

# GENDER OF UNMARKED FEMININE NOUNS IN BENI HAMMOU

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## ABSTRACT

All languages refer to gender as feminine and masculine. Arabic as one of these languages distinguishes between feminine and masculine genders. In Arabic<sup>1</sup> feminine words have the ending ‘-a’ to be different from masculine words which carry no suffix and thus are unmarked for gender: حَـاِـرـاـ ‘stone’, and رَـوْـدَـاـ ‘rose’ are examples of feminine nouns having ‘-a’ at the end, while تَـبَـلَـةـ ‘plate’ and كَـرْـسِـيـ ‘chair’ are masculine nouns without being marked. However, there are cases where the feminine nouns are unmarked and the decision about whether a noun is feminine or masculine is hard.

This paper is intended to examine variation in the unmarked feminine nouns in Beni Hammou Arabic (BHA), a spoken variety in Beni Hammou, a village among the thirteen villages<sup>2</sup> that form the valley of Beni Snous which is an area situated on the Algero- Moroccan confines, 600 km North West of Algeria and 35km far from Tlemcen. Classical Arabic (CA) is considered here as a reference point by which the variation in question in this paper is to be compared.

**KEYWORDS:** Unmarked Feminine Nouns, Variation, Masculine, Feminine

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<sup>1</sup> Arabic here is used to refer to both CA and modern Arabic dialects (MAD).

<sup>2</sup> The thirteen adjacent villages making up the valley of Beni Snous are: Tafessera, Tlata (also called Mghanine), Zahra, Beni Bahdel, Keddara, Beni Hammou (the village under investigation), Khémis, Ouled Moussa, Ouled Arbi, Beni Achir, Beni Zidaz, Ajdir Sidi Larbi, and Mazzer.