Arabic and Berber originally had highly different constructions for relative clause (RC) formation. This makes relative clause formation a central topic in studying the Arabic influence on the development of the Berber constructions. The many different questions involved in this issue will be studied here in more depth than was the case with other syntactic structures. I think this focus is defensible for two reasons. In the first place, there are few structures where Arabic and Berber were so different at the outset. In the second place, relative clause formation being highly changeable in Berber, it allows us to define both processes of convergence and processes of divergence. Put otherwise, while the rest of this study automatically focusses on convergence (which elements were taken over from Arabic), this subject can also be used to detect processes that go the other way round, i.e. where Berber has developed in the opposite direction of the Arabic system. This presents highly relevant evidence for the assessment of the Arabic influence on northern Berber in general. Is there a general process of convergence, that one could call a Maghribian “Sprachbund” (Maas 2001, 2002), or do the different languages show individual directions of change, that only converge to a limited extent?

12.1 General Overview of the Systems

In Classical Arabic and in eastern Arabic varieties (e.g. Cairo, Woidich 2006:199), the main characteristics of relative clause formation are as follows:

1. Obligatory resumptive pronominal reference in verbal RCs. With subject relatives, this reference is automatic, as the subject markers constitute an integral part of the verb; in other relative constructions, reference is made by means of bound pronouns.
2. Different constructions for RCs with a definite head and RCs with an indefinite head. Definite RCs are linked to their head by means of a relative marker, which, in Classical Arabic, marks number and gender of the head noun; case is only marked in the dual, and follows the case of the head noun,
irrespective of the function of the head in the RC. In eastern Arabic varieties, the relative pronoun is normally invariable. RCs with indefinite heads have no relative marker, and follow an asyndetic pattern.

The Maghribian Arabic constructions are similar:

1. Resumptive pronouns are obligatory in the RC when the head functions as a prepositional complement; if it functions as a direct object, resumptive pronouns are facultative (Brustad 2000). Subject marking is part of verb morphology, so subjects are always marked.
2. The difference between definite RCs and indefinite RCs as found in Classical Arabic is basically the same in Maghribian dialectal Arabic (for more details and exceptional constructions, see Maas 2011:248). With definite RCs the relative marker is invariable lli or (d)di.

The “classic” Berber structure, as found in Tashelhiyt, Tuareg and (to some extent) Kabyle, is quite different:

1. Many Berber languages have different constructions for RCs with a definite head and RCs with an indefinite head. RCs with an indefinite head have a kind of paratactic construction, in which the RC is fully identical to a normal clause. This construction has been baptized “relatives adjo"intes” by Lionel Galand (2002a:332).
2. There is no pronominal reference in the RC. Subject relatives have a special inflection, the so-called participle, which originally marked gender and number of the head, but which in many languages has lost one of these distinctions or both (cf. Drouin 1996, Kossmann 2003a).
3. Clitical pronominal elements precede the verb, instead of following it. In prepositional RCs, the remaining bare prepositions—i.e. prepositional phrases from which the (pro)nominal element has been extracted—are also put in pre-verbal position.
4. There is no dedicated relative marker. Head nouns of RCs are mostly marked by a deictic clitic; in many varieties, this is most frequently the anaphoric clitic (which could be considered a cataphoric in this context); constructions with other deictic clitics are also possible, but less frequent.

In many Berber varieties, RC structure has undergone major changes. In some cases this is most easily explained as an internally driven innovation. In other cases, Arabic influence has probably been a major inspiration.