast light on the case³.

Thanks to Cossiga's interest and to the action of Giuliano Amato (who was then the Secretary of the Council of Ministers in the Bettino Craxi government) the amount needed for the recovery of the wreck was allocated and in 1987 the French company Ifremer started a complex operation to bring the wreck to the surface. In the meantime, public interest grew and in 1988 the Association of the relatives of the victims was established. In the same year, the Parliamentary Inquiry Commission on terrorism began working on the Ustica tragedy (Ranci 2020, ch. 4).

Another important turning point was in 1990 when Judge Rosario Priore took the lead of the inquiry. His investigation lasted 9 years and it counted 350 witnesses, 980 search warrants, 89 legal examinations and up to 300 international rogatories. It was during this period that the DC-9 wreck was reassembled in the hangar of Pratica di Mare to be inspected by Judge Priore and his consultants.

When Judge Priore closed his investigation, his final judgement was 4969 pages long⁴. In his investigation, Priore could not identify the perpetrators of the Ustica tragedy and therefore he could not open a trial on the massacre's causes and perpetrators. However, he excluded both the structural failure and the bomb hypotheses and accused many Italian officials of perjury, abuse of authority and aiding and abetting. He also committed to trial four Italian Generals with the charge of high treason, for omitting in their communications to the government important information on military aircrafts in flight next to the DC-9⁵.

It's worth recalling here that in his judgement Judge Priore underlined the scenario of international war in which the Ustica affair took place: "Beyond any doubt the DC-9 accident occurred following military interception activity"⁶. "The lives of 81 innocent citizens were lost in an action that was nothing less than an act of war, an undeclared war, a covert international police operation against our country, whose boundaries and rights were violated" (Biacchessi Colarieti 2002, p. 15).

²In the month of August 1980 Purgatori was the only journalist who supported the missile hypothesis (Purgatori 1980).

³Appeal to Cossiga (1986).

⁴*Priore Final Judgement*, Ordinanza Sentenza Priore, Procedimento Penale Nr. 527/84 AGI. (<https://www.stragi80.it/documenti/gi/>).

⁵The four Generals, Lamberto Bartolucci, Zeno Tascio, Corrado Melillo, Franco Ferri were definitively acquitted in 2007. (See: N.A. 2007).

⁶*Priore Final Judgement*: 3953.

More than that, on the basis of numerous witnesses and evidence, Priore confirmed in his judgment that the Libyan MIG discovered on the Sila mountains in Calabria fell some time earlier than when it was found. Therefore he concluded that it appears likely that it fell in the same circumstances in which the Itavia DC-9 precipitated.⁷

More recently, in 2011, the Court of Palermo ordered the Defence and transportation Ministries to compensate the victims families for not having ensured their safety during the flight and having withheld the truth. The Supreme Court confirmed the verdict, thus underlining that the most likely causes of the incident were either a missile strike or a collision during the flight (Ranci 2020, pp. 12-13).

Despite these juridical conclusions, however, it is still not clear which countries were responsible and which flags the aircraft in the Italian sky that night flew.

An important turning point was Francesco Cossiga's declaration in 2008 on TV and then to the judges. He stated: "When I was President of the Italian Republic in 1986, our intelligence service informed the then Undersecretary Giuliano Amato and me that it was the French, with an aircraft carrier, that launched a missile...". He then went on to say that the French had information that Qadhafi could be on board, but he was saved because the Italian intelligence service SISMI had informed him of a possible attack and he decided not to fly⁸. As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper a more recent interview with Amato confirmed this hypothesis. On the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, in fact, Amato asserted that the most credible thesis was that of a simulated NATO military exercise, intended to cover an attack on Qadhafi's MIG, and that the error that saw the DC-9 being struck could be attributed to the French Airforce, with American complicity (Fiori 2023).

Both these statements, therefore, suggest the same thesis, that the Itavia DC-9 was struck down in error by a missile launched from a French (or American?) aircraft in search of a Libyan MIG – on which Qadhafi was presumed to be travelling – which was hiding itself under the Italian DC-9.

While this is the most accredited hypothesis, numerous other possible explanations have been put forward. We shall explore them in the next part of this paper, discussing in depth the international scenario of those days.

The International Scenario

The role of the historian may be valuable in depicting the background to the tragedy and the framework in which it happened. If during the night of 27 June 1980 the Itavia DC-9 encountered on its route the missile which would interrupt its flight, it is a central question for historians to understand which countries could have entered Italian airspace and territorial waters. We should therefore place the Ustica tragedy within the context of Italy's foreign relations at that time. As Luca

⁷Ibid: 4963.

⁸Interview to Francesco Cossiga. *SkyTG24*. 19 February 2008.

Alessandrini wrote, quoting March Bloch “History can provide contexts; can provide interpretations ... A historical phenomenon is never properly explained without reference to the historical moment in which it takes place” (Alessandrini 2020, p. 8).

Even just a quick glance back at the international scenario in the summer of 1980 allows us to understand how crucial that moment was.

The year 1980, in fact, represents a real turning point between a period of detente between the US and the USSR and one of renewed tension which led historians to speak about a “Second Cold War”.

From the East to the West everything seemed to indicate that détente had completely disappeared: the assault on the American Embassy in Teheran in November 1979 with the taking hostage of 53 American embassy staff, and, just one month later, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979; the Soviet SS20 missiles in the East of Europe and the decision of the Atlantic Alliance to install mid-range missiles in some Western European countries, which caused great tension in Europe (Westad 1997, Westad 2005). As Leopoldo Nuti wrote: “the end of 1979 seemed to be the point of no return of an apparently unstoppable tendency towards confrontation, and 1980 saw the coming back to a logic of a head-on collision between the blocs after years of dialogue” (Nuti 2020, p. 22, Bill 1998).

Particularly important in that context was the Middle East theatre, after the signing of the Camp David Agreement, by which for the first time an Arab Country, Egypt, recognized Israel. In a few short months Egypt became isolated within the Arab World, was expelled from the Arab League and a new tension arose in the region.

In this scenario of growing tension, in the same 1979, Saddam Hussein increased his leadership in Iraq and decided to accelerate the national nuclear program. France and Italy collaborated with Iraq in the nuclear field, exporting a variety of materials destined for its reactors, so distancing their policy from that of the United States, which in the same period condemned Iraqi nuclear policy and added Iraq to the list of countries which supported terrorism. Israel was, however, the country which feared most Iraqi nuclear acceleration. And it was Israel which was suspected to be the mandator of some attacks against a number of French industrial plants that produced parts of Iraqi reactors. This culminated in the well-known Osirak episode in June 1981, when the Israeli government attempted to solve the problem by bombing the Iraqi Osirak reactor then under construction (Weissman Krosney 1981, Braut-Hegghammer 2011).

This regional scenario serves as the backdrop to a first hypothesis concerning the Ustica tragedy, which traces the origins of what happened in the Italian sky in June 1980 back to the framework of Israeli-Iraqi-French relations. In the opinion of Claudio Gatti, a well-known Italian scholar, who in 1994 published a book entitled *Il quinto scenario* (The Fifth Scenario), the Itavia DC-9 was struck down in error by a missile launched from an Israeli fighter plane which mistook it for a French aircraft that it was supposed was transporting uranium to Saddam’s Iraq. Claudio Gatti was convinced that not only did Israel have a strategic interest in attacking French-Iraqi collaboration, but it also had the military competence to do

that and an intelligence organization able to cover the entire operation (Gatti Hammer 1994).

Considered by Judge Priore during his nine years investigation, Gatti's thesis was at the end rejected because of lack of sufficient evidence about an Israeli's aircrafts presence in the airspace over Ustica.

Italy was indeed concerned to what was happening in Middle East, due firstly to its relations with Iraq, but more than that it was the Mediterranean context that attracted most Italian attention. In the summer of 1980, in fact, Italy played a pivotal role in avoiding an alteration of the military balance in Southern Europe after the 1979 British retreat from Malta, a crucial Mediterranean crossroads. On August 2, 1980, Italy and Malta signed in La Valletta a bilateral agreement under which Italy would assure Malta's neutrality with an additional protocol that provided direct economic assistance. Under this agreement Italy appeared to replace the UK in preventing Moscow from acquiring air and naval bases, as well as facilities on the island and, at the same time, it appeared to succeed in keeping Malta from shifting towards Libya (Merlati 2020, Merlati and Vignati 2023).

On the same date, while Italian Undersecretary of State Giuseppe Zamberletti was signing the agreement in La Valletta, a bomb explosion in Bologna railway station caused more than 200 victims.

One of the various hypotheses proposed during the years to explain the Ustica tragedy is the one put forward by Zamberletti. In his opinion, the Ustica and Bologna tragedies were closely connected and both were directed by Qadhafi. As clearly emerges from Zamberletti's book of 1995 "*La minaccia e la vendetta*" (The Threat and the Vengeance), the Ustica tragedy was the threat of Qadhafi, who wanted to send Italy the message not to sign the Italian-Maltese agreement. The Bologna station bomb was then the vengeance for having signed it. The reasons lay in Qadhafi's hostility towards Italian Maltese policy which excluded Libya from a crucial point in the Mediterranean (Zamberletti 1995).

Judge Priore took all these elements into deep consideration and also in more recent times the public debate has moved back to Zamberletti's interpretation (Grignetti 2016a, b). In terms of evidence, however, the numerous examinations of the wreck conducted from 1990 to 1999 excluded the possibility of a bomb on board, thereby failing to confirm the main assumption of a Libyan terrorist attack.

The last scenario we are going to consider, the North African one, is certainly no less complex and directly calls into question French and American responsibilities, as mentioned above quoting Cossiga's and Amato's affirmations.

Qadhafi's Libya was again one of the main actors. We must consider Libya's relationship with the US separately from Libya's relationship with France.

Relations with the US were at this time full of contradictions and, from 1977 to 1980, the Carter administration had to carefully consider Qadhafi's Libya because of the many interests involved as well as because of the new sources of tension which arose. On the one side, the US imported more than 40% of Libyan total oil production and in Libya up to 4000 American citizens worked (Nuti 2020, p. 33). But on the other side, the assault on the American Embassy in Tripoli in December 1979 created deep tension. This episode – quoting Leopoldo Nuti, who carefully studied US foreign policy towards Libya during the Carter years –

marked a “point of no return in Us-Libyan relations”, even if many attempts to defuse tension were made (Nutti 2020, p. 36).

Nevertheless, Nutti admonishes, it would be an error to exaggerate this state of affairs. “From a methodological point of view, the risk is to backdate to 1980 the many strong tensions between Washington and Tripoli which were to develop in the following years, particularly under Reagan”. In other words, “in 1980 Libya was a growing problem, of course, but not a primary objective of US foreign policy, as it became in the following years.” (Nutti 2020, p. 43).

A unilateral and isolated American covert action to eliminate Qadhafi in June 1980 does not appear, therefore, entirely plausible. Different considerations, however, should be made about a possible involvement of Giscard D’Estaing’s France. The topic has been explored in depth by the Italian scholar Bruna Bagnato, who for many years has been engaged in archival research on French policy in North Africa.

Relations between France and Libya “at the hour of Ustica” were “complex, ambiguous and tortuous, subject to the turbulence of Tripoli’s aggressive strategy towards Egypt, Tunisia and above all Chad” (Bagnato 2020, p. 81).

In January 1980 some Tunisians armed and trained by Libyans conducted a raid in the city of Gafsa, in Tunisia, assaulting government buildings. France sent there its soldiers, thus provoking a strong Libyan reaction: at the beginning of February the French embassy in Tripoli and the consulate in Bengasi were attacked and diplomatic relations between the two countries were interrupted (Bagnato 2020, p. 85).

At the same time, turning to Chad, Qadhafi was trying to extend his influence over the country by supporting rebel forces (also against the French) in a context of civil war. Above all, Qadhafi was attempting to interfere in Egypt’s internal affairs, thus provoking Sadat’s reaction. There is much evidence of concerted Egyptian-French plans to eliminate Qadhafi, dating back to 1977. Giscard D’Estaing himself mentions in his memoirs a 1977 joint plan (D’Estaing 2004, pp. 178-181). Furthermore, in 1980 a new Egyptian-French collaboration would lead to a military uprising in Tobruk (Bagnato 2020, p. 84).

If French involvement in the scenario of the Ustica tragedy is therefore quite plausible considering French-Libyan relations at that time, how can we explain the Italian involvement? Why, in other words, was it in Italian airspace that the enemy aircraft were chasing each other?

“Italy had an American wife and a Libyan lover”. This is the well-known sentence largely used in the public debate to indicate the deep ambiguity of Italian-Libyan relations in those years. The relationship with Qadhafi was fed by political ambiguities, economic convergences and personal complicities, while at the same time Italy aimed to play a significant role in the framework of NATO countries.

The Seventies had been a period of great prosperity in Italian-Libyan relations from a commercial and economic perspective. Just think of the intensity of the exchanges between the two countries (in 1977, 25% of Libyan imports came from Italy) and of the cooperation agreements which provided that Libya would supply Italy with oil and Italy would build refineries and infrastructure in Libya (Vanderwalle 1995, Cresti Cricco 2012, Varvelli 2009). As a consequence of that,

Italy ended up maintaining a political approach towards Libya which was in contrast with that of the Allies.

After the Gafsa events, Italy did not condemn Qadhafi as the other allies did, carefully considering not to damage ongoing cooperation agreements. Also in April 1980, despite numerous political assassinations of Libyan citizens in Italy and in other European countries, Italy failed to join the Allies in taking a stand against Qadhafi. Through UK archival sources we now know how enormous the British effort to convince the Italians to take a stand against Qadhafi together with other European countries was and also how the main Italian concern remained that of navigating through “conflicting pressures”. From the UK Foreign Office perspective, the principal reasons behind the Italian “ambiguity” were its enormous economic interests at stake with Libya⁹.

Above all, more important in the framework of the Ustica affair, there was another hot issue in Italian-Libyan relations: the undisturbed use of Italian airspace by Libyan military aircraft. We are referring to what is known as “the Yugoslav corridor”: based on a secret agreement between Libya and Yugoslavia, Libyan aviation could use Yugoslav airports for training and repairs. On the route to Yugoslavia, Libyan military aircraft could cross Italian airspace without any formal authorization, taking advantage of the deficiencies of the Italian radar system (Ranci 2020, p. 42).

This “Italian inattention” was a source of great concern in the United Kingdom. Writing from the Embassy in Rome to the Foreign Office about the Libyan MIG crash on the Sila mountains in Calabria, the Embassy official W. R. Tomkys underlined how the “activities of Libyan air force interceptor aircraft over the Mediterranean [were] of continuing interest to the Department” and added that the MIG incident was “embarrassing” for Italy for not having intercepted it¹⁰.

In his final judgement Judge Priore explicitly refers to those “holes of the Italian radar system” as the framework of what happened during the night of the 27 June 1980¹¹.

Conclusions

There was a war, in conclusion, in the Mediterranean on the night of 27 June 1980. It was a covert war which violated Italian borders and sovereign rights, killing 81 innocent civilians. After 44 years, and notwithstanding an enormous number of inquiries, we still do not know exactly who was fighting in the Italian sky that night. Those who knew did not speak.

It is not too late, however; a lot of work has been done and many hypotheses have been formulated and scrutinised. Historians on one side and public opinion on the other could still participate in the search for the truth. Historians can go on

⁹Telegram from M. E. Pellew (Embassy in Rome) to J. Crosby (FCO), “Italo/Libyan Relations”, 12 June 1980, FCO 93/2345, The National Archive UK (TNA).

¹⁰Telegram from William Roger Tomkys (British Embassy, Rome) to Douglas Hardings (FCO), “MIG 23 Crash in Calabria”, 4 August 1980, FCO 93/2345, TNA.

¹¹*Priore Final Judgement*: 4962.

exploring the archives and through their research can contribute to distinguish between different scenarios and make the context of the tragedy increasingly clear. Public opinion can put pressure on governments, demanding serious commitment in the battle for justice, first of all within the framework of Italy's current international relations.

As mentioned before, credit should be given to Daria Bonfietti, the President of the Association of the Ustica victims' families, for having stimulated an ongoing public debate around the Ustica tragedy and for having contributed to building a public memory of it over the years.

One of the most important steps of this process was the creation of the Memory Museum in Bologna, inaugurated in 2007. The wreck of the DC-9 was transported there from Pratica di Mare and the recently deceased artist Christian Boltanski created an installation to host it: around the reassembled wreck there are 81 dark mirrors and 81 loudspeakers broadcast sighs and whispers of simple, common sentences, thus underlying how random and ineluctable the tragedy was. Big black boxes containing the passengers' belongings (shoes, toys, glasses....) are placed next to the wreck.

The cinema as well has played an important role in cultivating the memory of Ustica over the years, starting from the above mentioned "Muro di Gomma" of 1991, up to the more recent movie "Ustica" by Renzo Martinelli. They are completely different movies: the first recounts "the guilty silence of politics, while the second, also thanks to the advice of Judge Rosario Priore, is an attempt to propose a plausible thesis around the tragedy. Both of them, however, represent important steps not only in the process of public memory building, but also in the search for the truth and justice. Doing so, they are an example of civil engagement.

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Five Keys of Judgment: Truth and Fiction in Autobiographical and Oral History Research - Palestinian Oral History in Israel

*By Maysoun Ershead Shehadeh **

This article presents the problem of the scarcity and even lack of original historical documents related to the Palestinian Arab minority who were included in the State of Israel after its establishment, and the historians' consequent need to utilize autobiographies and oral history collected from Nakba generation Palestinians who remained within the borders of the State of Israel. The article takes a deductive approach, from the particular to the general, and proposes a research tool called "Five Keys of Judgment" that supports critical judgment work and refers to the trustworthiness of autobiographical documents and oral history collected previously by other historians and researchers and currently available in the form of audio records or written reports.

Keywords: *autobiographical research, oral history, selectivity, authenticity, identity voice, language, conditions of engagement with the past, Palestinians in Israel*

Introduction

The war of 1948 was a historical event and salient temporal point in the national narrative of both Palestinians and Jews (Berenskoetter 2014). From the perspective of the Jews, it was their independence war and enabled the ingathering of the Jewish people. From the Palestinian Arab perspective, however, this war brought upon them destruction and the *Nakba* (a term coined by Syrian historian Constantin Zureiq to describe the depth of the destruction and defeat following the war) and was the cause for the dispersion of the Palestinian people (Zureik 1948). This war junction has been the focus of vigorous work by writers and, journalists, intellectuals, historians, academics, and others, from both the Jewish and Palestinian sides, to document and commemorate their people's history.

From a research standpoint, first-generation Palestinian historians educated in Israeli academic institutions, such as Butrus Abu Mannah and Kais Firro, were cautious and preferred to engage in history that does not directly concern the war of 1948 and the Jewish-Palestinian conflict. It seems that their younger successors, however, such as Adel Manna, Mustafa Abbasi, Mahmoud Yazbak, and Mustafa Kabha, who were exposed in Israeli academia to the wealth of historical research on the Zionist movement and Jewish history, utilized the academic democratization and liberalization allowed them and aspired to facilitate the documentation of the Palestinian people's history, in the same way as their Jewish

*Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Political Science, Bar Ilan University, Israel.

counterparts. They also strived to renew and fill the gaps in the writings of Palestinian historians, those who reconstructed the pre-war period, and on the events of the 1948 war itself, which they had themselves witnessed. Most of these historians, such as Walid Khalidi, Aref al-Aref, Bayan Nuwayhed al-Hout, and others, were exiled from Palestine. Much of the gaps were created due to the ethnic and political identity and social status of these historians, which whether intentionally or not, prevented them from addressing certain classes, groups, and individuals who could have completed the historical picture that they were trying to reconstruct. Over time, these Palestinian historians in Israeli academia were joined by other Palestinian scholars who had been exposed to postmodern social and cultural approaches, and who also wished to innovate and integrate quantitative comparative approaches based on scientific sampling.

Palestinian historians in Israel faced a serious problem involving the scarcity of primary sources on which they could rely, where sometimes these were even completely inexistent. The Palestinian people who remained within the borders of the State of Israel, were a people in a process of structuring and forming their social status and identity, whose memory of the pre-Nakba period included acts of banning, repression, distortion and forgetting, both deliberate and non-deliberate (Kabha 2014, Nets-Zehngut & Bar-Tal 2014, Nets-Zehngut, 2014). The few Palestinians (150,000) who were included in the State of Israel after its establishment, were mainly fellahs (a class of farmers or agricultural laborers) or remnants of the low bourgeoisie. A large part of them was classified as “inner refugees”, as during the war of 1948 war they were forced by the Jewish army to abandon their villages and towns and move to places where the State of Israel permitted Arab settlement. Archival documents containing the correspondence between these refugees and the Minister of Minority Affairs during the early years of the State of Israel, constitute a preliminary source indicating that, under the threat of war, these refugees did not manage to collect and take with them documents, certificates, photographs, and most of their portable memories¹.

Against the background of the 1948 war, the Jews became the new settlers who took over most of the lands, buildings, streets, and property of the Palestinian people. This is one of the reasons that many of the Palestinians’ documents and belongings were scattered and lost; another part was confiscated by the Israeli authorities and kept in classified warehouses and archives to which the researchers had no access (Sela 2009, Raz 2020).

Surprisingly and extremely paradoxically, the Israel State Archives and the National Library of Israel Archive in Jerusalem (along with archives of historical mixed cities, the Kibbutz settlement movement, political movements, and others) have released and are still releasing original documents (photographs, records, letters, diaries, maps, certificates, memoirs, newspapers, notebooks, books, etc.) that belonged to Palestinians and constitute primary sources for the use of Palestinian and Jewish historians and researchers, albeit under strict censorship.

The difficulty faced by Palestinian historians in Israel concerned not only the loss of physical resources such as land, buildings, property, and documents, but

¹See, for example, Files P-931/6; G-301/82. Catalogue. Prime Minister’s Office – Office of the Advisor for Arab Affairs Office. State Archives, Jerusalem.

was further exacerbated by the lack of memory preservation among the Palestinians who remained within the State of Israel. The declaration of Israel's independence spurred the building of the state and the narrative and memory of the Jewish people, with concurrent efforts to erase, distort, and blur Palestinian memory. In quite a few cases, the Israeli authorities almost completely destroyed Arab buildings in the deserted villages (Kabha 2014), implemented a policy of removing the history of the Palestinian people from the curricula of Arabs in Israel (Mar'i 1978, Smooha 1980), imposed censorship on the media and press (Kabha & Caspi 2011), and Hebraicized the geographic and public space in all its forms², etc.

Due to the great shortage of primary sources, as described above, the narratives written by Palestinians and published in the Arabic language press in the early years of the State of Israel are an important source that researchers could use for the purpose of historical reconstruction. With the establishment of the State of Israel, the government under the auspices of the Histadrut (General Organization of Workers in Israel) supported the distribution of a newspaper in the Arabic language (*Al-Yaum* [Today]) that represented its voice and policy. The government also allowed the renewed publication of the communist newspaper *Al-Ittihad* (The Union), first published in 1944 during the British Mandate government. Slowly, after coming to terms with the new reality, the Palestinians in Israel who were previously accustomed to an abundance of cultural life and newspapers attempted to publish two other magazines (*Al-Mujtama* and *Al-Fajr*).³ In these newspapers and magazines they published poetry and prose constituting first-hand photographic documentation that provided historians and other scholars with a partial portrayal of the reality of Palestinians in Israel at the junction of the 1948 war (Touma 1963, 1965). The difficulty with these sources lies in their limitations, i.e., their small number and the fact that they were written under the censorship of the Israeli military administration with no real freedom of expression.

The field of oral history developed beginning from the 1960s and 1970s as a pioneering academic field, followed by an increasing tendency of researchers to study issues involving special groups who left behind no written documentation, such as manual laborers, poor women, oppressed groups, and others. Moreover, political, cultural, social, and financial histories based on significant writings began to receive further breadth and new perspectives when the body of written documents and findings at their base was enhanced by oral testimonies of those who participated in that history, but their point of view was not previously taken into account (Perks & Thomson 2015).

The awakening of oral history and its presence in the international research arena, the reliance of Jewish historians on oral history (e.g., Bauer 1970⁴, Cohen

²File GL-22167/6, State Archives, Jerusalem.

³*Al-Mujtama* (The Society) was first published in 1954 and was a general literary journal with no declared political line. Its writers included known local Arab authors alongside Iraqi-Jewish writers; *Al-Fajr* (The Dawn) was a monthly journal first published in 1958. It was the organ of Mapam (United Workers Party) and it advocated the nationalist line represented by Gamal Abdel Nasser.

⁴Yehuda Bauer documented the escape of some 250,000 Jews from Eastern Europe to Central Europe, mainly Germany, Italy, and Austria, after the Nazi defeat, between 1944 and 1948.

1984⁵, Cohen 2000⁶), and the founding of oral documentation centers for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and other places⁷, were probably what drew the attention of Palestinian historians in Israel to the use of oral history as a source to be relied on in the act of reconstructing history⁸. These researchers also relied (and still rely) on autobiographies written by Palestinians as a primary source.

Between Oral History and Autobiography – Common Questions

Oral history is a practice and research method based on collecting primary sources such as personal memoirs and commentaries through recorded interviews. As it comprises both the act of documenting (the recording) and the testimony produced (the record), it may be seen as a research method based on the interviewee's memory, which integrates in a timely manner both practice and product (Perks & Thomson 2015, Abrams 2016, Ritchie 2014, Portelli 2009, Thompson 2017, Shopes 2011, Hall 2017, Portelli 2010).

Looking at the relationship chain as formulated by Portelli (2009) regarding oral history shows up the common elements with autobiographies:

“Oral history is a work of relationships; in the first place, a relationship between the past and the present, an effort to establish, through memory and narrative, what the past means to the present; then, a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, and between the oral form of the narrative and the written or audiovisual form of the historian's product” (p. 21).

Autobiography, much like oral history, is a biography an individual writes (as opposed to says) about himself, his life, and events that influenced him and his surroundings, from a personal point of view. Similar to oral history, it also indicates the association between the past and the present, is based on memory and narrative, and is produced to form a link between the past and present (Smorti 2011, Ellingson 2009, Anderson 2001, Brockmeier 2012, DeGloma 2010, Walker 2017, Polkinghorne 1988, 1995, 2010, Westlund 2011).

The fundamental distinction between autobiography and oral history lies in the intrinsic requirement for an author, subject, and narrator. In the case of autobiography, the involvement of just a single individual suffices (Lejeune 1975, Byram et al. 2009, Neumann 2010), whereas oral history necessitates the participation of at least two people: the interviewee and the interviewer. This setup

⁵By using oral history, Asher Cohen followed the role of the refugees who belonged to the pioneer youth movements from Poland and Slovakia in shaping the rescue movement in Hungary during World War II.

⁶Avner Cohen documented the establishment of the nuclear reactor in Dimona, drawing on numerous documents and about 150 interviews with Israelis and key figures in the US government.

⁷See, for example, the “Falastin fi al-Zakira” archive established in 2003 for Palestinian refugees in Jordan. <https://www.palestineremembered.com/OralHistory/Interviews-Listing/ar/Story1151.html> (May 21, 2020); The Nakba Archive - an oral history collective established in Lebanon in 2002. https://www.nakba-archive.org/?page_id=956 (May 21, 2020).

⁸At the head of the Palestinian historians who have used oral documentation stands Mustafa Kabha, who established in Kafr Qara, Israel in 2006 an archive for oral documentation of the Palestinians in Israel and refugees outside it. He also published a list of books based on oral history.

can be further extended by including multiple interviewers and observers, who may engage actively or passively. Within the domain of oral history, it is common for researchers to employ a documenter who transcribes the interviews. This individual then becomes an additional contributor in the process, playing a pivotal role in the crafting of the final narrative (Perks & Thomson 2015, Kim 2008, Abrams 2016).

In analyzing the autobiography and transcribed oral testimony through the lens of those involved in their final production, it's essential to ponder certain inquiries. Here's a pivotal question that should be contemplated to assess the reliability of these two sources. These inquiries transcend the specific context of Palestinian research and are valuable for any scholar aiming to utilize these sources. In the following section, I will outline questions designed to aid researchers in evaluating these materials more effectively.

What Should a Researcher Ask when Examining the Credibility of an Autobiography or Oral History?

To enhance the understanding of the proposed model that aims to assist researchers in determining whether oral testimony or autobiography is more advantageous for their studies, this paper will leverage the example of American-Palestinian intellectual Edward Said (2000). Utilizing Said's autobiography and oral testimony as a case study, the model will be elucidated. Said embarked on the journey of writing his autobiography, "Out of Place", at the age of 60 while undergoing chemotherapy for leukemia, offering insight into his motivations for sharing his story. Within the narrative, he delves into his upbringing across various locations including Palestine (Jerusalem), Egypt (Cairo), and Lebanon (Dhour el Shweir), with a particular focus on his educational experiences. This raises questions about what elements were included in his reconstructed narrative. Composing his autobiography in the United States, Said navigates the complexities of recounting his history from a distance both in time and geographical location from the settings of his early life. This juxtaposition highlights the ongoing conflict between his Arab heritage and his experiences within the colonial context of the United States. A critical aspect of his narrative is the challenge of using English to recount events intrinsically tied to the Arabic language, introducing a layer of ambivalence to his discourse. The process of writing the autobiography spanned approximately five years, prompting reflection on the temporal and spatial dimensions of his historical reconstruction. Said's passing in 2003, three years after the publication of his book, marks a poignant conclusion to his narrative journey. Said indicated that his illness was the reason he led him to document his lost and forgotten world before it would be too late. The autobiography, as he pointed out, allowed him to bridge between time and place; between his present life and his past life. Said further noted his astonishment at the number of details he had not forgotten, and the pleasure that he received from the act of remembering and writing, which supported him and held him through the difficult period of receiving treatment for his illness (What is the personal experience during and after the reconstruction?). In the preface to his book, Said cautioned that several people that he described in

his book are still alive and will likely disagree with or dislike his portrayals of them and others (Was the testimony exposed to criticism?). Nonetheless, he indicated that it is him and only him who is responsible for what he recalled and saw, even though he was helped by two skilled editors who were his friends (Who is involved in writing the content and who is responsible for it?).

A year before Said passed away his former student, D. D. Guttenplan, convinced him to give a video interview to a common friend, Charles Glass (an American-British author, journalist, broadcaster, and publisher specializing in the Middle East and the Second World War)⁹ (Who is the interviewer, what is his identity?). This last interview with Said that was held at his home (What details can be produced beyond the interview?) took almost three and a half hours and included (in the first part) additional testimonies and clarifications on personal questions directed by Glass and related to Said's autobiography and the critique it received (What is true and what is false?). Following the publication of his autobiography, some reviews were published against Said, which questioned some of the facts he wrote and claimed that they are fiction (mainly Justus Weiner, 1999). The interviewer, Glass, knew how to lead the interview to clarify contested points and also asked questions regarding details that didn't seem to make sense for him. For example, the issue of Said's lack of enthusiasm for the works of Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi, as opposed to his appreciation for the music of Gioachino Rossini at a very young age. The interviewer also asked questions regarding passages in the autobiography that needed clarification.

The concept of trustworthiness serves as an alternative to the conventional metrics of validity and reliability utilized in both quantitative research and traditional qualitative studies, as established by Guba & Lincoln (1983). In the realm of naturalistic-qualitative inquiry, achieving trustworthiness hinges on the researcher's commitment to thoroughly and transparently documenting the research process. This includes explicating the criteria for database and category selection, as well as elucidating the analysis methodology through the verification of diverse sources, leveraging existing literature, and seeking insights from external reviewers.

Furthermore, the model introduced herein emphasizes five critical aspects designed to assess the trustworthiness of autobiographical texts or oral testimonies (whether written or recorded) upon which researchers intend to base their work. This five-key model is proposed as a practical instrument to facilitate a researcher's critical evaluation of both the structure of the narrative (and the content encapsulated within it, whether in written autobiographies or oral histories).

Truth or Fiction – the “Five Keys of Judgment” Model

Key #1: Motives: How do the motivations behind the narrative influence the selection of what is included or excluded from the reconstructed frame?

Key #2: Authenticity: To what extent does the narrative reflect personal memories versus collective or national memories?

⁹The Last Interview of Edward Said. By Brigitte Caland. Directed by Mike Dibb, Interviewed by Charles (Summer 2002). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzorBapIIFM>.

Key #3: The Voice of Reconstructing Identity: Can a distinction be made between the narrative voice of the current identity and that of the past identity being reconstructed?

Key #4: Language: What terminology is employed in the narrative, and what does it reveal about the narrator's personal and collective identity and culture?

Key #5: Conditions of Engagement with the Past: What are the conditions under which the past is reconstructed, including the physical and temporal setting, the narrator's age and health, the temporal distance from the period being reconstructed, the continuity of the narrative, whether the reconstruction was a one-off or extended over time, and whether it was more reflexive or reflective? Additionally, were there any external factors that influenced the reconstruction process?

In the following, each key will be presented in detail, while noting that it cannot be addressed effectively without understanding the background and general atmosphere of the document and without going over the report comprehensively time and again.

Content of the Critical Coding Keys

D1. Motives: This key includes the question of the author's motivation for writing the autobiography, the interviewee's motivation for giving the oral testimony, and the interviewer's motivation for collecting it (obtaining answers to research questions, confirming or refuting assumptions, etc.); the motives are an essential source for determining the frame and content of the reconstructed picture.

The examination of an autobiographical document or oral testimony (in the form of a recording or written report) by a researcher must be accompanied by preliminary collection of information about the identity and the social, political, and research position of the author, the interviewer, and the interviewee. Autobiographies are usually written by an elite political group, intellectuals, social activists, or others, after they have retired and stepped out of the limelight. Attorney Muhammad Nimr al-Hawari (1908-1984), who for a certain period was an associate of national leader Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, was one of the few Palestinians in Israel who wrote an autobiography (in 1955) about his life and actions before the 1948 war (al-Hawari 1955). Al-Hawari's declared motivation was to generate a historical record for the use of future generations. However, a slight search in his past leads to the conclusion, or at least to a suspicion, that he did so in order to clarify his position and to defend himself against allegations of national betrayal after the Israeli authorities approved his return to Israel in 1950. In addition, support of the Jewish narrative against the Palestinians and its dissemination is also a motive that should be brought to the forefront when examining the reconstructed historical picture in Al-Hawari's autobiography.

Bulus Farah was a communist activist during the British Mandate, and he insistently rejected the partition plan of Palestine into two states, Jewish and Arab. As a result, he was barred from the party's political activities and was compelled to

operate outside it. In his autobiography he writes: "I want to present myself as I really was, to refute what was written about and misrepresented me in other books" (Farah 1985, p. 13). Self-defense as a motive assists the researchers in interpreting and judging the truth presented by Farah from his own point of view.

Palestinian intellectuals such as Emile Habibi (1973) and Hanna Abu Hanna (1997) chose to write their autobiographies as novels about fiction figures. This helped them look into themselves and at their past while remaining outside the picture (Bruner 1985). The conclusion regarding their motives is that Habibi and Abu Hanna wanted to avoid reprimand and criticism, particularly because they were active in the political and cultural arena. The researchers can thus conclude that they reconstructed and revealed only part of the truth and not its entirety.

Eakin (1999) introduces the concept that individuals are shaped by their own narratives, highlighting a motivation tied to the author's desire for self-perpetuation and the intention to present oneself in a preferred light. This motive often leads authors to emphasize significant moments of trauma, sacrifice, and heroism, positioning themselves at the heart of these stories (Gilmore 2001). Researchers should consider this underlying motive when analyzing narrators' texts, assessing how narrators or authors leverage their personal experiences to construct their idealized selves.

The researcher needs to examine both the manifest and covert motives; the motives of the interviewee in the oral testimony are similar to those of the autobiography author. The interviewee consents to be interviewed to defend himself, reveal his own personal truth, gain prestige and reputation, or attain commemoration. Similarly, the interviewer has overt motives in the form of obtaining answers for the research questions and testing assumptions, and he may also have covert motives, such as his will to perpetuate groups and figures, to protect against and dismiss allegations raised against his associates, and also to promote a national narrative he is interested in.

Hobsbawm (1990), who coined the term "national engineering", alluded to manipulations that bias the work of contemporary historians (in our case the interviewer), particularly those whose objective is the perpetuation of national memory. For example, a historian-interviewer whose goal is to promote the escape narrative of Palestinian refugees during the 1948 war will direct questions whose answers indicate a narrative whereby Palestinians fled their villages and towns without putting up a struggle, while not mentioning situations of deportation, killing, struggle, and so on. The religious identity of the interviewer can lead to focusing the interview on a specific religious group or a certain religious conflict, for example, the Christians from Beisan (Beit She'an) who remained within the borders of the State of Israel, in contrast to the deportation of the Muslim inhabitants, instead of focusing on a story whereby all the inhabitants of Beisan, whether Muslim or Christian, were deported.

The academic framework significantly influences the selection of interviewees and the formulation of questions. The interviewer's presence within an academic environment and its effect on their decision-making process play a crucial role in determining both the choice of interview subjects and the nature of the questions posed (Ankersmit & Kellner 2013, Lorenz 2002). Researchers employing the

"motives key" can monitor the interviewer's efforts to discern the ideologies and theories that drive their inquiries, focusing on the interviewer's careful engagement and listening dynamics with the interviewee's perspective. A lack of such meticulous effort can result in the interviewer's own motivations dominating the interview process (Grele 1991a). This interplay of motives outlines the framework and contours of the selectively reconstructed narrative. It also shapes the historical contexts, events, and experiences that are explored and documented.

D2. **Authenticity:** refers to the inclination or the subjective state of an individual, wherein he feels that he is behaving and acting in a way that is loyal to his inner thoughts and emotions despite external influences (Abulof 2017). The authenticity key examines the boundary between truth and fiction, between the internal and the external, and between the personal association and the wider collective association (Stanley 1992). The difficulty of finding this boundary lies in the fact that the narrator's selective memory is related not only to him, since it is produced and maintained by broader familial, communal, social, and cultural representations (Abrams 2016, Schacter 1999). For this reason, the researcher examining the autobiography or the document/recording the oral testimony must clearly discern between personal experiences and collective experiences. The recollections of a narrator originating from the period of military government can indicate his own personal memory, and may also be part of a popular memory of his collective, which has been communicated to him through public discourse and the media and might have mixed with his own experience. Multiple and accurate details, as opposed to inclusive reconstruction, are one tool for assessing the authenticity of the narrator's testimony (Smith 2014).

The researcher observing the text should consider the two approaches to the self – the first asserts that the narrator is free to choose the content and language of his story, and the other claims that the story is subject to the narrator's culture and its language. The tension between these two approaches, which leads to differentiation between the power of individual agency and the power of culture, between the personal story that reflects the narrator's identity and identification, and the conformist, culturally-enclaved presentation of the story, needs to be taken into consideration (Bruner 1994).

D3. **The voice of the reconstructed identity** (Identity transformation, the voice of the present identity, and the voice of the reconstructed past identity): Identity is a description, or in other words, a definition of existence and affiliation, and it is built according to the special state of the process of time and space (Kymlica 1998, Taylor 1992, 1994). Observing the identity definition of Palestinian autobiographic authors and/or providers of oral testimony in Israel is a fundamental matter that requires the attention of the researchers, because the narrator tells a story about himself in a time and space where his identity encompassed different components than it does in the present time. Before the establishment of the State of Israel, Palestinians' national identity was defined in two spheres—Palestinian and Arab (for a small group, also their communist international identity was part of their national identity). After the State of Israel was established, the component of the Israeli-civil identity was acquired as a new identity sphere in their collective identity, and the definition of their identity according to the Palestinian and Arab

spheres changed. This transformation of identity stimulated a wide research polemic that agreed that the identity of Arabs in Israel, which was moving between the ethno-national sphere and the civil-Israeli sphere, is a conflictual, divided, and hybrid identity (Smootha 1992, Rouhana & Ghanem 1993, Peres & Yuval Davis 1969, Rouhana 1997, Shehade 2019).

Examining the narrator's attitude to the State of Israel (rapprochement, alienation, or crisis; Smootha 2001), and to the definition of his national affiliation should be taken into account when following up the voice of the telling identity. Palestinian autobiographic authors and oral testimony providers in Israel are intellectuals who can, in the words of Edward Said (1994), be divided into insiders and outsiders. The former fully belong to society as it is, while the latter are exiles. There is a third kind suggested by Honaida Ghanim (2009), which is the liminal identity. According to Ghanim, Palestinians in Israel exist within a liminal space, meaning that they are neither inside nor outside. This is a space abounding with contrasts, ambivalence, and conflicts between the past and present, civil and political, national and state, and modern and traditional. Ghanim opines that in the reality of the Palestinians in Israel the liminality has been transformed from a temporary and transitional phenomenon, after the Nakba of 1948, into a constant and routine reality. She also argues that the Palestinians in Israel remained in their homeland but are in fact outside it, as their homeland became the state of the other and the Palestinian landscape became a ruin upon which the new state was founded.

In an interview¹⁰ the current author held with communist activist Samira Khoury (b. 1929) in April 2019, Khoury described a scene she experienced while in elementary school. In this scene, she and other pupils from her school in Nazareth took part in a support rally for the Mufti of Jerusalem and against the British (during the 1936–1939 Arab revolt in Palestine). Samira memorized the support slogan of that time, but it was accompanied by feelings of objection to that support. While she was telling the story, Samira was unable to detach herself from her communist identity, which she acquired after the establishment of the State of Israel and which promoted a narrative that opposed the Mufti. The interviewer in oral history can, by using in-depth questions, direct the interviewee to a reflexive procedure through which he can define his identity and even discover things about himself that he had not previously known. Although the oral interview is a golden opportunity for external intervention, with the aim of extracting more in-depth information (Abrams 2016), the interviewer's intervention and academic and personal motives might permeate the interviewee's voice and form a bias in the context of the identity issue and other issues (Kim, 2008).

D4. **Language:** Language represents a significant key as it reflects the identity and inner experience of the narrator and generates the personal, social, and cultural form of the story (Fivush 1998). Language enables us to look, in the present, at a past that no longer exists, with the use of images and terminology that belong to the narrated past but at the same are comprehended by the (present) society to which the person is presenting his story (Halbwachs 1992). For this reason, translating autobiographies and oral testimonies into other languages requires great effort, given the difficulty of rendering terminology from the narrator's cultural

¹⁰Nazareth, April 2019.

world into a language that does not contain such terms only because its speakers belong to another culture. Hence, the researcher's culture and his ability to understand and interpret the terminology used in the oral testimony, are critical; usually, such testimony is collected in the local (non-literary) spoken language and it reflects the unique dialect and terminology of the locals.

Despite the small geographical area they reside in, the Palestinian population is diversified in terms of dialect – every grouping of the population has its unique dialect. The dialect (the spoken language) in the center or southern area of the country is distinct from that used in northern Israel, and it is not that rare for two adjacent villages to speak different dialects. As a result of the 1948 war and the migration of many Palestinians from one area to another within Israel, their dialect too was transformed. Rural Palestinians who moved to cities such as Haifa or Nazareth as a result of the 1948 war, had their dialect, landscape, and content world changed as well. Acquiring the local dialect helped them become integrated and survive in their new place. In this transformative reality of the dialect, the interviewer can assist the interviewee to reconstruct the past in the dialect and terminology of his past place (the abandoned village). The researcher who receives the recording or the written transcript of the interview or autobiography, must take caution regarding the language that was used for reconstructing the past, and determine whether it includes terminology from the past world or the present world for describing the past.

The language choice of a narrator offers valuable insights into their self-identity, encompassing a spectrum from formal to colloquial, from openly emotional to restrained and conservative. Such linguistic choices reveal the narrator's inclination either towards highlighting personal experiences or favoring a more generalized approach, thereby shedding light on their self-perception (Renza 1977). Within autobiographical works or the transcripts and recordings of oral testimonies, the representation of the self may vary, reflecting the complexity and multifaceted nature of individual identity.

To analyze the coherence of self-presentation through language, researchers can utilize the three criteria proposed by Charlotte Linde (1993): the continuity of self over time, the self's relationship to others, and the reflexivity of the self. These criteria facilitate the identification of a consistent self-narrative across both autobiographies and oral histories. Notably, the aspect of continuity tends to be more pronounced in oral histories, emphasizing the evolution and consistency of self-identity through various life stages and experiences.

The researcher should also take into account that the language of revealing the truth is related to gender characteristics, to the nature of the personal experience and the will to share it. Though Palestinian men and women both experienced the suffering of the Nakba, the current author realized, through the interviews, that women's testimonies were laden with much more emotional terminology compared to those of men who were inclined to state facts. The women were also willing to share detailed information even when it involved humiliation and personal suffering, while the men seldom shared details of humiliation and suffering. This restraint may be linked to both culture and gender – to the masculine image as those who are supposed to protect women and children,

the home and the land, and in fact failed to do so in the circumstances of war and refugeeness (cf. Bauer et al. 2003).

Language can also serve to protect the narrator against future threats and revenge, criticism and/or prosecution following the revelation of details from the past. Through the use of language, the narrator can conceal names, while also noting other cues that can lead to the truth he wants to reveal. The researcher will need to base his interpretation on this fact and search for the truth by cross-checking the cues with information from other sources.

D5. Conditions of engagement with the past: (time, place, health status, time distance from the recounted past, continuous or fragmented reconstruction, one-time or prolonged reconstruction, external stimuli, personal experience, interviewer intervention).

In autobiographies, engagement with the past is accomplished throughout a prolonged period of time, where the story can be updated and organized to produce a single consolidated and continuous memory. This is not the case in an interview, which in most cases is a one-time event, fragmented by the interviewer's questions and depending on the interviewer's resolve.

Creating an appropriate atmosphere that allows for easy recall is a prerequisite for giving voice to the narrator and hearing him or her (Abrams 2016, Grele 1991b). Palestinian interviewees who witnessed and could recall the events of the Nakba – the 1948 war – are at present over 80 years old (and many of them are over 90). Specifying the time and place of the interview (in the interviewee's home, nursing home, or the real arena of the reconstructed past, i.e., the deserted Palestinian village) and the health status of the interviewee would help future researchers judge the conditions under which the interview was held. These details would also need to be derived, by the researcher, from the autobiography of the narrator. The events of the Nakba took place 73 years ago, and the question a researcher would have to ask himself is whether the told memory is truth or fiction.

Daniel Schacter highlights those elderly interviewees and autobiographers, such as those from the Nakba generation, often retain vivid and emotionally potent memories because these memories are distinct and emotionally charged. Furthermore, the process of repeatedly narrating their stories serves as a method of reconstruction, solidification, and long-term preservation of these memories. Schacter points out that while transient memories tend to fade, become obscured, or merge with other memories over time, significant and emotionally resonant memories, like those of the Nakba, are more likely to be preserved and distinct.

For the Nakba generation—Palestinians in Israel for whom the Nakba was a pivotal event—the act of sharing their experiences with friends and family has been crucial in maintaining and reconstituting a personal narrative around these events. An illustrative case is that of Mohammad Ali Taha, a native of the now-abandoned Palestinian village of Mi'ar. Born in 1941, Taha managed to reconstruct precise details of names and events from the 1948 war in his autobiography published in 2017. Despite his young age of 7 at the time of these events, the detailed fixation of these memories was not solely the result of Taha's individual efforts but was also supported by the collective memory of his community, who

continually narrated and enriched these stories with details. This phenomenon of memory fixation, as described in Thomson's (1991) "Memory and Remembering in Oral History," underscores how, over time, Taha and others like him have been able to update and shape their stories, despite the significant transformations in the physical and nominal characteristics of the original settings of their memories.

The act of recalling details that have blurred or faded is an untrained action, and it is not an extraordinary experience for the narrator. In judging the credibility of a story that lacks reference to collective events, a historical researcher should take this fact into account. In addition, the researcher may encounter references to events in the reconstructed story which do not make sense. The recommendation for the researcher is to judge that this memory is fiction. At the same time, the researcher must try to understand the source of the fact fabrication. The concept of False Memory Syndrome (FMS) was introduced by Peter J. Freyd as an idea that a person strongly believes in but is objectively incorrect. The reason for this belief may derive from traumatic experiences, which cause him to make up false facts as a means of distraction and overcoming these experiences (Gilmore 2001).

Rose (1993) draws an analogy between the act of narrating a memory and a mechanical model of memory retrieval, suggesting that recalling a memory involves bringing it forth from deep storage, revisiting and refining the details, and then reconsolidating it back into deep memory. This intricate process encompasses neurological, social, and psychological dimensions, influenced not only by the individual's personal experiences but also by collective memory, which is shaped and disseminated through media and public discourse (Smith 2014). The narrative thus becomes a product of both personal recollection and the broader cultural and societal narratives that contextualize individual memories.

In the dynamic interaction between narrator and listener, the role of the interviewer is particularly significant. The interviewer has the potential to influence the memory that emerges during the conversation. According to Yow (1997), this influence can become particularly pronounced in cases where the interviewer has a strong emotional connection with the interviewee. Such affection or bias might lead the interviewer to consciously or unconsciously guide the testimony in a manner that casts the interviewee in a more favorable light. This interplay underscores the complex nature of memory recall and narration, where personal biases, social influences, and the interactive dynamics of the interviewing process can all impact how memories are recounted, interpreted, and ultimately recorded. To conclude this section, it is notable that it is not the responsibility of the historical researcher to act as a psychoanalyst who finds failures in a person's memory as a result of the terms of reconstruction or other causes. The role of the researcher, as mentioned above, is to discover the authentic details, considering the conditions in which the story was produced and the personal experience of the narrator, in order to back up the researcher's judgment as to whether the story is fiction or truth.

Conclusions

In this article, I have addressed the unique case of the Palestinian community within Israel, highlighting my reliance on oral histories and autobiographies as the primary sources for reconstructing their historical narrative. This approach emphasizes the critical importance of these narrative forms in capturing and preserving the experiences of a community that has faced significant challenges in having its history recognized and recorded. My analysis of the credibility of these autobiographical and oral historical sources is consistent with the critical research methodologies applied to similar narratives across different groups and individuals. Furthermore, I have developed a methodological framework that serves as a crucial tool in my research. This framework enables me to assess the extent to which I can depend on these personal narratives, ensuring that my reliance on them is both critical and methodologically sound. By integrating this framework into my work, I aim to contribute to the broader field of historical research, advocating for a thoughtful and rigorous approach to incorporating personal narratives into our understanding of history.

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On Some Examples for the Egyptian Apheresis of “i”

*By Stefan Bojowald**

This contribution deals in detail with the Egyptian apheresis of “i”. The phonetic principle occupies a solid position in the current scientific literature. The number of examples is enlarged here considerably, viewing the phenomenon from as many vistas as possible. In each case, the phonetic circumstances are explained.

Keywords: *Egyptian philology, Egyptian phonology, apheresis of “i”*

Introduction

This article takes a closer look at the Egyptian apheresis of “i”. In general, apheresis is a rhetorical and phonological term for the omission of one or more sounds or syllables from the beginning of a word. A (weak) vowel or diphthong is usually left out. In English, the forms “round” for “around”, “specially” for “especially” and “spy” for “espy” can be given as examples.

Researchers were confronted with the Egyptian phenomenon early on. The following overview shows the course of development to date¹.

The oldest work on this aspect was apparently presented by Erman (1967/ Neudruck der Ausgabe 1910, pp. 96–104), who was able to prove the apheresis both compactly and in individual formations.

The phonetic rule was then touched upon by Westendorf (1962, pp. 12–13) under the amply flexible term “Defektive Schreibung”.

The aspect was last made clear by Kurth (2007, p. 463) in the spelling “h.t” for the “ih.t”-cow.

The scientific interest in this topic seems to have decreased noticeably afterwards. The existence of the phonetic law is not subject to any doubts.

In this contribution, the initiative is taken to deal with this phenomenon again. The amount of data that has been added in the meantime is presorted for this purpose and processed to such an extent that the phenomenon can be viewed in all its facets. In the total sum, ca. 50 examples have accumulated, on the basis of which first statements can be made. The apheresis of “i” follows certain rules, which differ from case to case, but are always binding. The list presented here uses the Egyptological transliteration alphabet to arrange the evidence. This was the best way to get a handle on the wealth of material. In principle, other tools have been available for the structuring, but after weighing up all the arguments, they turned out to be less useful. Otherwise, the scope of the article would have

*Lecturer, University Bonn, Germany.

¹The loss of initial “i” in the hieroglyphic reproduction of African country names mentioned by Edel (1990, p. 89) will be excluded, cause it may have other causes, which cannot be pursued further here.

exceeded an almost unacceptable level, since frequent back and cross references would become unavoidable. The age of the evidence is given in brackets for better orientation. The elision of “i” started cautiously in the Old Kingdom, only to experience its climax in the Graeco-Roman period.

The dominant theme of the investigation is the phonetically conditioned apheresis of “i”. In the further course, the question of the influence of phonetic laws is tried to be answered as often as possible. The discussion is mainly based on spellings of individual words, but then also includes puns in the consideration². The environment of puns has crystallized several times as the gravitational centre of phonetic laws, so that the present cases are no exception. The puns come from literary texts, where they are known to be particularly common. The interpretation of the puns follows in the footsteps of Leitz (2014, p. 310 n. 44), who arrives at the conclusion that the mere consonance is sufficient as a constitutive feature.

The Apheresis of “i” before “3”

The first group of examples is put under the motto of the apheresis of “i” before “3”. The most logical explanation is probably the assimilation of “i” to “3” in connection with the phonetic change between “I” and “3”³. The writing “3.t” (Sethe 1964, 25 k, Allen 1960, p. 46, Kucharek 2010, pp. 276/279/326f) (New Kingdom/Graeco-Roman period) for “i3.t” “site” is pointed out first. The writing “3.t” (Allen 1960, p. 46, Quack 2014, p. 93, Widmaier 2008, p. 146) (New Kingdom/Graeco-Roman period) for “i3.t” “back” should be highlighted as well. The writing “3.t” (Ockinga 2011, p. 353) (New Kingdom) for “i3.t” “standard” follows the same pattern. The theoretically conceivable connection between “3bw” “Elephantine” and “i3b.t” “Osten” (Beinlich 2017, p. 25) (Late Period) can be seen in the same context. The writing “3r” (Burkard 1995, 194 n. 132) (Graeco-Roman period) for “i3r” “mourning” fits into the same grid. The relatively rare spelling “3r” (Allen 1960, p. 46, Jansen-Winkel 2009, p. 453) (New Kingdom/Late Period) for the second halve of “šh.t-i3rw” “field of rushes” reflects the same phenomenon. The explanation of “3r.t” (Middle Kingdom) as a writing of “i3r.t” “outflow” suggested by Lesko (1972, p. 64c) would be on the same line, but was rejected by Sherbiny (2017, p. 231) because of the unusual flesh determinative. The writing “3d.t” (Jasnow 1992, p. 108) (Late Period) for “i3d.t” “deficiency” must also be considered here. The pun between “3d” “to rage” and “i3d.t” “deficiency” also goes back to the apheresis of “I”, which can be found in: “...kii r3 tp-‘.wy ir.t hr i3d.t=ś, iw 3d=k r=ś iw 3d=ś r=k” (O’ Rourke 2015, p. 130) (Late Period) ,... Another spell before the eye of Horus (and) its torment(er). You rage against it (and) it rages "against you". The puns between “3bw.t” “Abydos pillar” and “i3bii.t” “left” respectively “3b” “to stay” and “i3bt.t” “east” in: “tši tw m 3bw.t ir.t i3bii.t n. t R‘, 3b ib=k m i3bt.t” (D X, 244,

²For Egyptian puns cf. Guglielmi (1984, pp. 491–506), Barbash (2011, p. 16ff), Hagen (2012, pp. 52–54), Richter (2016, pp. 13–38).

³For this phonetic change cf. Edel (1955/1964, p. 59f), Westendorf (1962, p. 10f), Jasnow and Zauzich (2005, p. 89), Sethe (1899, p. 48).

2–3) (Graeco-Roman Period) draw back on the apheresis of “i” as well. The line, which is almost saturated by with puns, can be translated “Raise in/as the Abydos pillar, left eye o Ra, your heart may stay in the east”.

The Apheresis of “i” before “w”

The next subcategory of the apheresis of “i” can again be demonstrated with a larger number of examples. The examples connect the fact, that everywhere “i” before “w” was expelled. The assumption that here the assimilation of “i” to “w” in connection with the phonetic change between “i” and “w”⁴ takes place should be correct. The writing “w” (Pries 2011, p. 110 n. 358) (Middle Kingdom) for “i w” “washman” is stressed first. The second example is built by the writing “b” (Burkard 1995, p. 193 n. 116, Goedicke 1984, p. 63, Allen 1960, p. 46) (New Kingdom/Graeco-Roman Period) for “i b” “bowl”. The writing “b” (Old Kingdom/ Graeco-Roman Period) for “i b” “to join (Junge 2003, p. 228)/to supply (Pries 2011, pp. 228–229)” can be added to the series. In its case, according to Gundacker (2018, p. 158), it should be an aleph prostheticum or dialect doublets. The explanation with dialectal influence seems to be less probable. The writing “b.t” (Parkinson 2012, p. 190) (Middle Kingdom) for “i b.t” “unity” must also be taken into account in this context. The writing “f” (Sander-Hansen 1956, p. 51) (Graeco-Roman Period) for “i f” “to torment” should receive the same appreciation. The writing “r” (Erichsen 1959, p. 61, Albert 2013, p. 20; see also Otto 1960, p. 75) (Graeco-Roman Period) for “i r” “to arise” can be subsumed under the same keyword. The writing “r.t” (Töpfer 2015, p. 117) (Graeco-Roman Period) for “i r.t” “urae” belongs to the same category. The same interpretation can be consulted in explaining the writing “h” (Sethe 1964, p. 174; Volten 1958, p. 351 n. 1; von Falck 2006, p. 15) (New Kingdom/Graeco-Roman period) for “i h” “moon”. The same mention should get the pun between “i b” “to present” and “b.t” “vessel”, delivered in “i b.n=i n=k b.t” (Cauville 1997, p. 95) (Graeco-Roman period) “herewith I present you the vessel”. The pun between “i r” “to arise” and “r” “Ra” allows the same explanation, which can be observed in the line “i (r)=k n=s m m=k pw n r” (Sethe 1960, p. 233 (452b); see also Edel 1955/1964, § 428 bb) (Old Kingdom) “...you arises to him in this your name Ra”. In addition, a metathesis is to be assumed. The plausibility of the pun is increased by the writing “r” for “i r” discussed above.

The Apheresis of “i” before “w”

The next examples join together again to form a group, in which the apheresis of “i” before “w” appears. The external prerequisite has certainly demanded the

⁴For this phonetic change cf. (Sethe 1899, pp. 88–90), Westendorf (1962, p. 19), Peust (1999, pp. 103–104).

assimilation of “I” to “w” as a result of the phonetic change between “i” and “w”⁵. The writing “w3” (Osing 1992, p. 62) (New Kingdom) for “iw3” “cow” is listed first. The same look is worth throwing at the writing “w” (WB I, 50, Belegschreibungen) (Old Kingdom) for “iw” “heir”. The writing “wr” (Kucharek 2010, p. 440, Barbash 2011, p. 118) (Graeco-Roman period) for “iwr” “pregnant” will next be noted. The hint at the pun between “iwr” “pregnant” and “wr” “large” should also be included in this context, which can be verified in the line “iwr.n t3 wr.t m ḥnt-t3” (Kockelmann and Winter 2016, p. 105) (Graeco-Roman period) “pregnant was the Large one in Philae”. The pun is supported by the writing “wr” for “iwr” discussed above.

The Apheresis of “i” before “p”

The next statements will be entirely in the spirit of the apheresis of “i” before “p”. In this case, the assimilation of “i” to “p” seems to occur. In the present moment, only the writing “p.t” (KRI III, 305, 12/KRI III, 311, 9) (New Kingdom) for “ip.t” “harem” could be detected. The phonetic change between “i” and “p” has apparently not yet appeared. As a way out, analogy formation could be considered. However, the remarks of Kitchen are otherwise not without problems, so that it may be a modern misspelling. The example should therefore perhaps be deleted.

The Apheresis of “i” before “m”

The next group consists of examples in which the apheresis of “i” before “m” has taken place. The assimilation of “i” to “m” is a possible cause for this. The process was most likely started by the phonetic change between “m” and “I”⁶. The phonetic change has entailed the corresponding assimilation. The writing “m3” (Barbash 2011, p. 166) (Late Period) for “im3” “gracious” has to be introduced first. The possibly existing connection between “m3ḥ” “grain sheaf” and “im3ḥ” “venerable” continues the series (Kaplony 1966, p. 88, cf. Hornung 1963, p. 53; for the word “m3ḥ” “grain sheaf” cf. Giza VI, 144; Giza XI, 191; Takács 2008, p. 315). The writing “mn” (Helck 1961, p. 187 n. 4, Jansen-Winkel 2007a, p. 188) (New Kingdom/Late Period) for “Imn” “Amon” follows next. The writing “mn.tiw” (Barbash 2011, p. 152) (Graeco-Roman Period) for “imn.tiw” “the Western ones” must also be included in the statistics. The number of examples can be further increased by the writing “mḥ.t” (Lüscher 2010, p. 93; for the connection between “mḥ” and “imḥ.t” cf. Leitz 2014, pp. 298–299) (New Kingdom) for “imḥ.t” “place name”. The assimilation of “i” to “m” is also documented by the pun between “Imn” “Amun” and “mn” “to be firm”, which is certified in at least three places. The first case occurs in “i3w.t rmpi šbb nḥḥ, Imn mn m (i)ḥw.t

⁵For this phonetic change cf. Sethe (1899, 87f/116f), Edel (1955/1964, p. 62), Westendorf (1962, p. 21), Osing (1976, p. 628).

⁶For this phonetic change cf. Bojowald (2011, pp. 293–295).

nb(.wt)” (Lange 1927, p. 34) (New Kingdom), which can be translated by “you old one, who rejuvenates, and lives through the eternity, Amon, who is firm in all”. The second example can be proven in “imn.ti m Imn m ḥ3.t ntr.w ... ḥr=k tw m imi p.t mn.ti m R’” (Zandee 1947, pl. 3; see also Smith 2002, p. 103) (New Kingdom), for which the translation “(You are) hidden as Amon in the front of the gods ..., you removes yourself as the one, who is in heaven, firm as Ra” can be offered. The third example is in “nḥb(.t)[=f] m ḏw.w r nwn [m] Imn mn m ḥ.t nb(.t)” (Klotz 2006, p. 74) (Graeco-Roman period), for which the translation “[his] names row reaches from the mountains to the sea [as] Amun, who is firm in all.”. The pun is made almost perfect by the writing “mn” für “imn” discussed above.

The Apheresis of “i” before “n”

The next examples begin a new paragraph, in which the apheresis of “i” before “n” is analyzed. The assimilation of “i” to “n” forms the prerequisite that was brought about by the phonetic change between “n” and “i”. The last phenomenon has been treated e.g., by Westendorf (1962, p. 28). The writing “nb” (Brunner 1944, p. 32) (Middle Kingdom) for “inb” “wall” serves as first example. The writing “npii” (Leitz 2014, p. 142) (Graeco-Roman period) for “inpii” “the one belonging to Anubis” must also come up for discussion.

The Apheresis of “i” before “h”

The next example again opens up a new paragraph in which the apheresis of “i” before “h” is portrayed. The search has so far resulted only in one example that hides in the writing “hb” (von Falck 2006, p. 28) (Graeco-Roman period) in one manuscript instead of “ihb” “?” in another manuscript. In the Egyptian language, the definitive proof of the phonetic change between “i” and “h” does not seem to have been successful so far, the phonetic change between “i” and “h” in Egyptian-Semitic direction will step in as a provisional replacement⁷. The late writing “hms.t” (Widmer 2014, p. 138) for the Horus son “Im-št” “Amset” may also indicate this phonetic change. The assimilation of “i” to “h” has been productive in the example of Kurth discussed above.

The Apheresis of “i” before “ḥ”

The next examples constitute a new paragraph, in the centre of which is the apheresis of “i” before “ḥ”. The assimilation of “i” to “ḥ” as a result of the phonetic change between both consonants can be recognized as a cause. The phonetic change between “i” and “ḥ” is one of the rarer types, but it has been proven with certainty (Westendorf 1962, p. 36). The base can perhaps be

⁷For this phonetic change cf. Ember (1967/Neudruck der Ausgabe 1911, p. 89).

additionally expanded by the writing “šnwii” (WB IV, 157) for “šnwḥ” “to cook”. The writing “ḥ” (Grunert 2005, p. 122) (Old Kingdom) for the particle “iḥ” must be highlighted as the first example. The same process can also be illuminated from another perspective with the writing “ḥḥ” (Allen 1960, p. 46) (New Kingdom) for “iḥḥw”⁸ “dusk”. The loss of “w” at the end of a word would also cause no difficulties as a second factor.

The Apheresis of “i” before Gutturals

In the next section, the examples for the apheresis of “i” before gutturals will be examined more closely. The assimilation of “i” to the subsequent guttural offers itself as a cause. The phonetic change between “i” and gutturals has not yet found a consensus, but a separable study is to be published in the foreseeable future that will provide with better security. The writing “kr” (Gardiner 1932, 34 a) (New Kingdom) for “iḳr” “excellent” starts the series. The writing “gp” (WB I, 141, p. 1, Vandier 1950, pp. 223–234, Klotz 2006, p. 91, Jansen-Winkel 2007b, p. 341, Knigge 2006, p. 168) (Middle Kingdom/Late Period) for “igp” “cloud” must not be missing either.

The Apheresis of “i” before Dentals

The next examples appear again as an organic unit whose common denominator consists of the apheresis of “i” before dentals. The assumption does not go too far that the assimilation of “i” to the dentals in connection with the corresponding phonetic change is responsible for this. The existence of the Egyptian phonetic change between “i” and dentals could be sufficiently cemented some time ago (Bojowald 2013b, 27–35). The writing “tn” (Allen 1960, p. 59, Grimal 1981, p. 45, Hoffmann 1996, p. 372) (New Kingdom/Graeco-Roman period) for “itn” “sun disc” should be illustrative of this. The writing “tm” (Allen 1960, p. 46) (New Kingdom) for “Itmw” “Atum” evokes the same interest. The writing “tr.w” (Gardiner 1948, 36 a/42 a) (New Kingdom) for “itr.w” “river” can also be classified in this category. The list is further completed by the writing “ṭi” for “iṭi” (Grunert 2005, p. 124) “to take”. The writing “dn” (WB V, 463, unter dn II) for “idn” “to represent” further rounds off the picture. The writing “db” (Backes 2016, p. 411) (Late Period) for “idb” “shore” should also be named in this context. The hint at the writing “dmi” (Brunner 1937, pp. 23, 59) (Middle Kingdom) for “idmi” “red garment” also seems appropriate. The pun between “dmi” “to snuggle up” and “idmi” “red garment” is to be evaluated in the same light, for which two examples can be given. The passage “ḥd=k m ḥd.t, w3d=k m w3d.t, sm^ḥ=k irtiḥ, dmi=k idmi” (Rickert 2011, pp. 230–233) (Graeco-Roman period) is of first importance, for which the translation “You are white in white clothes, you are green in green clothes, you unite with blue linen, you snuggle up to the red linen” can be chosen. The second example can be decrypted in the line

⁸For the word “iḥḥw” “dusk” cf. Lacau (1970, p. 40), Lacau (1972, pp. 57, 81).

“m n=k idmi dmi=ś r ‘wt=k nb.t” (D X, 222, 10–12; for this passage cf. Leitz 2011, p. 24) (Graeco-Roman period), for which the translation “Take the red garment, so it snuggles up to all your body” makes an adequate impression. The pun between “dr” “to subdue” and “idr” “herd” also belongs here, which is to be seen in the passage “rḥ pḥ.ti=f dr idr n sm3 mi ḥr n ḥr” (KRI V, 112, 16; for this passage cf. Hsu 2017, p. 245) (New Kingdom) “who knows his power and subdues the herd of wild bulls face to face”. The pun between “Itmw” “Atum” and “tm” “to be complete” goes back to the same principle, which shines up in the passage “...mšḥn.t tm.ti dr.t Itmw mśi.t šw ḥn’ tfn.t” (Yamazaki 2003, p. 24) (New Kingdom) “...Mesechenet, while you are complete, hand of Atum, who bore Schu and Tefnut”. The probability of the pun is successively increased by the writing “tm” for “itmw” discussed above.

The core statement of the contribution remains to be briefly summarized at the end. The apheresis of “i” could be outlined clearer by the foregoing considerations. In the majority of cases, phonetic reasons for the apheresis could be identified. The tendency of the consonant to drop out is certainly related to its own weakness. The same behaviour is shown by the two other weak consonants “3” (Bojowald 2015, pp. 39–42) and “w” (Bojowald 2013a, pp. 197–205). The overall development is not isolated in the world of the oriental languages (Littmann 1910, pp. 62–63).

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