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## UNRESEARCHED SOURCES OF YEMENITE ARABIC

Written texts reflecting the influence of the colloquial Arabic of Yemen on Arabic and Judeo-Arabic literature are represented by two kinds of material: Muslim-Arabic and Judeo-Arabic. There are also several examples of sentences or separate words in Yemenite Arabic recorded in Latin characters by European scholars already in the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Only a small part of this material is published (mostly Judeo-Arabic); many manuscripts are still unknown to scholars. Of course all such manuscripts and documents are to be listed. But this list may be compiled only after cataloguing by computer or, at least in card form, all Arabic and Judeo-Arabic manuscripts in the world. Nevertheless, as the research in this field is of great importance, it must be done without waiting for the completion of the cataloguing process, because it is now possible to make available some undescribed or only briefly described manuscripts and documents. Below is given some information about certain manuscripts in Soviet and American collections comprising material on the history of the Yemenite Arabic dialects.

Among Judeo-Arabic texts the most widely known group of sources is medieval poetry by Jewish authors in Yemen. Although there are some monographs and articles dealing with this kind of poetry,<sup>2</sup> there still remain a lot of texts unused by scholars. For instance, more than 90 years ago David Günzburg described an anthology of poems in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic written in Yemen.<sup>3</sup> But who knows that there may not be some other anthologies of the same type in his manuscript collection (now in the Lenin Library, Moscow)?<sup>4</sup>

Judeo-Arabic sources comprising Yemenite dialect material include not only poetic, but also prosaic literary texts as well as documents and letters, for example, the fragment Adler 2575 from the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York. E. N. Adler defines this fragment as a "description of a journey by an Egyptian Jew",<sup>5</sup> but it

<sup>1</sup> C. Niebuhr, *Description de l'Arabie. D'après les observations et recherches faites dans le pays même*, I. Paris 1779, pp. 122-125.

<sup>2</sup> W. Bacher, *Die hebräische und arabische Poesie der Juden Jemens*. Budapest 1912; Y. Raṣḥabi. *Yalqut šire Teman*. Jerusalem 1969.

<sup>3</sup> D. Günzburg, *Mis-sifre Teman*. Festschrift zum achtzigsten Geburtstag Moritz Steinschneider. Leipzig 1896, hebr. Abt., pp. 87-97.

<sup>4</sup> Shelfmarks: Günzburg collection N<sup>o</sup>s 1254, 1290, 1300, 1519, 1520, 1521.

<sup>5</sup> [E. N. Adler], *Catalogue of Hebrew manuscripts in the collection of Elkan Nathan Adler*. Cambridge 1921, p. 128, N<sup>o</sup> 2575.

seems to me that the author was not an Egyptian Jew; most probably he was a Yemenite one. Such an assumption is based on some specific Yemenite features of the text, e.g. the relative pronoun *allaḏī* is used in one unchangeable form in spite of the plural in a determinated word: *al-gōyīm allaḏī ḏali‘ū* (f. 1v) "the non-Jews that went out (or up)". Moreover, the use of the particles *qad* and *lam*, not before verbs, but before other words (in this case pronouns) is strange for literary Arabic and is observed neither in Middle Arabic nor in the Egyptian dialect, but is usual in Yemenite Arabic.<sup>6</sup> For example: *wa-qad anā mayyit min at-ta‘ab* (f. 2r) "and I'm really dead of fatigue", *wa-lam ma‘anā šī* (f. 1v) 'and we had nothing with us". The fragment has no beginning and no date. According to the type of script, it may be dated within the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries.

The same linguistic forms occur in two later texts. The first one is a Judeo-Arabic manuscript of the tale of the Brass City which I found in the Second Firkovich Collection in 1964 and briefly described in Russian.<sup>7</sup> E.g.: *wa hiya-llaḏī staftaḥhā l-Iskandar* (f. 1v) "and it is [the Brass city] which Alexander [the Great] occupied; *ayn allaḏī banaw Baḡdād* (f. 6v, 9r) "where are those who built Baghdad?"; *anā ra‘ayt mā lam aḥad yarāh* (f. 11r) "I have seen something nobody has seen".

The manuscript including the tale of the Brass City has neither beginning nor end, no colophons or other dates. It may be from the sixteenth or early seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup> It was not simply a copy of the above-mentioned tale. It included also some other texts, but only one of them is preserved. That is a story about Yēhōšū‘ b. Nūn (Jesus Navin), undoubtedly of Jewish origin. The manuscript from the Firkovich collection contains only the beginning of this story (f. 11v), but there exist some complete manuscripts of it. In November 1989 I had the opportunity to examine one of them in the library of the Lehmann Foundation (New York) and to receive a photocopy of it.<sup>9</sup> In this story one can find phrases like *wāḥid wa-ḏalāḏīn sulṭān allaḏī ahlakhum Yēhōšū‘ b. Nūn* (f. 41v)<sup>10</sup> "thirty-one sultans (var.: kings) that were killed by Jesus Navin"; *aṣ-ṣawā‘iq allaḏī kānat fi-l-hawā* (f. 43v) "the thunders that were in the air". Also several cases of using the conjunctive adverb *lamman* instead of the literary *lammā* occur, e.g. *fa-lamman tasallam ar-rasūl al-kitāb* (f. 42v) "and when the messenger received the letter"; *fa-lamman aḥaḏ al-kitāb* (ibid.) "and when he took the letter"; *fa-lamman šāhadū bi-ḏālik* (f. 43r) "and when they looked at that [thing]".<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> E. Rossi, *L'arabo parlato a San‘a*. Roma 1939, p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> В. В. Лебедев, *Арабские сочинения в еврейской графике. Каталог рукописей*. Leningrad 1987, № 429 (shelfmark: Hebr.-arab. II 1461).

<sup>8</sup> For more details, see В. В. Лебедев, *Следы южноарабской фольклорной традиции в сказках "1001 ночи"*. *Народы Азии и Африки* 1973:1, pp. 105-106. (Traces of South Arabian folklore tradition in the Tales of Arabian Nights. In Russian.)

<sup>9</sup> Shelfmark: Lehmann Y 6003, f. 41v-43v. Here I take the opportunity to thank Dr. Manfred R. Lehmann and Prof. Elazar Hurvitz for kindly informing me about this manuscript and for making a photocopy of it for me.

<sup>10</sup> Hebr.-Arab. II 1461, f. 11v (var.: *malikan* instead of *sulṭān*).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Joshua Blau, *Diqduq ha-‘ibrit—ha-yehudit šel yeme—ha-benayim*. Jerusalem 1961, p. 248-249.

There is also a rare manuscript reflecting a special Yemenite version of the Judeo-Arabic Bible translation. The manuscript is kept in the Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library (St. Petersburg) in the non-Genizah part of the Antonin Collection.<sup>12</sup> Although Dr. Abraham Albert Harkavy twice tried to draw the attention of scholars to it about ninety years ago,<sup>13</sup> nobody has examined it till now.

This codex on 322 folios contains Genesis and Exodus in Hebrew with the Targum Onkelos and an Arabic translation. There are no dates; the very common type of watermark "tres lunes" without any letters or supplementary signs (contramarks) does not help in dating. But the name of a single scribe mentioned in an undated colophon (f. 185v) — Mōšē b. Yēhūdā al-Ḥarrāq — gives an opportunity to suppose middle nineteenth century as an approximate date.<sup>14</sup> The Hebrew text and the Targum text have Tiberian vocalisation, the Arabic translation has a Babylonian one.<sup>15</sup>

Dr. A. A. Harkavy supposed the well-known Judeo-Arabic Bible translation by the famous Gaon Saʿadia (Saʿīd) al-Fayyūmī (882-942) to be represented here.<sup>16</sup> But in fact this text is quite different from Saʿadia's tafsīr. It is most probable that it may be a special Yemenite version of the Judeo-Arabic Bible translation. Besides some Middle-Arabic forms, common to all medieval vernaculars of Arabic, there are some specific Yemenite features: an unchangeable *allaḏī* and a prefix *ša* to mark the future tense.<sup>17</sup> E.g., *bi-l-ḥidmat allaḏī taḥdimnī* (f. 106r: Gen. XXIX,27) "for the work you will serve me"; *ša-aḏkur* (f. 151r: Gen. XLI,9) "I'll remember"

As for Muslim-Arabic texts, three manuscripts with poetical content, acquired in the 1970's by the State Public Library in St. Petersburg, must be mentioned. The oldest of them is a collated copy of the diwan of the sixteenth-century Yemenite poet Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Šaraf al-Dīn (1530-1601),<sup>18</sup> grandson of the Zaidite Imam Šaraf al-Dīn. According to C. Brockelmann, there are at least two other copies of this diwan, both in Europe (in Leiden and Berlin).<sup>19</sup> The Leningrad copy bears the date 9th of Ramaḏān, 1088 of the Hijra (5th of November, 1677 A.D.). Two more manuscripts are kept in the same library, in the manuscript collection of Prof. I. Y. Krachkovskii (1883-1951), a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.<sup>20</sup> Both manuscripts were copied in the middle of the nineteenth century and contain poems by 17 authors, only three of whom are mentioned in C. Brockelmann's *Geschichte der*

<sup>12</sup> Shelfmark: Antonin A 12.

<sup>13</sup> Отчетъ Императорской Публичной библиотеки за 1899 г. СПб. 1903, p. 76; Отчетъ ... за 1902 г. СПб. 1910, p. 207 (Reports of the Public Library for the year 1899 and for the year 1902).

<sup>14</sup> The same scribe copied in 1848 a manuscript of Pirque de Rabbi Eliʿezer, now in the Ben-Zvi Institute, see: Yosef Tobī. Yemenite Jewish Manuscripts in the Ben-Zvi Institute. Jerusalem 1982, p. 30 № 36 (Hebrew).

<sup>15</sup> Babylonian vocalization in Judeo-Arabic texts of Yemenite origin (as well as Hebrew and Aramaic) is not so rare. It occurs for instance in the above-mentioned manuscript of the tale of the Brass City. Отчетъ за 1899 г., p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Отчетъ за 1899 г., p. 76.

<sup>17</sup> В. В. Лебедев, Поздний среднеарабский язык. Moscow 1977, p. 45.

<sup>18</sup> Shelfmark: Arabic new series (Ar.n.s.) 601.

<sup>19</sup> C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, 2. Leiden 1938, p. 399 № 2.

<sup>20</sup> Shelfmarks: Kr. 20 and Kr. 21.

*arabischen Litteratur*. The main part of one manuscript (Kr. 21, ff. 1v–27r) is a diwan of the Yemenite poet ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā al-Anīsī (1754-1835), but there are also some poems of three other authors (ff. 27v–30v); the second one (Kr. 20) is an anthology of poems by 14 authors. The poems are mostly of pious contents, but some of them are secular lyrics.

The most typical dialectal features of these poems are the prefix *ša* for the verbal form of future, e.g. *ša-abkī* "I'll cry" (Ar.n.s. 601, f. 25v; Kr. 21, f. 7v); *šašrab* "I'll drink" (Ar.n.s. 601, f. 79v); *šašbur* "I'll suffer" (Kr. 20, f. 6v). There are also some common Middle Arabic forms, e.g. the personal pronouns 1st pl. *iḥnā* (Kr. 21, f. 6v, 23r) and 2nd pl. masc. *intū* (Kr. 20, f. 3r). Very often the form *ḏā* is used as the demonstrative pronoun instead of the ordinary *hādā* (Ar.n.s. 601, f. 14v, 26r, 81v, 83r, 112r; Kr. 20, f. 1v; Kr. 21, f. 11).

Even this brief survey of the material leads to several fairly obvious conclusions. First, these and similar manuscripts must be examined in more detail. Second, a description of any Arabic or Judeo-Arabic manuscript, interesting from a dialectological point of view, should include its linguistic characteristics. Self-evidently, research on the Yemenite version of the Judeo-Aabic Bible translation must be continued.