

Phonological evidence for the division of the *gəlat* dialects of Iraq into *šrūgi* and non-*šrūgi*

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The purpose of this paper is to provide new insights on the division of the *gəlat* dialects into *šrūgi* and non-*šrūgi* types, which was first proposed in Hassan (2020). This division was an attempt to redraw the map of the *gəlat* dialects after having observed a correlation between their geographic distribution and the sectarian affiliation of their users. With this backdrop in mind, the present paper will demonstrate two stable isophones that support this division, emphasizing whether these isophones are indigenous premigratory features or non-native postmigratory elements, which gradually infiltrated through at a great extent into some *šrūgi* dialects from other adjoining *šrūgi* ones. Moreover, maps that illustrate the pre- and postmigratory distribution of these isophones are also included.

Keywords: Iraqi-Arabic, *gəlat* dialects, *šrūgi*/non-*šrūgi* dialectal areas, pre-/postmigratory isophones.

1. Introduction

When compared with the *qəltu* dialects, the classification of their *gəlat* counterparts has received only marginal attention in the literature on Iraqi-Arabic dialectology.¹ Nevertheless, Blanc (1964), in his *Communal Dialects in Baghdad*, made the first step in this direction. He ‘ecologically’ divided Iraqi-Arabic dialects into ‘two large groups’, *gəlat* and *qəltu*, both named after the Classical Arabic form *qultu* ‘I said’ (Blanc 1964: 5). According to his ‘ecological division,’ the *gəlat* area comprises most varieties spoken in lower and upper Iraq where Muslims constitute the vast majority of the population (Blanc 1964: 6).

This division has also been adopted post-Blanc by most dialectologists, without any substantial improvement, and it is still the foundation on which the classificatory descriptions of Iraqi-Arabic are made to this day. However, except for a few indications of their geographic distribution, Jastrow's

¹ The classificatory picture of the *qəltu* dialects became increasingly clear, particularly after the numerous works of Otto Jastrow (2007, 1990a, 1990b, 1983, 1981, 1979, 1978, etc.), among others.

numerous publications on Iraqi-Arabic, have made no new contribution to the classification of the *gəlat* dialects, as they simply confirmed some points already made by Blanc (cf. Jastrow 2007: 415).

Moreover, in a recent paper, Hassan (2020) suggested for the first time a division of the *gəlat* dialects into *šrūgi* and non-*šrūgi* (Map 1.). According to this division, the *šrūgi* dialectal area refers to all *gəlat* dialects spoken in southern Iraq and the Middle Euphrates area, whereas the non-*šrūgi* one includes only *gəlat* dialects in the northern and western parts of the country. The notion *šrūgi* itself is a pejorative exonym created by non-*šrūgi* Sunni people to pertain to their Shia counterparts from the *šrūgi* dialectal area.



Map 1. The Division of the *gəlat* dialects into *šrūgi* and non-*šrūgi* dialectal areas (Hassan 2020)

Interestingly, people in the *šrūgi* dialectal area are proud of being described as such, that is because they interpret the word *šrūgi* differently. For them, it derives from the term *šrūgōn*, the name of the king of Akkad, whom they consider their ancestor. With this in mind, such division is not far from Blanc's 'communal affiliation' approach as it presupposes a correlation between the distribution of the *gəlat* dialects and the sectarian affiliation of their speakers.

Hassan (2020) supports this division by a list of lexical features that are present in the *šrūgi* area, but absent in the *non-šrūgi* one. The present paper, however, is a further attempt to corroborate this division. Two stable contrasting isophones, $\check{g} > y$ and $\check{g} > \check{z}$, that separate these two areas, are described in detail in the next sections. However, due to a general lack of research on the *šrūgi* dialectal area, and on this particular topic, much of the data in this paper come from the author's knowledge of his own community.

The other data were mainly from personal communication with notables in different parts of the *šrūgi* area who are usually considered a storehouse of tribal knowledge. Moreover, in this regard, anthropological studies conducted by Drower (1936), Field (1936), Salim (1955), Thesiger (1967), and Westphal-Helbusch (1962), among others, do not provide any indication of how, why, and when tribal movements existed, but rather emphasize the anthropometric aspect of people in the *šrūgi* area (Drower 1936, Field 1936) or their beliefs and traditions (Thesiger 1967, Westphal-Helbusch 1962, Salim 1955).

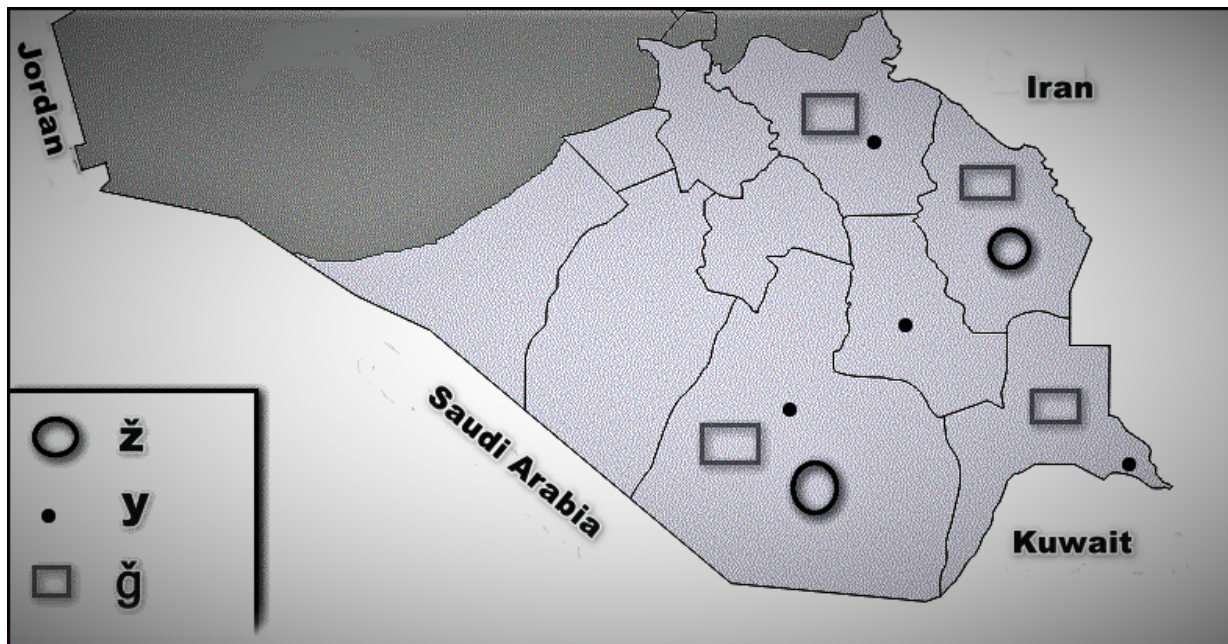
In addition, migratory movements of individuals and groups are still ongoing throughout the *šrūgi* area due to recurring tribal tensions or other constraints such as water scarcity and droughts in remote rural areas. It is consequently hard to find any reliable sources documenting these tribal movements and all events were passed down orally from the perspective of the individuals.

2. A brief overview of the state of research of \check{g} -reflexes in the *šrūgi* dialectal area

Generally, early studies on \check{g} -reflexes, albeit rare in the literature, seem to be inconsistent and do not, therefore, provide a clear picture of their geographic distribution in the *šrūgi* dialectal area. Blanc (1964: 28), for example, states in passing that the voiced fricative / \check{z} / is typical of the *šrūgi* dialect of ʿAmāra, whereas the palatal approximant / y / is typical of the very end of southern Mesopotamia.

This, however, goes in line with Ingham's pioneer views on \check{g} -reflexes in the *šrūgi* area. He considers the voiced fricative / \check{z} / hallmark of the Mīʿdān Arabs of the marshlands in ʿAmāra, whereas the palatal approximant / y / is characteristic of the rest of the area (Ingham 2000: 128, 1994: 95, 1982: 36, 1976: 67, etc.). On the contrary, Jastrow (2007: 416) points out that the voiced fricative / \check{z} / is the

common reflex of the phoneme /ǧ/ in Samāwa, and the palatal approximant /y/ is a characteristic of southern Iraq including Bašra (Map 2.).

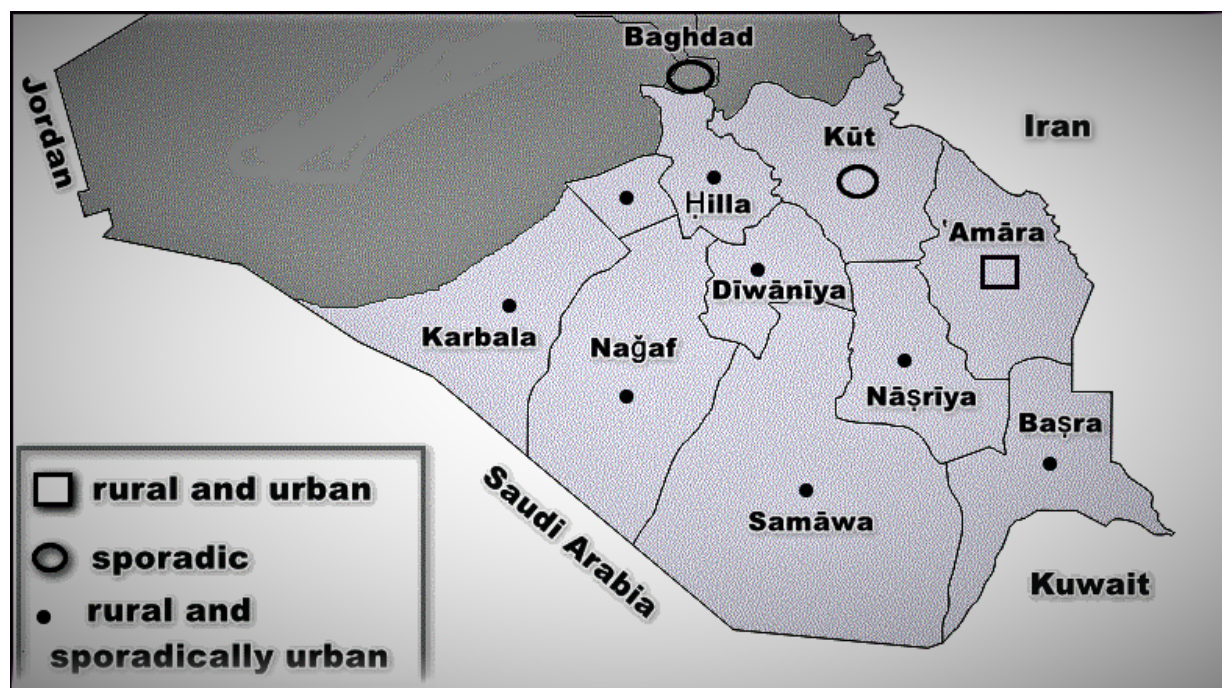


Map 2. The geographic distribution of ǧ-reflexes according to Blanc (1964: 28), Ingham (2000: 128, etc.), and Jastrow (2007: 416)

In what follows, I will first show through maps that the reflexes /ž/ and /y/ are present in the whole *šrūgi* dialectal area, but completely absent in the non-*šrūgi* one. I will also show that the voiced fricative /ž/ is largely a postmigratory feature in some enclaves of the *šrūgi* area, in contrast to the palatal approximant /y/, which seems to be, at least for the most part, premigratory.

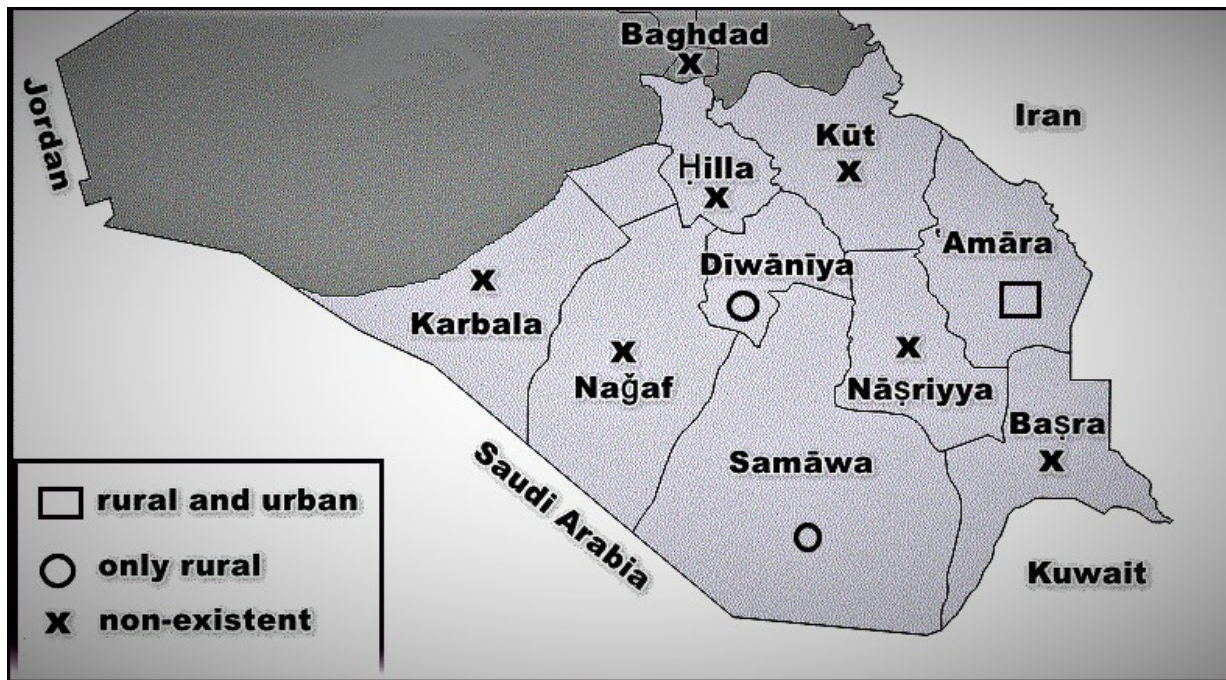
3. The voiced fricative /ž/

The voiced fricative /ž/ occurs today along with the phoneme /ǧ/ in all *šrūgi* dialects and its frequency of occurrence varies significantly from dialect to dialect. It is, for example, most common in both urban and rural *šrūgi* dialects in ʿAmāra and less frequent in the speech of the other urban *šrūgi* dwellers (Nāšriyya, Bašra, Karbala, Samāwa, Dīwāniyya, Nağaf, and Ḥilla), in comparison with their rural counterparts, that usually have /ž/ for /ǧ/ (Map 3.).



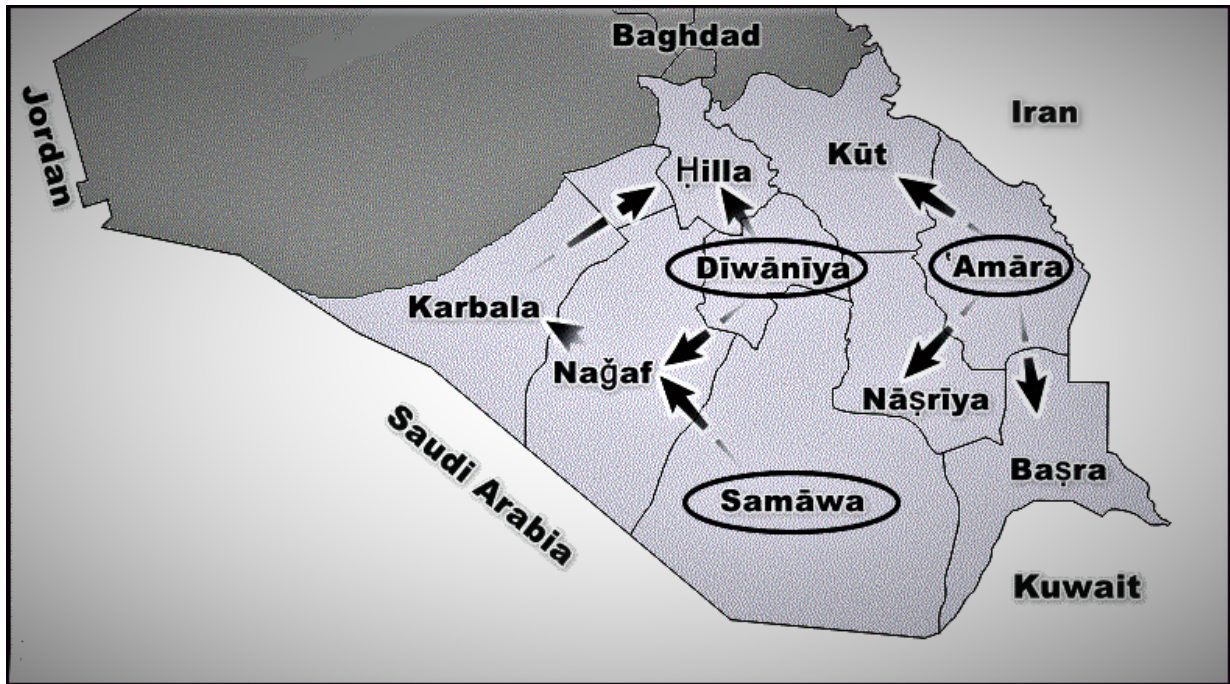
Map 3. The present-day distribution of the voiced fricative /ž/ in the šrūgi dialectal area

The present-day distribution picture of the voiced fricative /ž/ on Map 3., however, was not so in the premigratory situation (Map 4.). It is usually considered a stigmatized rural feature that spread in stages from a rural ž-dialect to a dialect area where it is not heard of before. Accordingly, with all probability, today's intensive presence of the voiced fricative /ž/ can be attributed to two reasons. First, the massive movements of ž-dialect-speaking peasants into areas in which this reflex is previously unknown, and second, the forced displacement of a ž-dialect-speaking tribe, wholly or partially, from its ancestral land to a new place due to tribal disputes.



Map 4. The premigratory distribution of the voiced fricative /ʒ/ in the *šrūgi* dialectal area

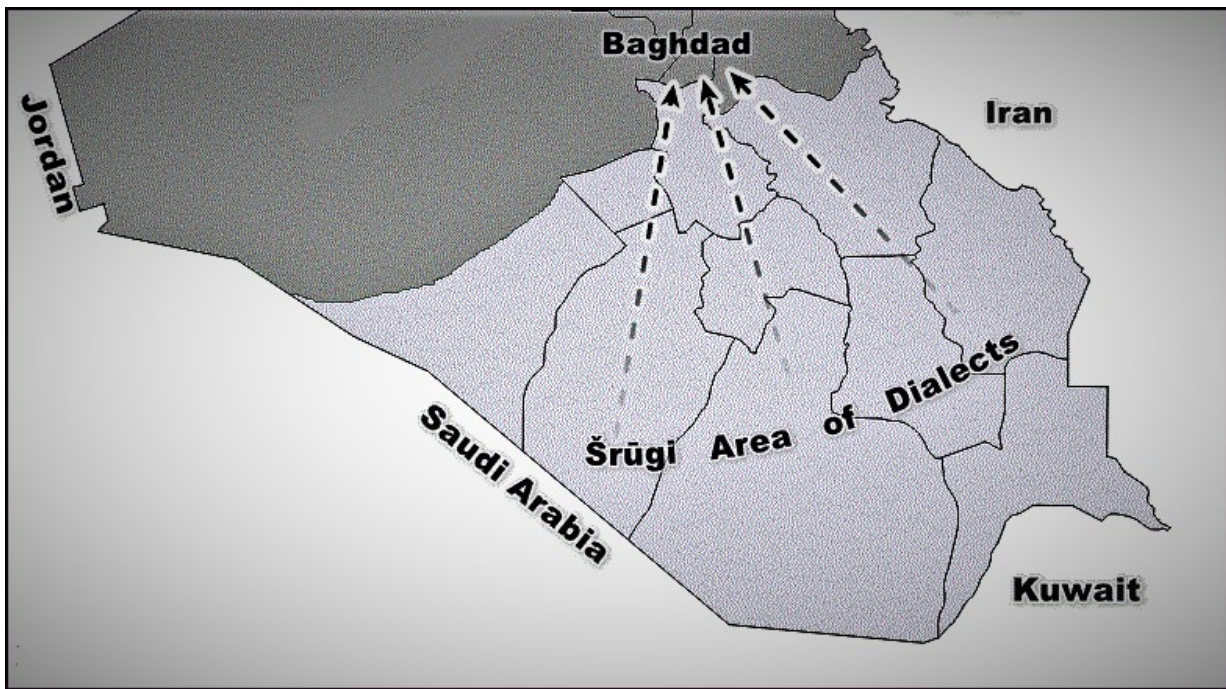
Moreover, one can also assume that the voiced fricative /ʒ/ spread from two different geographic starting points. The first goes from ^ʿAmāra southwards to Nāṣriyya and Baṣra, and northwards to Kūt on the Tigris, the second southwest from Samāwa and Dīwāniyya, the hubs of the *ž*-dialects in the Middle Euphrates area, up to Naṣraf, Karbala, and Ḥilla on the Euphrates (Map 5.). This can be evidenced by the tribal correlation found between the tribes in the source areas and those in the target areas. Therefore, *ž*-speakers in Nāṣriyya and Baṣra are closely related to those in ^ʿAmāra, whereas those in the southwest area are closer in consanguinity to the neighboring population in Samāwa and Dīwāniyya than to ^ʿAmāra.



Map 5. The postmigratory situation of the voiced fricative /ʒ/ in the šrūgi dialectal area

The second point of interest is that the frequency of the voiced fricative /ʒ/ becomes less and less the further southwest one goes in the Middle Euphrates area. Similarly, the further southeast of ^ʿAmāra, the source of the voiced fricative /ʒ/ in the south, along the west bank of Shatt Al-Arab we go, the less frequent this reflex becomes. This gradual spatial decrease of the voiced fricative would indicate that it is a postmigratory feature rather than a premigratory one.

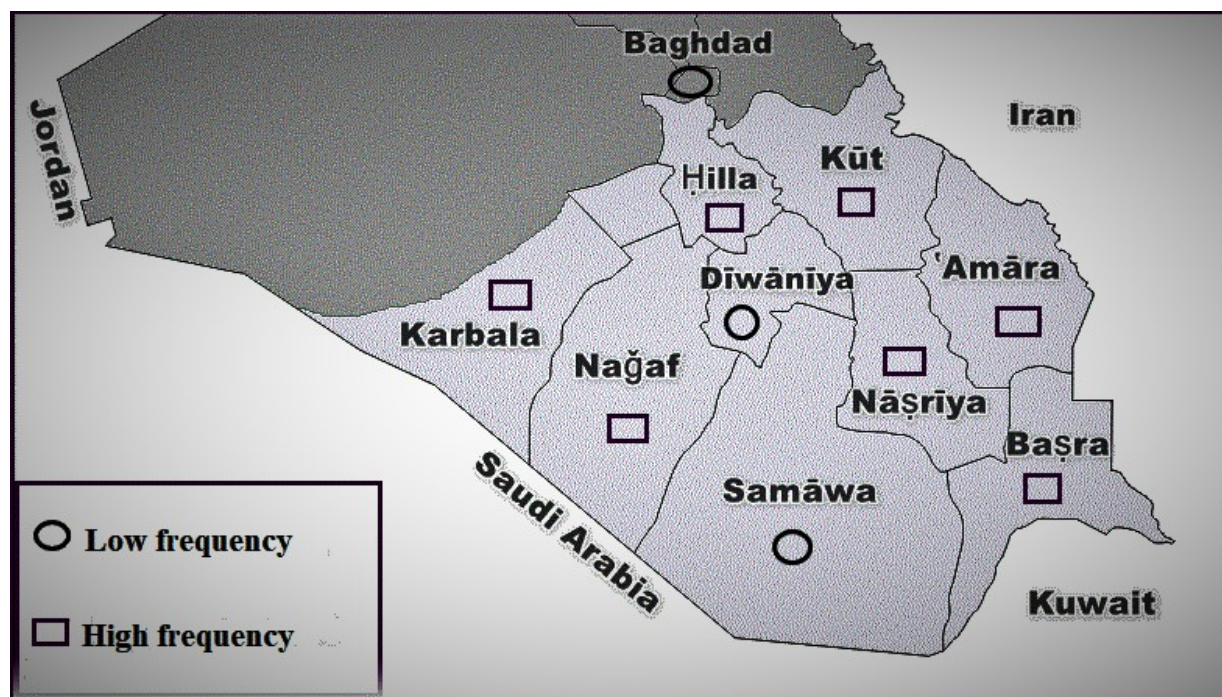
In Baghdad, on the other hand, the voiced fricative /ʒ/ represents a particular case in that it occurs to an inconsiderable extent, as a postmigratory feature, amongst immigrant communities hailing from different šrūgi areas of dialects (Map 6.). Most of them moved out of agriculture, in the second half of the past century, in search of better opportunities to improve their living conditions, and they usually live in heavily populated quarters of the capital.



Map 6. The voiced fricative /ž/ as a postmigratory feature in Baghdad

4. The palatal approximant /y/

The geographic distribution picture of the palatal approximant /y/ appears to be quite different from that shown for the voiced fricative /ž/. The palatal approximant /y/ is in principle a premigratory feature in the completely rural *šrūgi* dialectal area, though its frequency of occurrence in this area is not the same. It is found to be considerably higher in frequency in the rural areas of Bašra, ^ʿAmāra, and Nāšriyya in the south, but it becomes lower the further southwest one goes in the area (Map 7.). In Kūt, however, the palatal approximant /y/ is found to be widespread among Bedouins and villagers alike.



Map 7. The frequency of the palatal approximant /y/ in the šrūgi dialectal area

In the strongly rural *ž*-dialects of Dīwāniyya and Samāwa in the Middle Euphrates area, for example, the palatal approximant /y/ appears only sporadically as a postmigratory feature amongst immigrants from the neighboring *y*-dialects as well as amongst Iraqi returnees, or the so-called *bidūn* ‘stateless’, from some Gulf countries. However, the frequency of use of the palatal approximant becomes again higher in the rural areas further southwest in Karbala, particularly amongst the tribesmen of il-Mas‘ūd, a branch of the Šammar tribal confederation.

A similar situation obtains in Baghdad and in the southern and southwestern parts of the šrūgi dialectal area, where the presence of the palatal approximant is a result of the mass migration of rural residents to urban areas. In these urban areas, the palatal approximant is typically bound to a low sociolinguistic variety and it underwent therefore radical changes under the influence of the prestigious urban dialects in which the phoneme /ǧ/ is usually preserved as a voiced fricative.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the present paper proceeded from the assumption that there are a critical gap and an incomplete picture of the classification of the *ǧalāt* dialects, in comparison to their *ǧaltu* counterparts that received priority attention in the literature on Iraqi-Arabic dialectology. The main aim of this paper was therefore to cover this gap and to provide new insights in support of the division of the *ǧalāt* dialects into šrūgi- and non-šrūgi dialectal areas. For this purpose, the geographic distribution of ǧ-

reflexes is presented. It has been shown that *ǧ*-reflexes are nowadays present in all *šrūgi* dialects, but completely absent in the non-*šrūgi* ones. It has been also shown that the voiced fricative /*ǰ*/ is, for the most part, a postmigratory feature in contrast to the palatal approximant /*y*/, which seems to be premigratory.

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