

Seeger, Ulrich. 2022. *Wörterbuch Palästinensisch – Deutsch: Teil 1: ʔ – Š, Teil 2: Š – Y*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. XVII, 1348 pp. ISBN 978-3-447-11841-5.

Ulrich Seeger's two-volume dictionary of Palestinian dialects published in late 2022 is the largest and most comprehensive of its kind, preceded, for example, by Leonhard Bauer's work in German (1957) and 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Barġūṭī's in Arabic (2001). Apart from these, the most important achievement in the lexicography of Syrian and Palestinian dialects, although referential primarily to Damascus, is Adrien Barthélemy's French dictionary (1935), collecting lexis also from the dialect of Jerusalem.

Seeger is a German linguist and Arabist who is very well recognised among dialectologists of Arabic, yet I will still outline his scientific profile for readers outside the dialectological community who may be unfamiliar with him. Seeger has been associated with the Department of Semitic Studies at Heidelberg University throughout his academic career. There he completed his master's degree in Semitic studies with a thesis on the Arabic dialect of al-Xalīl (Hebron) (Seeger 1996). In 1996, conducted field research in the eastern Iranian region of Khorasan, where he became the first to confirm and record the existence of Arabic dialects.

However, it is Palestinian dialects to which he has committed himself in his dialectological work. As part of his doctoral project, he conducted long-term field research on the rural dialects around Ramallah and published his findings in two volumes. The first one was with a glossary preceded by transcriptions of the texts and the second contained a grammatical description (Seeger 2009; 2012). Seeger has taught Palestinian dialects at Heidelberg University for years and based on his experience also prepared a textbook for the study of the dialect of Jerusalem (Seeger 2013), which contains an eminently clear consolidated grammatical description of this Palestinian variety in 30 lessons. His recent publications are partly an aftermath of the dictionary reviewed here, as he has also published four books in 2023 with proverbs, animal and plant names, borrowings and verb types in Palestinian Arabic (Seeger 2023a; 2023b; 2023c; 2023d).



Seeger's dictionary is unquestionably the largest work of its kind in the field of Palestinian lexicography. It collects vocabulary in Palestinian Arabic translated into German. On 1,348 pages, he has arranged the entire vocabulary in approximately 9,000 roots and there are more than 30,000 lexical entities. In addition to individual entries, the dictionary contains approximately 11,000 examples. The dictionary is preceded by five-page 'Instructions for use', 'Hinweise zur Benutzung' (p. VII–XI), which, for example, besides a discussion on the arrangement of entries, includes information on how to cite lexicographical data (entries or their translations) from earlier publications. It should be emphasised that when compiling the dictionary in the second phase of his work, the author made use of earlier sources, which he very scrupulously notes next to each dictionary entry. This was done in order to complete the missing entries. He lists all quoted literature immediately after the 'Instructions for use' (p. XII–XIV), and in the 'Alphabetical list of abbreviations', 'Alphabetisches Verzeichnis der Sigel', he provides all abbreviations implied with more than 57,000 citations. Seeger cites earlier sources extremely accurately and clearly, as the following example of one of the entries illustrates:

- TRYN *trēn* / *-āt* Zug, Eisenbahn, _z Straßenbahn^{LB5,292,43} (frz. train, engl. train)
 • _z *trēn* *ʕafš* Güterzug^{LB5,145,-36}
 • _z *trēn* *iksbrēs* Schnellzug^{LB5,263,-15} (p. 147)

The author inserts the letter _z in the subscript before each quoted part, whether of the whole entry or its translation. Then, after the quotation in the superscript, he gives the exact bibliographical data, e.g. ^{LB5,145,-36}, where LB5 stands for Bauer's dictionary (1957), page 145 and line 36 counting from the bottom of the page. Although the dictionary is saturated with citations, so that they appear quite frequently, they are nevertheless discreetly placed, so they do not disrupt the dictionary's readability. The citation system is also neatly outlined in the 'Instructions for use'.

Seeger's dictionary originates from his 2009 work, in which he included a dictionary of villages around Ramallah. It was for this publication that he began collecting vocabulary during his field research, which he continued in the following years while staying in Palestine. It was definitely the first stage in the compilation of his dictionary and at the same time his evident core of work. He collaborated with a number of speakers in this regard, although he was most assisted by three consultants: Rāmi il-ʿArabi, Laṭīfe Abu l-ʿAsal and Taḥsīn ʿAlāwnih. Their contributions to the dictionary are also noted on the cover and title page as collaborations. It is noteworthy that the consultants not only collaborated with Seeger in the development of new entries, but also collected for him vocabulary used on a daily basis, and then also checked and discussed data from earlier publications and sources.

As far as transcription is concerned, the author is remarkably consistent in this respect. I refer here again to ‘Hinweise zur Benutzung’, in which he describes in detail at the very beginning how the various transcription characters are realised. Seeger points out, for example, that despite the notation of the interdental consonants *t*, *d̥* and *ḏ*, it should be borne in mind that in urban dialects they are realised as *t*, *d* and *ḏ*. Although he uses the sign *q* consistently in his dictionary, in urban dialects this sign corresponds to the phoneme /ʔ/, while in Bedouin and rural dialects of southern Palestine **q* is realised as /g/, in rural dialects of central Palestine as /k/, while in the north as /ḳ/. There are many more such introductory notes on transcription and pronunciation, hence it is worth reading them in detail before using the dictionary.

The entries are arranged by roots, following the order of the Arabic alphabet, so Seeger follows the well-established principles used in Arabic lexicography in this respect. It can sometimes be problematic to find borrowings, mainly from English, French, Turkish or Italian. These are arranged according to ‘roots’, in which the first root consonant is usually followed by a weak consonant *w* or *y* which is equivalent to the second root consonant. For example, the word *Rezept* ‘prescription’ in as many as six variants: *rōšitta*, *rōšētta*, *rušētta*, *rošitta*, *rušetta*, *rušēta* (p. 475) should be looked for under the root RWŠTY, and not, for example, RŠT. When using the dictionary for the first time, it takes a little more time to find some borrowings. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile not to give up too quickly, because Seeger’s dictionary is likely to have the borrowing the reader is looking for (cf. Seeger 2023b).

In the case of borrowings, Seeger also provides the etymology of the words in question, which is primarily morphological, looking for attestations of the word in, for example, another older registered Semitic language. Seeger thus follows the paths set by other Semitists, and in terms of recent lexicographical work, the same has been done, for example, by Werner Arnold (2019) in his dictionary of Western Neo-Aramaic. However, Seeger is not always faithful to the rule applied and sometimes also tries to take into account the individual history of a word. For example, he places the word *šabāba* under the stem ŠBBY rather than ŠBB and gives its Hebrew equivalent סבבה as the etymology (‘Even-Šošān 2003 4: 1256).

In terms of the arrangement of the dictionary, what seems to be different from the previous rules is the placement of all words with the suffix *-ḡi* at the consonant Ğ, rather than the individual roots. As a result, the dictionary contains a five-page list of words with the suffix *-ḡi* (p. 171–175). So, once again, I urge dictionary users to read the guidelines carefully.

A great advantage of the dictionary is the inclusion of different variants of a given word in individual entries, avoiding being limited to one form of a given word in any particular dialect, such as urban. This uniquely enriches the collected lexis as much as does the inclusion of an old traditional lexicon—today perhaps unknown even to most Palestinians. This makes the material even richer, more interesting and encourages in-depth reading of the dictionary.

In summary, Seeger has done an enormous amount of work. It is not without reason that I am writing that his *magnum opus* is now the most important lexicographical source for the Palestinian Arabic dialects. Thanks to his work, the Palestinian varieties are undoubtedly now among the best compiled Arabic dialects in terms of the vocabulary collected so far. Any new publications in Arabic dialectology on Palestinian lexicography will probably only slightly complement Seeger's masterpiece.

Although German translations are of a very high linguistic standard, I hold out hope that the dictionary will be used much more widely than just among researchers who know the language.

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