

Grammatical borrowing in Domari

Yaron Matras

1. Background

Domari (also Domi, sometimes also Qurbati) is the Indo-Aryan language spoken by a population of commercial nomads in the Middle East. The language retains some archaic Indo-Aryan features, such as the Middle Indo-Aryan present-tense conjugation, but also shows some radical re-structuring in the past-tense conjugation and in syntactic typology. In this respect it resembles Romani, also an Indo-Aryan diaspora language of originally peripatetic groups. The self-appellations *rom* and *dom* are also related, both deriving from Indic *dom*. However, some isoglosses separating the two language appear to be rather ancient, and it is highly unlikely that they both split from the same ancestor language after leaving India.

The present chapter deals with the only dialect that has been extensively documented – that of the Palestinian Doms of Jerusalem (see Matras 1999; Macalister 1914). The language is confined strictly to oral use within the family and, to a limited extent, with members of other Dom communities. The precise history and date of arrival of the group in the region remain unknown. The language shows a layer of Kurdish influence, and the community has a sense of affinity to another, Arabic-speaking population of commercial nomads who are referred to as “Kurds”. Arabic has been the principal contact language for many centuries. The Jerusalem community began shifting to Arabic in the 1960s, and individuals who were raised since this period are largely monolingual in Arabic, with only passive exposure to Domari. It is estimated that out of a total number of between 600–1000 community members, only around 10 percent speak Domari fluently; the language is thus endangered or even moribund. Whatever information is available suggests that this is also the situation at least in urban Dom communities elsewhere in the Middle East.

2. Phonology

The Domari sound system strongly resembles that of its contact language, Palestinian Arabic, though it is not always obvious that this is due to borrowing

or convergence. All consonants with the exception of /p/, /v/ (interchangeable with /w/), /tʃ/ and /g/ are shared with Arabic. Uvular /q/ appears also in the pre-Arabic component and may be the outcome of Iranian (Kurdish) influence (e.g. *qištoṭa*, alongside *kištoṭa* 'small'). The glottal stop /ʔ/ is distinctive only in the postposed negation marker *-éʔ*:

- (1) *n-mang-am-éʔ*
 NEG-want-1SG-NEG
 'I don't want.'

The pharyngeals [ħ] and [ʕ] appear to be restricted to Arabic-derived lexical loans, but pharyngealization of dentals /t, d, s, z/ is transferred to the pre-Arabic component as well: [wɑ:ʔ] 'stone', [dɑnd] 'tooth'. Consonant gemination also appears independently of the Arabic component: [tilla] 'big'. Under Arabic influence, the affricates /tʃ, dʒ/ are being reduced to sibilants /ʃ, ʒ/. In the case of the voiced affricate, a similar change has fairly recently taken place in the Arabic dialect as well, and some variation is still observable.

All vowel sounds with the exception of [ɔ] and [ʌ], both rather infrequent, are shared with Arabic. As in Arabic, there is variation in the realization of the short vowel phonemes /i/ [i, i, i] /a/ [a, æ, a] and /u/ [u, u, u], and of long /ā/ [a: æ:, a:], with back vowels preferred in the vicinity of uvular and pharyngealized consonants, as in [ʔɑ:t] 'Arab', but [tat] 'heat'. As in Arabic, the vowels /u/ and /i/ are often interchangeable: *džuwir/džiwir* 'woman' (also a feature of Kurdish). Prothetic and epenthetic vocalization around initial consonant clusters can also be regarded as a general regional phenomenon. Prosody and intonation are largely shared with Arabic.

3. Morphological typology

As a New Indo-Aryan language, Domari will have undergone a re-structuring of its past tense formation leading presumably at some stage to the emergence of split morphological ergativity. Evidence to this effect is the use of the originally oblique form of the pronoun for *ama* 'I', and the construction of the past-tense conjugation, based on the attachment of what once were oblique personal clitics (*kard-o-m* 'I did' < **karda-o-me* 'done-by-me') (cf. Matras 2002: 145–151). The language is, however, no longer ergative, though this might be attributed to the general drift away from ergativity in northwestern Indo-Aryan frontier languages as well as in Iranian, and there is no con-

crete evidence linking it with the influence of Arabic, which is not ergative, either.

4. Nominal structures

The overall similarity in word-order rules results in a similar positioning of nominal objects in the sentence. The most extensive Arabic influence on nominal structures is in the domain of local relations, more specifically the almost wholesale borrowing of Arabic prepositions. We can assume that Domari lacked prepositions altogether before contact. Local relations expressions that are not borrowed are expressed either by case suffixes, or by genitive-possessive location expressions which consist of a location adverb inflected for (oblique) possession and the Locative case, preceding a head in the Ablative. There is only a very small set of such inherited location adverbs, all expressing strict spatial relations: *mandža* 'in', *bara* 'out', *paš* 'behind', *agir* 'in front', *atun* 'above', *axār* 'below', and *čanč-* 'next to':

- (2) *čanč-is-ma* *kury-a-kī*
 next.to-3SG.OBL-LOC house-OBL.F-ABL
 'next to the house' (lit. 'in its-side from-the-house').

Arabic-derived prepositions may be integrated into this format, as long as the meaning is stative:

- (3) *žamb-is-ma* *lāč-a-ki*
 next.to-3SG.OBL-LOC girl-OBL.F-ABL
 'next to the girl' (< Arabic *žamb* 'next to').

Temporal and more specified spatial relations are generally expressed through Arabic prepositions, the nouns appearing in the Ablative case (serving as a general prepositional case):

- (4) *bašd wars-ak-ki*
 after year-INDEF-ABL
 'after a year' (< Arabic *bašd* 'after')

The Arabic prepositions *maš* 'with', *min* 'from', *la* 'to', *fi* 'in' and *šind* 'at' compete with the synthetic cases Associative, Ablative, Dative, and Locative

respectively. Occasional doubling of case may be observed, e.g. Arabic *fī* 'in' + Locative case *-ma* (see example 6), though in general these prepositions too trigger the default Ablative/Prepositional case on the noun (example 5):

- (5) *mafi bɔy-im-ki*
with father-1SG.OBL-ABL
'with my father' (< Arabic *mafi* 'with')
- (6) *fī šarefi-ma*
in street-LOC
'on the street' (< Arabic *fī* 'in')

Non-Arabic expressions are preferred only with pronominal clitics:

- (7) a. *ab-us-ke*
for-3SG-BEN
'for him'
- b. *minšān zirt-an-ki*
for child-OBL.PL-ABL
'for the children' (< Arabic *minšān* 'for')
- (8) a. *nkī-man*
at-1PL
'by us/at ours'
- b. *šind wud-as-ki*
at old-OBL.M-ABL
'at the old man's' (< Arabic *šind* 'at')

Domari has two formats for the possessive construction:

- (9) a. *bɔy-im kuri*
father-1SG.OBL house
- b. *kury-os bɔy-im-ki*
house-3SG.NOM father-1SG.OBL-ABL
'my father's house'

The second, (9b), in the order head-determiner, is by far the more widespread, and contrasts with the normal Indo-Aryan (including Romani) determiner-head construction. It matches however the Iranian type (cf. Kurdish *mal-a*

Arabic *fi* 'in'
 prepositions
 (example 5):

bav-ê min 'house-DET father-DET me') as well as the Arabic type *bēt abū-y* 'house father-1SG', and is matched even more closely by the (less frequent) Arabic construction *bēt-ō la-ʔabū-y* 'house-3SG to-father-1SG'.

As in Arabic, citation forms of many inalienable nouns must include possessive marking, thus *bɔy-om* 'my father' for 'father', cf. Arabic *abū-y*. Arabic plural suffixes are often retained with Arabic nouns, and usually doubled by a Domari plural ending: Arabic *mislim-īn* 'Muslim-s', Domari *mislim-īn-e*. Finally, the overuse of the Domari demonstratives *ahalihi/ehe* with nouns, and a slight erosion of their deictic focusing quality, as in 'and this man went into this house, to fetch this jar of water', resembles the tendency in Arabic discourse toward generalization of the reduced demonstrative *hā-* (< *hādal/hādi/hadōl*), which tends to accompany the Arabic definite article in similar contexts (Domari has no definite article).

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5. Verbal structures

Domari differs from Arabic in its structure of past tenses, but the two languages share a distinction between the present indicative and subjunctive (Domari *lah-ami* 'I see', *lah-am* 'that I see'; Arabic *b-ā-šūf* 'I see', *ā-šūf* 'that I see'), as well as the absence of an explicitly structured future tense. For aspectual distinctions, Domari relies directly on Arabic-derived auxiliaries expressing habitual, inceptive, and iterative aspect, which retain their Arabic tense and person inflection. Unlike in Arabic, however, these auxiliaries are followed by an indicative, not subjunctive, form of the main lexical verb:

- (10) *kunt aw-ami.*
 was.1SG come-1SG
 'I used to come.'
- (11) *šārat mangišk-ari.*
 began.3SG.F beg-3SG
 'She began to beg.'
- (12) *baqēt kamk-ami.*
 continued.1SG work-1SG
 'I continued to work.'

e widespread,
) determiner-
 Kurdish *mal-a*

The conditional is formed with the Arabic auxiliary *kān* with the Domari anterior past:

- (13) a. Domari
law ēr-om xužoti kān laher-d-om-s-a.
 if come.PAST-1SG yesterday COND see-PAST-1SG-3SG-ANT
- b. Arabic
law až-īt mbāreh kān šuft-ō.
 if came-1SG yesterday COND saw.1SG-3SG
 'If I had come yesterday I would have seen him.'

Modal expressions, with the exception of *sak-* 'to be able to', are all borrowed from Arabic. The modal expression for obligation and necessity *lāzim*, and that for possibility, *mumkin*, are impersonal. The expression for desire/intention, *bidd-*, retains its Arabic person inflection, and is followed by the Domari subjunctive.

Arabic loan-verbs are integrated into Domari by incorporating the isolated stem of the subjunctive form – e.g. *-štrī-* from *a-štrī* 'that I buy', *-šīš-* from *a-šīš* 'that I live' – into the inflected loan-verb integration markers *-k-* from *-kar-* 'to do', for transitives, and *-h(r)-* 'to (have) become', for intransitives: *štrī-k-ami* 'I buy', *šīš-hr-omi* 'I live'.

Domari and Arabic both lack a verb 'to have'. Although contact influence will not have been the source of the absence of 'to have', the specific Domari possessive expression *wāšī-m* 'with-me, at-mine' for 'I have' (rather than a construction of the type 'to-me there-is', as in other Indo-Aryan languages) does resemble Arabic *šind-i* 'at-mine'. There are also similarities in the organization of existential predications. While Arabic has nominal predications in the present tense and lacks a present-tense copula, Domari, in contrast with its overall SVO structure, retains an enclitic copula, which, in the past tense, is modified by the (non-clitic, non-final) Arabic-derived copula *kān*:

- (14) a. Domari
ama mišta-hr-omi.
 I ill-COP-1SG
- b. Arabic
ʔana šayyān.
 I ill
 'I am ill'

- (15) a. Domari
ama kunt mišta-hr-om-a.
 I was.1SG ill-COP-1SG-ANT
- b. Arabic
ʔana kunt ʕayyān.
 I was.1SG ill
 'I was ill.'

Like Arabic (but also Kurdish), Domari lacks infinitives in modal constructions, and employs a present-subjunctive form of the embedded verb instead:

- (16) *bidd-ī dža-m kury-a-ta*
 want-1SG go-1SG.SUBJ house-OBL-DAT
 'I want to go home'

6. Other parts of speech

Domari shows a massive amount of Arabic loans in its grammatical vocabulary. All numerals above '5', with the exception of '10' and '100', are derived from Arabic (e.g. *sitte zirt-ēni* 'six children-PRED'), and some speakers also use Arabic numerals for '3, 4, 5'. The quantifiers *akam* 'few' and *kull* 'all' (alongside Kurdish-derived *giš*) are from Arabic, as are most indefinite pronouns, with the exception of *ek-ak* lit. 'one' for 'somebody, anybody'. Most Arabic indefinite pronouns show only a shallow level of grammaticalization, and are similar in structure to the nouns from which they derive (e.g. *hāža* 'thing, anything', *wāhad* 'one, anyone', *maħall* 'place, somewhere'). They are integrated into Domari by adding the Domari indefinite article *-ak*: *maħal-ak* 'somewhere, anywhere, nowhere', *hāža-k* 'something, anything, nothing'. Other indefinites, such as *dāʔiman* 'always', are borrowed directly. Expressions for the days of the week, dates, and usually also seasons are Arabic-derived, with times of the day showing a mixture of Turkish (*šabaħtan* 'morning'), Arabic (*zuhur* 'midday'), and Indic (*arāti* 'night').

Domari borrows the Arabic interrogatives *ʔayy* 'which?', *qaddēš* 'how much?', and *waqtēš* 'when?' (though not from Jerusalem Arabic; they appear to have been adopted prior to settlement in the city, from Beduin or rural dialects). Further pronouns borrowed from Arabic include the reciprocal *bašd* (*laherde bašd* 'they saw one another'), and the third-person resumptive pronoun *iyyā-*, which retains Arabic-derived gender and number inflection

(*mana illi torim iyyā-h* 'the bread that you gave me [it]'; see below, on relative clauses).

All connectors (coordinating and subordinating conjunctions), discourse markers, interjections, particles, fillers, and tags in Domari are Arabic, and assume the same position in the utterance as they do in Arabic. They include *ū* 'and', *fa* 'and so', *bass/lākin* 'but', *wila* 'or', *wala* 'nor', *iza / law* 'if', *lamma* 'when', *qabel mā* 'before', *baʿd mā* 'after', *baʿdēn* 'and then', *yaʿnī* 'that is', the phasal adverbs (e.g. *lissa* 'still, yet, no longer') and focus particles (e.g. *bass* 'only', *kamān* 'too'), the particles *ʔa* 'yes' and *la* 'no', and more. The factual complementizer *inn-* carries Arabic inflection and, like in Arabic, may either be impersonal, with a default third person masculine singular marker, or agree with the subject of the complement clause:

- (17) *ama sin-d-om inn-o/inn-ak atu ʕiʕhr-ori hinēn.*
 I hear-PAST-1SG COMP-3SG.M/COMP-2SG you live.2SG here
 'I heard that you live here.'

While place deictics remain Indic, many temporal deictic expressions are borrowed from Arabic, including *hallaʔ* 'now' and *baʿdēn* 'later'.

In the adjective, comparative and superlative forms are borrowed wholesale from Arabic, including their lexical forms, rendering all adjectives in the language (except those whose positive forms are also Arabic-derived) suppletive:

- (18) a. *tilla-akbar-akbar wāhed*
 'big bigger biggest'
 b. *qiʕtoʕa-azyar-azyar wāhed*
 'small smaller smallest'

This can be explained by the motivation to borrow a comparative/superlative procedure, but the inability to segment the Arabic comparative/superlative into analysable morphemes (cf. Arabic *kbīr-akbar* 'big-bigger').

7. Constituent order

Constituent-order rules in Domari are on the whole fully compatible with Arabic. Both languages have flexible word order, with a tendency toward SV(O) in isolated, categorical sentences, and with other patterns as options.

Since most Indo-Aryan and Iranian languages are SOV, this can be considered a clear case of convergence with Arabic. The only exception appears to be in present-tense copula clauses, discussed above (examples 14–15). The more frequent Domari possessive construction shows the order possessed–possessor noun (example 9b), matching that of Arabic.

The original position of the Domari adjective was in front of the noun (see Macalister 1914). Adjective-noun constructions are still encountered (20a), but they are greatly outnumbered in all contexts by an alternative construction in which the noun is followed by the adjective, to which a non-verbal predication marker is attached (19b):

- (19) a. *ēr-ī* *qištōt-ī šōnī*.
 came-3SG.F little-F girl
 ‘A little girl came.’
 b. *ēr-ī* *šōnī qištōt-ik*.
 came-3SG.F girl little-PRED.F
 ‘A little girl came [A girl came, being little].’

The order of (19b) – originally a marked construction – matches the noun–adjective order found in Arabic.

The position of local relation expressions is mixed. While adverbial constructions based largely on inherited material may have the modifier in a position following the noun (example 21), Arabic-derived prepositions occupy the same pre-nominal position as in Arabic (21):

- (20) *kury-is-ma* *bara*
 house-3SG.OBL-LOC outside
 ‘outside the house’
 (21) *min kury-a-ki*
 from house-OBL-ABL
 ‘from the house’

8. Syntax

In both languages, non-verbal predications allow subject and predicate to appear in adjacent positions, which might be interpreted as ongoing convergence on the part of Domari with the structure of Arabic nominal clauses:

(22) a. Domari
ama mišta-hr-omi.
 I ill-COP-1SG

b. Arabic
ʔana ʕayyān.
 I ill
 'I am ill'

(23) a. Domari
wuda bizzot-ēk.
 old.M poor-PRED.M

b. Arabic
l-xityār miskīn
 the-old.M poor.M
 'The old man is poor.'

Another sign of convergence in non-verbal predications is the fact that, while Domari retains Indo-Aryan negation particles (*na/n*) elsewhere, in non-verbal predications it adopts Arabic *mišš*:

(24) *pandži mišš bizzot-ēk.*
 3SG NEG poor-PRED.M
 'He is not poor.'

The Arabic verbal negator *mā* is used for the negation of modal and auxiliary verbs borrowed from Arabic, as well as in the vicinity of Arabic-derived prepositions and particles:

(25) *warik-ar-a mlāy-ēk minšan mā džan-ad-is.*
 wear-3SG-ANT veil-PRED.M so.that NEG know-3PL.SUBJ-3SG
 'She used to wear a veil so that one would not recognise her.'

Clause combining rules in the two languages are by and large identical, Domari drawing entirely on the pool of Arabic connectors and subordinating conjunctions:

(26) *qabel mā dža-m xatāšk-ed-om kam-as.*
 before COMP go-1SG.SUBJ finish-PAST-1SG work-OBL
 'Before I left I finished my work.'

- (27) *iza wars-ari, n-aw-am-e?*
 if rain-3SG NEG-come-1SG-NEG
 'If it rains, I shall not come.'
- (28) *na kil-d-om bara liʔann-hā wars-ari.*
 NEG go.out-PAST-1SG out because-3SG.F rain-3SG
 'I did not go out because it is raining.'
- (29) *ū daʔiman/ yaʔnī/ kunt ama kury-a-m-ēk wala.*
 and always that.is was.1SG I house-OBL-LOC-PRED.F and.not
kil-šami wala aw-ami.
 exit-1SG and.not come-1SG
 'And I was always/ I mean/ at home, not going out nor coming.'
- (30) *kānū lamma qayišk-ad-a kunt wēšt-am-a wāšī-san.*
 was.3PL when cook-3PL-ANT was.1.SG sit-1SG-ANT with-3PL
 'When they were cooking I used to sit with them.'

As in Arabic, there is no infinitive in Domari, and the verbs of modal clauses normally appear in the subjunctive (see example 16). Finally, relative clauses in Domari take over the Arabic structure, including both the uninflected relativizer *illi*, and the presence of an Arabic-derived resumptive pronoun with third person head nouns, which agrees with the head noun in gender and number, retaining Arabic inflection:

- (31) *mana illi to-r-im iyyā-h*
 bread REL gave-2SG-1SG RES-3SG
 'the bread you gave me'
- (32) *ple illi to-r-im iyyā-hum*
 money REL gave-2SG-1SG RES-3PL
 'the money(PL) you gave me'

9. Lexicon

All semantic domains of the Domari lexicon adopt Arabic loans. The only limitations on lexical borrowing are in the domain of grammatical vocabulary, more specifically referential and deictic pronouns, and place deictics,

both of which categories seem uninfluenced by borrowings. Alongside Arabic loans, Domari has also retained some Kurdish lexicon (*zara* 'boy', Kurdish *zaro*), as well as Turkish lexical loans (*qapi* 'door', Turkish *kapi*).

10. Conclusion

It would be useful at this stage to remind the reader that under "borrowings" and "loans" we understand those (Arabic-derived) forms in Domari, for which the language has no inherited alternative; they are thus distinguished from ad hoc switches or mixing patterns. This said, the extent of Arabic borrowing into Domari can be described as nothing less but massive. It is indeed easier to point out those domains in grammar in which borrowing is not found; even for those, exceptions or some hedging of another kind can usually be found: There is no borrowing of case inflection (but Arabic has no synthetic case markers), of synthetic tense marking (though Arabic-derived modality and aspect auxiliaries retain their Arabic tense inflection), of person marking on verbs, prepositions, or nouns (though Arabic-derived modality and aspect auxiliaries retain their Arabic person inflection, and Arabic person agreement markers may appear with Arabic-derived complementizers such as *inn-* 'that' or *li?ann-* 'because', as well as on the resumptive pronoun *iyyā-*). There is also no borrowing of definite articles (which exist in Arabic but not in Domari, but may occasionally accompany Arabic nouns in Domari discourse), of personal pronouns, or of demonstratives. These domains thus appear as "resistant to borrowing" – at least in the history of Domari so far; but given the extent of grammatical borrowing in the language, we may have a tentative indication of those domains of grammar which the forces of contact-induced change may find more difficult to infiltrate. Already the presence of (at least some) Arabic-derived items in the Domari set of lower numerals, in verbal negation, and in existential constructions, put Domari on the extreme side of the continuum for grammatical borrowing.

A remarkable feature of Domari–Arabic contact is the reliance on the borrowing of actual linguistic *matter*, or MAT-borrowing. While in some domains this is the obvious choice, it is not at all self-evident that Domari should use Arabic-derived prepositions, inflected aspectual auxiliaries, or even subordinating conjunctions. The absence of language-internal grammaticalization processes to replicate the Arabic model (*pattern* replication or PAT-borrowing) in these domains indicates considerable flexibility within the speech community; it appears to allow itself to shift and re-define the

demarcation boundaries between the two separate sets of forms, rules and constructions – the “internal code” Domari, and the “external code” Arabic – which together constitute the speakers’ linguistic repertoire, and to maintain a boundary that is almost symbolic, drawing only on a limited amount of everyday vocabulary items, deictic and anaphoric reference tools, and the structuring of tense and of person agreement, as the almost exclusive components of the linguistic instrument used to flag and negotiate in-group identity. The other linguistic-mental processing operations, most notably those associated with discourse and utterance organization and clause combining, rely entirely on Arabic structures; for these operations, the two codes are inseparable, having undergone “fusion” (cf. Matras 1998). In this respect, the absence of PAT-borrowing in a series of grammatical domains might be interpreted as a kind of “weak resistance” against the collapse of cross-linguistic demarcation boundaries, or perhaps as “full acceptance” of fusion.

One outstanding domain that relies on *pattern* replication is the formation of non-verbal predications. The presence of nominal sentences in Arabic, but not in Domari, is a major typological difference between the languages. Here, Domari accommodates by replicating at least one principal feature of the Arabic nominal sentence, namely the placement of Subject and Predicate in adjacent positions, not separated by a verb. The verbal element in Domari then follows the predicate; somewhat ironically, this is also the only construction type in which Domari resists full accommodation to Arabic word-order rules, maintaining a verbal copula in enclitic position. As discussed above, in the past tense this difference too is minimized, once again by resorting to MAT-borrowing of Arabic copula forms.

Abbreviations

ABL	ablative	M	masculine
ANT	anterior	NEG	negation
BEN	benefactive	NOM	nominative
COMP	complementizer	OBL	oblique
COND	conditional	PAST	simple past (perfective)
COP	copula	PL	plural
DAT	dative	PRED	(non-verbal) predication marker
DET	(possessive) determiner	RES	resumptive pronoun
F	feminine	SG	singular
INDEF	indefinite article	SUBJ	subjunctive
LOC	locative		

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Grammatical Borrowing in Cross-Linguistic Perspective

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Mouton de Gruyter
Berlin · New York

Mouton de Gruyter (formerly Mouton, The Hague)
is a Division of Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin.

⊗ Printed on acid-free paper which falls within the guidelines of the
ANSI to ensure permanence and durability.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Grammatical borrowing in cross-linguistic perspective / edited by Yaron
Matras, Jeanette Sakel.

p. cm. — (Empirical approaches to language typology ; 38)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-3-11-019628-3 (cloth : alk. paper)

1. Language and languages — Foreign elements. 2. Grammar, Com-
parative and general. I. Matras, Yaron, 1963— II. Sakel, Jeanette,
1973—

P324.G73 2007

410—dc22

2007042917

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data is available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

ISBN 978-3-11-019628-3

ISSN 0933-761X

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