

AN EGYPTIAN ARABIC ZAJAL FROM THE FOURTEENTH (?) CENTURY

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The text published here, *Ḥikāya fī ḍamm an-nisāʾ* ‘A Story in Dispraise of Women,’ a sort of narrative ballad in Egyptian Arabic, is included in the manuscript Firkovich Evr.-Arab. II 852, a booklet (*karrās, kurrās*) of 18 folios, 15 x 11.5 cm in size, containing three other pieces of Arabic popular literature: *Ḥikāyat al-ḥarb bayn al-ṭuyūr wa-l-wuḥūš* (folios 1–12), *Ḥikāya li-ʾaḥad min al-buxalāʾ* (folios 12–15), and *Ḥikāya ʿan baʿḍ al-naḥwīya* (folios 17–18). The manuscript is preserved in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, previously known as the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library. It belongs to the collection of manuscripts acquired by Abraham Firkovich (1787–1874) in 1862–76, mainly from the Old Karaite Synagogue in Cairo, by Firkovich called Genizat Miṣrayim, but also from other places, among them the famous “Cairo Geniza”, i.e., the Rabbanite Ben ʿEzra Synagogue in Fuṣṭāṭ. The whole manuscript, by Victor Lebedev dated to the 14th century,¹ is written in Hebrew characters and by the same hand. Thus it probably was written in the Classical period of Judaeo-Arabic.² Apart from a few folios, the text is fairly well preserved. Folios 15–17, which contain the present *zajal*, are preserved in good shape. I have published the text tentatively in a conference volume (1993);³ of the three prose texts in the manuscript, I published two, in 2002⁴ and 2004.⁵

¹ Lebedev 1987: no. 453, p. 95.

² Hary 1987 defines the periods as follows: Early JA 9th–10th centuries, Classical JA 10th–15th centuries, Later JA 15th–18th centuries, Modern JA 19th–20th centuries; p. 122, Diagram 13.

³ Palva 1993.

⁴ Palva 2002.

⁵ Palva 2004. In the same collection, different versions of the longest prose text (folios 1–12, 273 lines in all) are found in at least four further manuscripts and fragments: Evr.-Arab. II 1546 (9 fol., 14th–15th c.), Evr.-Arab. II 1528 (3 fol., 15th–16th c.), Evr.-Arab. I 1110 (2 fol., 4th–15th c.), and Evr.-Arab. II 1603 (1 fol., 15th c.). I discuss the language of these

1. THE LANGUAGE

The language form of the prose texts in this MS is sub-standard Arabic with some Egyptian Arabic features, whereas the linguistic structure of the *zajal* text is closer to the local dialect, with only a few classical devices common in sub-standard texts, such as 9b קד *qd*, 8e יתגאדלון *ytǧ²dlwn*, and 12c לא יז *l yz²l*. In addition to the Hebrew script, the text displays rather few Judaeo-Arabic features. One of these is /š/ instead of /s/ in 5a אשמעו ^צשמ^עו ‘listen! (pl.)’. Another is probably the form ‘*azūz(a)* ‘old woman’ (4b עווה ^צzwzh; 6a, 8a עוו ^צzwz; cf. Modern Cairene ‘*agūza*), which implies affricated pronunciation of /ǧ/ at the time when the regressive assimilation took place. Compared with the texts written in prose, there is a natural reason for the lack of literary features, namely the more or less bound form of poetry. Above all, this is due to the fact that this poem is a *zajal*, and it belongs to the very character of this genre that it is composed in dialectal Arabic and not in literary Arabic like the *muwaššaha*, the other well-known genre of strophic poems originating in al-Andalus; in the latter, only the *xarja* is written in dialect.⁶

2. THE METRE

If the present manuscript actually comes from the 14th century, the ballad is a relatively early example of *zajal* poetry in Egypt. This poem (*himl* ‘a load’), which comprises 12 stanzas (*dōr*) divided into five distichs – except the first one, which has two lines – is far from being a literary masterpiece. The technical clumsiness of the poem is, of course, at least partially due to its rather poor oral transmission.

versions in the forthcoming proceedings of the “First International Symposium on Middle Arabic and Mixed Arabic throughout History,” held in Louvain-la-Neuve in May 2004.

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Monroe characterizes the *zajal* and the *muwaššaha*, the two “sister-genres” (Stern’s term, Stern 1974: 12) as follows: Both are strophic, both incorporate vernacular elements, both contain puzzling departures from the rules of Classical Arabic metrics, *muwaššaha* poets often function as *zajal* poets and vice versa, *muwaššaha* passages are often quoted in *zajal* and vice versa, and both genres originated in Andalus. According to a medieval Arabic source, the *muwaššaha* was invented in Cordoba toward the end of the ninth century; however, the earliest surviving *muwaššahas* are from the beginning of the eleventh century. Although the earliest extant *zajals* are those of Ibn Quzman (d. 1169), in Monroe’s opinion, the *muwaššaha* is derived from the *zajal*, not vice versa as is usually supposed. According to him, it is probable that *zajal* poetry, often sung at markets, was popular in Cordoba at the beginning of the tenth century. See Monroe 1989.

The rhyme-scheme of the poem is regular: *aa bbbaa cccaa dddaa eeeaa fffaa*, etc. The poorest rhyming line is 7a, which orthographically is blameless, as it ends in the same sequence *nh* as 7b and 7c, whereas its last word *sana* phonetically does not match with *mitmanna* (7b) and *miftanna* (7c). The *zajal* proper always has an initial refrain, *maṭlaʿ*, usually a couplet rhymed AA. This pattern is very popular; it is, for instance, used in the major part of the *zajals* included in the Bouriant collection.⁷ About this rhyme pattern, Pierre Cachia says: “I have never heard this particular pattern in a popular performance, and its prevalence in the 1893 publication must be taken to indicate either that Bouriant’s informant had strong personal preferences, or that the fashion has since changed. In particular, the arrangement in distichs has virtually disappeared from popular songs, except in print.”⁸

The underlying metrical pattern of the present poem seems to be $\sim \sim \sim / \sim \sim // \sim \sim \sim / \sim \sim$, but it is obvious that the person who has written down the text has not paid much attention to the metre. In the first stanza (lines 2a-2e) the hemistichs have been indicated by a space; the exceptionally long first hemistich of 2d has been separated from the second hemistich by the symbol “. After 3a, no spaces have been left between the hemistichs.

In spite of a great number of metrical irregularities, some lines seem to follow a relatively regular pattern, provided that they for the most part are read according to the *iʿrāb*-less structure of spoken language. Such lines are, e.g., the following:

- (1a) ʔnfsd ḥāl ʔlzmʔn // wʔnʿwǧ ʔlʿtdʔl
ʔinfasad ḥāl / ʔiz-zamān // w-inʿawaǧ ʔil- / ʔiʿtidāl
- (2a) km mlyḥh mbdʿh // qsmhʔ q[s]m mšwm
kam mliḥa / mubdiʿa // qisməhā qis- / min mašūm
- (3c) wʿly ʔlšʔq ʔlryyq // txtḏb ʔw tntqš
wi-ʿala š-šāq / ʔir-raqīq // tixtiḏib ʔaw / tintiḏiš
- (5c) ʔltqy srbh nsʔ // qʿdyn fwq ʔlqbwr
ʔaltiḳi sur- / bat nisāʔ // qāʿidīn fōq / ʔil-qubūr
- (6c) wʿlyhʔ mntqḥ // blhyʔkl wlḥrwz
wi-ʿalēhā / mintāqa // bi-l-hayākil / w-il-ḥurūz
- (8d) wlqyt dyk ʔlšhwd // qʿdyn fy qyl wqʔl
wi-laqēt dīk / ʔiš-šuhūd // qāʿidīn fī / qīl wi-qāl

⁷ Bouriant 1893. Of the 34 pieces, two are narratives.

⁸ Cachia 1989: 32.

It must be admitted that the number of such more or less regular lines is limited, and both the vocalization and the analysis can be questioned.

3. THE ORTHOGRAPHY

The orthography follows in broad outlines the conventions of Arabic script. It lacks many conventions of Judaeo-Arabic, such as the often occurring *plene scriptum* of short vowels (e.g. כול *kwl* = *kull*) and the use of two consecutive semi-vowels (exceptions: 4b איימ *ʿyyām* = *ʿyyām*; 6e עייאל *ʿyyāl* = *ʿyyāl*); in addition, there is an uncertain case of marking gemination by two letters (8c אתתפקת *ʿ[ʔ]t[ʔ]qt* = *ʿittafaqt?*). In the word *walla(h)* ‘by God’ (12b), the geminate *ll* is, following the Arabic orthographic conventions, written with two consonants: ואלה *wʿllh*. In this item, as is common in this manuscript, the sequence *ʿl* is written with the ligature ʿ. However, in the rhyme-words it is almost consistently written with two separate letters (אל); the only exception is 6d אסל *ʿlsʿl*. After a preclitic particle, the א ʿ of the article is as a rule omitted, e.g. 5d כלגואל *klgzʿl*; 5e ולנקאב *wlnqʿb*; 6c בלהיאכל ולחרוז *blhyʿkl wlhṛwz*; there are two exceptions: 8e ואגל *wʿgl*; 11c ואיטבילי *wʿlṭbyly*.

Among the consonant equivalents used in MS II 852, the following may be mentioned:

/x/ = *kaf* + superscript diacritic: כֿ;

/d/ = *ṣade* + superscript or a subscript diacritic: צֿ or צֿ;

/z/ = *ṣet* + superscript diacritic: טֿ; because the historical /d/ and /z/ have merged, the symbols are used indiscriminately;

/ǧ/ is indicated by *gimel* + superscript diacritic: גֿ (instead of the alternative Judaeo-Arabic notation *ʿayn* + superscript diacritic, as in Arabic orthography: عֿ), and therefore the eventual de-affrication of /ǧ/ has not been indicated.⁹

/d/ = *dalet* + superscript diacritic and /t/ = *taw* + superscript diacritic do not occur here, since the interdentalals have become postdental stops.

It has to be observed that the diacritic dots are most often omitted, obviously at random, for example: 2d אכרה *ʿkrh* = *ʿuxra*; 2d כיאל *kyʿl* = *xayāl*; 3b תכנק *tknq*

⁹

Blanc 1981: 188–193 discusses the different orthographical conventions for writing the dialectal reflex of the OA *jīm* in Egyptian Judaeo-Arabic. In Cairo – in the Muslim, Christian and Jewish population – the final stage of depalatalization can be traced to the period 1800–1860. The postdental reflex had become stabilized in Cairo by 1900, in Alexandria somewhat later. According to Blanc, in the 17th century /g/ was not yet the normal equivalent of OA *jīm*.

= *tixnaq*; 3b נטר *nṭr* = *naḍar* (or *naẓar*); 5d גזאל *gzʿl* = *gazāl*; 7e גלטהא *glṭhʿ* = *galaṭhā*; 8e קאצי *qʿsy* = *qāḍī*; 9c גראב *grʿb* = *gurāb*; 9d כבאל *kbʿl* = *xibāl*.

4. THE TEXT

15a

- (1a) אנפסד חל' צמאן ואנעוג לאעתדאל
 (1b) אלמלאח יקולו רכאץ ואיחאש יקולו כגואל
 (1a) *ʿnfsd ḥl' ʿzmʿn // wʿnʿwğ ʿlʿtdʿl*
 (1b) *ʿlmlḥ yqwlw rxʿš // wʿlwhʿš yqwlw ġwʿl*

Time has become corrupted, and equity has become distorted.
 Nice people are held in contempt, and uncivilized people are held in high esteem.

- (2a) כס מליחה מבדעה קסמהא ק[ס]ם משום
 (2b) תאכל כמון תקול אשתהינא דא ידום
 (2c) עליהם פֿרד תוב ללסקיע ולסמום
 (2d) ואכרה אוחש מא תכון" בין תיאבה כיאל
 (2e) נפסהא פוק אֿסהא והי מעהא פי קתאל

- (2a) *km mlyḥḥ mbdʿh // qsmhʿ q[s]m mšwm*
 (2b) *ʿkl ʿlkmwn tqwl // ʿšthynʿ dʿ ydwm*
 (2c) *ʿlyhm frd twb // llsqyʿ wlsmwmm*
 (2d) *wʿxrh ʿwhʿš mʿ tkwn // byn tyʿbh xyʿl*
 (2e) *nfshʿ fwq ʿlshʿ // why mʿhʿ fy qʿl*

How many a most refined lady has met with a sad fate!
 She eats caraway and thinks: We hope there will be enough of this.
 They wear the same dress in cold weather and in scorching sun,
 while another woman, the most barbarous that exists, wears fashionable clothes.
 Her mind soars above the Suha star,¹⁰ and she is at odds with the fine lady.

¹⁰

The middle star in the tail of Ursa Major. Because it is the dimmest star in the constellation, it was thought to be the highest among them.

- (3a) ופי איזאר אגדיד מליחה תנתפש
 (3b) תכנק אוזה והי פי אנטר שכל וחש
 (3c) ועלי אשאק ארקיק תכתטב או תנתקש
 (3d) איש יפיד אנקש עלי אבלאט או עלי אידין אבאלאל
 (3e) תקלע איזאר תציב אמוחא עלי אנבאל

- (3a) *wfy ʔʔyzʔr ʔlğdyd // mlyħħ tntfš*
 15b (3b) *txnq ʔlwzh why // fy ʔlndr škl wħš*
 (3c) *wʔly ʔlšʔq ʔlrqyq // txtđb ʔw tntqš*
 (3d) *ʔyš yfyd ʔlnqš ʔly ʔlblʔt // w ʔly ʔydyd ʔlbpʔ*
 (3e) *tqlʔ ʔʔyzʔr tšyb // ʔlmħʔ ʔly ʔlnbʔ*

Beautifully she struts in a new loincloth.
 She tries to hide that she is a plump girl, but her appearance is wild.
 She is painted and decorated with minute care.
 Of what avail are mosaic decorations on the floor or the moisturizer on her hands?
 When she takes off the loincloth, it will appear that nobility is out of her reach.

- (4a) כם ארעי עלי מן נסג אריד אאנקבא
 (4b) כם עוזה פי אנקאב תרעי אייאם אצבא
 (4c) ענד מא [תכש]ף תציב וגה מתל אקטרבא
 (4d) חין תרא דיך אעיון תעתקד אן פי אדאר רגאל
 (4e) אנקאב תקלע תציב שי יפזע אגמאל

- (4a) *km ʔrʔy ʔly mn nsg // ʔryd ʔʔnqbʔ*
 (4b) *km ʔzwzh fy ʔlnqʔb // trʔy ʔyyʔm ʔlšbʔ*
 (4c) *ʔnd mʔ [tkš]f tšyb // wğħ mtl ʔlqtrbʔ*
 (4d) *ħyn trʔ dyk ʔʔywn // ʔʔtqd ʔn fy ʔldʔr rğʔl*
 (4e) *ʔlnqʔb tqlʔ tšyb // šy ʔfzʔ ʔlğmʔ*

How often I set my eyes on a woman who has woven a most desirable veil!
 How many a veiled old woman looks as in the days of a young girl!
 But when [she takes off the veil], you see a face like that of an ogre.
 When you see those eyes, you are sure that there are men in the house,
 But when she takes off the veil, you see something that dispels the beauty.

- (5a) אשמעו מא תם לי ואנא אטיור אחדור
 (5b) גית לבאב אנצר יום אתפרג תם אזור
 (5c) אתקי סרבה נסא קאעדין פוק אקבור
 (5d) אציב פיהם מרה בעוינאת כלגזאל
 (5e) ופי איזאר ולנקאב תסוי מיתין אף מאל

- (5a) ʃmˁw mˁ tm ly // wˁnˁ ʔlʔywr ʔlhˁdwr
 (5b) ɡyt lbˁb ʔlnˁsr ywm // ʔtfr ɡ tm ˁzwr
 (5c) ʔltqy srbh nsˁ // qˁdˁyn fwq ʔlqbwˁr
 (5d) ʔˁyb fyhm mrh // bˁwynˁt kl ɡzˁl
 (5e) wfy ʔˁyzˁr wlnqˁb // tswy mytyn ʔlf mˁl

Listen what happened to me, when I with presentiments of ill fortune¹¹
 the other day came to the Bāb in-Naṣr, to have a look and then to visit
 the place.

I saw a group of women sitting on graves.

Among them I set my eyes on a woman whose eyes were like gazelle's
 eyes

and whose loincloth and veil were worth two hundred thousand pounds.

- (6a) צרת אמשי ולתפת נצרת מנהם עזו
 (6b) אקיאדה ולבאטה פי אמרהא שרע יגו
 (6c) ועליהא מנטקה בלהיאכל ולחרו
 (6d) קאת איש בך יא שבאב קלת אנא קצדי אסלא
 (6e) קאת תעאי אגוּזך גארתי סת אעיאל

- (6a) ʃrt ʔmʃy wˁlʔft // nˁrt mnhm ˁzwz
 (6b) ʔlqyˁdh wlbˁtˁh // fy ʔmrhˁ ʃrˁ y ɡwz
 (6c) wˁlyhˁ mnˁqˁh // blhyˁkl wlhrwz
 (6d) qˁlt ʔyʃ bk yˁ ʃbˁb // qlt ʔnˁ qʃdy ʔlʃlˁl
 (6e) qˁlt tˁly ʔ ɡwzk // ɡˁrty st ʔlˁyyˁl

¹¹ Syntactically unclear. The translation is based on the assumption that *ʔayr* is here used in the meaning '(bad) omen'; cf. G. W. Freytag, *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum* 'augurium, pec[uliariter] infaustum, malum omen'; E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* *lā ʔayra ʔillā ʔayru llāh* 'there is no evil fortune but that which is of God'. On the other hand, *ʔayr* also means 'thoughtlessness', 'inconstancy'.

I went nearer, and watching more closely, I noticed among them an old woman,

whose responsibility it perhaps was to act as her guardian and to act on her behalf.

She wore a belt, decorated with dummies and amulets.

She asked, "What do you want, young man?" I said, "I want to have one of a good family."

She said, "Come here, I will let you marry my neighbour, from a top family."

(7a) קלת אנה איש עמרהא קלת אתנעשר סנה

(7b) קלת אנה שוארהא קאלת סעירה מתמנה

(7c) קלת אנה איש אמלאכהא קלת דור מפתנה

(7d) סלת סן טול שערהא קלת טויל מתל לחבאל

(7e) קלת ואיש הו גלטהא קלת סמינה לא תסאל

(7a) *qlt ʔn ʔyš ʕmrhʔ // qʔlt ʔtnʕsr snh*

(7b) *qlt ʔn ʕwʔrhʔ // qʔlt sʕyrh mtmnh*

(7c) *qlt ʔn ʔyš ʔmlʔkhʔ // qʔlt dwr mftnh*

(7d) *sʔlt ʕn twl ʕʕrhʔ // qʔlt twyl ml ʔlhblʔ*

(7e) *qlt wʔyš hw glthʔ // qʔlt smynh ʔ tsʔl*

I said, "How old is she?" She said, "Twelve years".

I said, "Her dowry?" She said, "It is as valuable as one ever can hope for."

I said, "What does she possess?" She said, "Fine houses."

I asked about the length of her hair. She said, "It is as long as a string of ropes."

I said, "What is her flaw, then?" She said, "She is a good catch, don't ask."

16b (8a) דולבתני דל עוזו ובקית דיק אנסא

(8b) וצפולי וצפהא קא גחא אטמאע עסא

(8c) אתתפקת אתקי רוחי גוא אמדרסא

(8d) ולקית דיק אשהוד קאעדין פי קיל וקאל

(8e) כלהם יתגאדלון קדאם אקאצי ואגלא

(8a) *dwlbtny dl ʕwz // wbqyt dyk ʔlnsʔ*

(8b) *wʕfwly wʕfhʔ // qʔl ʕhʔ ʔlmʕ ʕsʔ*

(8c) *ʔtfqt ʔltqy // rwhy ʕwʔ lmdrsʔ*

(8d) *wlqyt dyk ʔlšhwd // q^xdyn fy qyl wq^l*

(8e) *klhm ytḡ²dlwn // qd²m ʔlq²dy w²lḡ²l*

The old woman fooled me, and those women went on describing the girl to me. They said: “You are the greedy Juḥa, we suppose?”

I agreed, and I found myself in a *madrasah* and found the witnesses sitting and saying “It is said” and “He said”. They all were quarreling before the judge and the Majesty.

(9a) קא נרפק תעאו קבל כתב אכתאב

(9b) נחן פי לא ונעם וקד אנחל אנקאב

(9c) אתפת אתקי איש ואחדה אסוד מן אגראב

(9d) קלת קלבי טיעני ללהרוב לא תקע פי דל כבאל

(9e) ארקאד מע אכלאב אכיר כיר מן דל עיאל

(9a) *q^l nrfq t²lw // qbl ktb ʔlkt²b*

(9b) *nhn fy P wn^cm // wqd ʔnhl ʔlnq²b*

(9c) *ʔlft ʔltqy ʔyḡ // w²ḡdh ʔswd mn ʔlḡ²b*

(9d) *qlt qlby t^yny llhrwb // P tq^c fy dl xb^l*

(9e) *ʔlrq²d m^c ʔlkt²b // xyr xyr mn dl ʔy^l*

She said, “Let’s be friends! Come over here before writing the marriage contract.”

While we hesitated between “no” and “yes”, the veil loosened.

I turned around, and what did I see? I saw a woman more black than the raven.

I said, “Oh my heart, get me to run away lest you fall into this chaos.

Sleeping with dogs is much better than this pack.”

(10a) קלת קלבי תיעני ללהרוב לא תנזק

(10b) קלת קאים באשתרי ללכתאב צפחת ורק

(10c) קאת אפה אשתחי כף אנה מן דל שלק

(10d) כאנת אגואזי אגמיע אשתרולי כתאב לאואל

(10e) שי בכמסין אדראע ואחריר מעודם וגאל

(10a) *qlt qlby t^yny llhrwb P tnznq*

(10b) *qlt q^ym b²stry llkt²b sfht wrq*

(10c) *q^lt ʔfh ʔḡth^y kyf ʔn² mn dl ḡlq*

- 17a (10d) *kʔnt ʔǧwʔzy ʔlǧmyʔ ʔštrwly ktʔb ʔlʔwʔl*
 (10e) *šy bxmsyn ʔldrʔ wʔlḥryr mʔdwm wǧʔl*

I thought, “Oh my heart, get me to run away lest you get caught!”
 I said, “I must go and buy a sheet of paper for the marriage contract.”
 She said, “Fie! I feel embarrassed; how could I belong to that riffraff?
 All my husbands bought for me a marriage contract of finest quality,
 for about fifty ells of rare, expensive silk.”

- (11a) קלת כס לך גוז קאת יגי דון אטרף
 (11b) לי עמר וצהר אסביע ואצלחדאר ולשרף
 (11c) ולמחוגב ואטבילי וסעיד ועבד אעריף
 (11d) וזקילם וזקימו ומפרג והלאל
 (11e) ולי מחמד ושהאב ועלי ואבן כמאל

- (11a) *qlt km lk ǧwz // qʔlt yǧy dwn ʔltryf*
 (11b) *ly ʔmr wšhr ʔlsbyʔ // wʔlšlḥdʔr wʔšryf*
 (11c) *wlmḥwǧb wʔlḥbyly // wʔʔyd wʔbd ʔlryf*
 (11d) *wzqylm wzqymw // wmfřǧ whlʔl*
 (11e) *wly mḥmd wšhʔb // wʔly wʔbn kmʔl*

I said, “How many husbands have you had?” She said, “It’s nothing extraordinary:

I have had ʕUmar, Šahr al-Subayʕ, the Šilahdār, and al-Šarīf,
 and al-Muḥawgab, al-Ṭubayli, Saʕīd, and ʕAbd al-ʕArīf,
 and Zuqaylam, Zuqaymo, Mufarrag, and Hilāl,
 and I have had Muḥammad, Šihāb, ʕAlī, and Ibn Kamāl.”

- (12a) קלת דא פנדק אמיר או דכאן אסביל
 (12b) וללה חגה אערפך דרהמי ואלה קליל
 (12c) וגסמי איכצא יום ויום לא יזא עליל
 (12d) אנא קצדי לאפכאך אלא נקע פי דל כבאל
 (12e) לו את—צלנא איש כאן נקאד אנהאראת וליאל
 כמל

- (12a) *qlt dʔ fndq ʔmyr // ʔw dkʔn ʔlsbyl*
 (12b) *wʔllh ḥǧḥ ʔrfk // drhmy wʔllh qlyl*
 (12c) *wǧsmy ʔqʔ ywm wywm // lʔ yzʔl ʔlyl*
 (12d) *ʔnʔ qšdy ʔlḥfkʔk // lʔ nqʔ fy dl xbl*
 (12e) *lw ʔtḏlnʔ ʔyš kʔn // nqʔd ʔlnḥʔt wlyl*
kml

I said, “That is like an amir’s inn or a hostelry,
 but I have to tell you the truth: I have very little money,
 and in addition to that, my body is getting worse day by day.”
 It was my aim to disengage myself lest I fall into that jumble.
 Had I let them fool me, how much would I have to blame myself, day
 and night!
 The end.

5. LINGUISTIC NOTES

- 1b יקולו *yqwlw*: the dialectal *-n*-less 3rd p. pl. masc. morpheme;¹² here the 3rd p.pl. act. is used in passive function.
- 2a קסם *qsm*: for metrical reasons, probably to be read *qismin*, a typical case of using *tanwīn* in sub-standard texts.¹³
- 2a משום *mšwm*: = *mašūm*; the glottal stop of *mašūm* has been dropped in plain omission.
- 2b אשתהינא *ʾšthynʾ*: in this item, the classical-type Form VIII is genuinely dialectal.
- 2b דא *dʾ*: in Egyptian Arabic vernacular poetry, the demonstrative pronoun is often used independently, as a rule preceding the noun.¹⁴
- 2c עליהם *ʿlyhm*: as in modern sedentary dialects, separate feminine plural forms of personal pronoun have disappeared.
- 2c ולסמורם *llsqyʿ wlsmwrm*: in the latter word, the definite article has probably been written phonetically, i.e., it remains graphically unexpressed (*li-s-saqīʿ wi-li-s-samūm*). The spelling can also simply be due to haplography. For metrical reasons, asymmetric use of article as in 12c, *אנהאראת וליאל* *ʾnhʾrʾt w-lyʾl*, is ruled out.
- 2d אכרה *ʾxrh*: in a 14th-century Judaeo-Arabic text, the orthography *ʾxrh* probably implies that the */-h/* here is understood as a feminine morpheme (*ʾuxra*); in later Judaeo-Arabic texts, such an implication does not exist.

¹² In Blau & Hopkins 1985: 458, the longer form *tqwlwn* ‘you (pl.) say’ is attested, but there are several instances of forms without */n/*: *ltybyʿw* ‘do not sell’, *ʾn ... P tgw* ‘that ... you do not come’ (most likely not to be explained as Classical jussive/subjunctive forms).

¹³ The optional use of *tanwīn* as a morpheme, indicating that the indefinite noun to which it is affixed is followed by an adjectival attribute, is well documented in Middle Arabic texts; see, e.g., Blau 1979: 215–262, esp. 250 and references there.

¹⁴ Cf. Doss 1979: 352; cf. Davies 1981: 163f. and n. 113.

- 2d תיאבה *tybh*: the final ה probably marks the *tā' marbūta*; for metrical reasons, read *tiyābatin*.
- 3a מליחה *mlyḥh*: the final ה *h* probably marks the *tā' marbūta*; for metrical reasons, read *miliḥatin*.
- 3b נטר *ntr*: it is uncertain whether the word has to be read *naḍar* or *nazar*. In most cases, the result of the merger of Old Arabic *ḍād* and *zā'* is /d/ or, in dialects in which the interdentalals are preserved, /ḍ/. However, in Modern Cairo Arabic this item belongs to a limited group of words in which the reflex of *ḍād* and *zā'* is the sibilant substitute *z*. No conclusions can be drawn from the orthography, though, since in 6a the corresponding verb is written נצרת, which cannot be read but as *naḍart*.
- 3c תכתב *txtdb* 'she is painted/paints herself', תנתקט *tnṯqṣ* 'she is decorated/decorates herself': instead of the local dialectal t + Form I pattern, the classical Form VIII is used.
- 3d אִישׁ יֵצֵעַ *ʾeš ʾeš*: *ʾeš* is a rather widespread old dialectal form commonly occurring in sub-standard texts. In Modern Egyptian Arabic, it is mainly used in proverbs and set phrases,¹⁵ a usage probably inherited from an earlier period when *ʾeš* was more common, or even the predominant form.¹⁶
- 3d אִישׁ יֵצֵעַ *ʾeš ʾeš*: Egyptian (etc.) Arabic dialectal form.
- 4b עוּזָה *ʾzwh*: Judaeo-Arabic assimilation < *ʾaḡūza*, which implies affricated pronunciation of /ǧ/ at the time when the assimilation occurred.¹⁷
- 4c וַחַה *wḡh*: for metrical reasons perhaps to be read *wi-hin*, as *qismin* 2a above; the form may reflect a situation in which *ḡim* in Cairene Arabic still had two phonetically-conditioned variants (*ǧ* and *g*; cf. the assimilated Cairene (etc.) form *wišš*). Therefore it might here be read as *wiḡh*.¹⁸ There is, however, an alternative possibility to explain the development of the historical reflexes of *ḡim* in Cairene Arabic; in that case,

¹⁵ Hinds & Badawi 1986, s.v. In modern Egyptian dialects, the form *ʾayš* is uncommon, only found in the area of Bani Swayf, see Behnstedt & Woidich 1985: Map 182. According to Hinds & Badawi 1986: 46, it is mainly used in proverbs and set phrases. For the history of the form, see Fischer 1905.

¹⁶ Examples of the use of *ʾeš*/*ʾayš* in seventeenth-century Lower Egyptian Arabic are found, e.g., in al-Maḡribī's *Daḡ al-ʾiṣr ʾan kalām ʾahl Miṣr*: *ʾyš ḥḏh ʾl-xuzaʾbalāt* 'what are these *xuzaʾbalāt* 'superstitions', Zack 2004: 383, and in the dialectal narrative MS Firkovich Evr.-Arab. II 1536: *dʾyš* 'what's this?' 2b19, 7a1, Palva 2000: 93. Still at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Miḡāʾil Šabbāḡ (1784–1816) gives both *ʾayš* and *ayh* as Egyptian Arabic forms, Šabbāḡ 1886: 42, 11–20; the reproach 'what's this?' is (the newer) *dā ʾih* 46, 14–15; see also Talmon 2000: 199–200.

¹⁷ Cf. the same device in Lebedev 1965: 524 *ʾazūz*; cf. *ʾazūza*, *zōz* in Tripoli, Libya, Blanc 1981: 190 n. 8.

¹⁸ In al-Širbīnī's *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, *wḡh* occurs side by side with *wš*, which may be evidence of a palatal realization, Davies 1981: 69. The fully assimilated form is attested from the 15th century, see Blanc 1981: 190 n. 9 (in *al-Mustatraf fi kull fann mustatraf*).

the form *wišš* is not the result of an internal development of Cairene Arabic but due to contact with a dialect in which the reflex of *ǧīm* was affricated.¹⁹

- 4d דיך לעיון *dyk ʿlywn*: dialectal demonstrative pronoun preceding the noun, see note on 2b.
- 4e שי *šy*: for metrical reasons, read *šayyin*.
- 5a אשמעו *šmʿw*: probably a Judaeo-Arabic *š* reflex of *sīn*; cf., e.g., Tunisian Judaeo-Arabic *šətt*, ‘six’; *təšʿ*, ‘nine’; *hšš*, ‘to feel’; *nāš*, ‘people’; *šikkīn*, ‘knife’; *miškīn*, ‘poor’ etc.²⁰
- 5a ואנא אטיור אחרור *wʿnʿ ʿlṭywr ʿlhḏwr*: syntactically unclear, see footnote 11 above.
- 5c אלקי *ʿlqy*: as in 3c above.
- 5c סרבה *srbh*: written according to Arabic orthographic conventions; the final ה probably marks the *tāʿ marbūṭa*.
- 5c קאעדן *qʿdyn*: active participle, especially when used in verbal function, lacks feminine plural forms as is common in modern dialects.
- 5d פיהם *fyhm*: as in 2c above (*ʿlyhm*).
- 5d עוינאת *ʿwynʿt*: for metrical reasons, read *ʿuwēnātin*.
- 6a מנהם *mnhm*: as in 2c above (*ʿlyhm*).
- 6d איש בכ *ʿy bk* ‘what do you want?’ See footnote 15 above.
- 6e אגוז *ʿǧwzk*: metathetic form (*ʿaǧawwizak*, cf. *zwǧ*) common in modern dialects; the metathesis cannot be understood if it had not taken place before the generalized depalatalization of /ǧ/.
- 7a אתנעשר *ʿtnʿšr*: compound, invariable for both case and gender.
- 7c איש *ʿy*: for metrical reasons probably to be omitted.
- 7e תסאל *tsʿl*: for metrical reasons, read *tisāl*; the form might have been a living dialectal form, as in the Syrian oasis of Suxne.²¹
- 8a דל עוז *dl ʿwz*: dialectal demonstrative pronoun preceding the noun, here perhaps used in a pejorative sense.²²
- 8a דיך אנסא *dyk ʿlnsʿ*: as in 8a above.
- 8b וצפולי *wšfwly*: as in modern sedentary dialects, without distinction between masc. and fem. in plural forms of finite verb.
- 8b קא *qʿl*: schematically used 3rd p. sing. masc.
- 8c אתתפקת *ʿtfqt*: the geminated /t/ is exceptionally written with two letters.

¹⁹ Thus Woidich 1995: 502f. According to him, the phonological development supposed by Blanc is highly unnatural.

²⁰ Cohen 1975: 21f.

²¹ Behnstedt 1994: 67f. (*saʿal* - *sāl*, *saʿalat* - *sālit*, *saʿalu* - *sālu*, *yisʿal* but not *yisāl*).

²² Doss 1979: 353.

- 8c רוח *rwh*: used as a synonym of *nafs*, as *rōḥ* in Modern Egyptian Arabic.²³
- 8c מדרסא *mdrsʿ*: orthography follows the rhyme, the fem. suffix is therefore written as */ʿ/*.
- 8d דך אשהוד *dyk ʿlshwd*: cf. 8a דל עוזו *dl ʿzwz*.
- 8d קאעדן *qʿdyn*: as 5c.
- 8d טיעני *tyʿny*: dialectal long vowel in the imperative; Form I used in the function of the obsolete Form IV.
- 9a קא *q ʿl*: *qāl* ‘she said’, schematically used masc. form.
- 9c אלתפת אלתקי *ʿlft ʿltqy* as 3c.
- 9d טיעני *tyʿny*: as 8d.
- 9d and 9e דל *dl*: cf. 8a דל עוזו *dl ʿzwz*.
- 9e אכיר *ʿaxyr*: *ʿaxēr*, attested not only in modern dialects but also in a vocalized letter dated to the 12th–13th centuries.²⁴
- 10a טיעני *tyʿny*: as 8d.
- 10b קאים באשתרי *qʿym bʿstry*: dialectal *b*-imperfect the function of which seems here (still) to be volitive and future, cf. אשתחי *ʿsthy* 10c, which is present indicative.²⁵ By the 12th century the *b*-imperfect had become a fixed verbal form in Judaeo-Arabic.²⁶
- 10c אשתחי *ʿsthy*: /ʃ/ instead of /s/, one of the few Judaeo-Arabic devices of the text.
- 10c דל שלק *dl šlq*: prepositive demonstrative pronoun undoubtedly used in a pejorative sense.
- 10d אשתרולי ... כאנת אנוזוי *kʿnt ʿğwʿzy ... ʿstrwly*: probably a hyper-correct Classical Arabic agreement.
- 10e וגאל *wgʿl*: = *wi-ğāl(i)*, shortened in order to rhyme.
- 11a יגי *ygy*: used in the dialectal sense ‘about’.²⁷
- 11b אצלחדאר *ʿlslḥdʿr*: /ʃ/ instead of /s/ in back environments is common in Judaeo-Arabic texts; in the first narrative in this booklet (folios 1-12), the title is written סלחדאר *slḥdʿr*. In that narrative several other ranks in Mamluk administration are mentioned: *wazīr*, *mušīr*, *ḥāğib*, *sāqī*, *nāʿib*, *ğandār*, and *ʿustadār*.

²³ This item occurs also in a 17th-century Judaeo-Arabic text, Lebedev 1977: 76f., text III *ʿintá ʿšit ráwḥū*.

²⁴ Blau & Hopkins 1985: 459.

²⁵ For a more detailed diachronic discussion, see Palva 2000: 86–89.

²⁶ The earliest example of the *b*-imperfect reported by Blau occurs in a Christian Arabic text from the end of the 9th century, others are found in Judaeo-Arabic texts from the 12th century, Blau 1981: 121f.

²⁷ The same form occurs twice in a 17th-century manuscript from the same collection, Lebedev 1977: 63 (*yigi ʿalf ʿarīq*, *yigi miyat alf dīnār*)

- 12a נד *dʔ*: as in 2b.
 12c נצאני *ʔyqʔ* (= *ʔēdā* or *ʔaydan*): frozen Classical Arabic adverb commonly occurring in sub-literary texts as well as, e.g., in Bedouin poetry (in both forms).
 12c חזי ל *ʔ yzʔl*: Classical Arabic phrase commonly occurring in sub-literary texts.
 12d דל *dl*: as in 10c.
 12e נת-צלנא *ʔtdlnʔ*: = *ʔitdallnā*, the passive-reflexive *t* + I Form. The genuinely dialectal *ʔitdallēnā* would not match the metre.

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לבבין והוטא חק לרגין ואכל לטמין לרגין
 והדה טמין גר ליה וטמין דחייט מן אכבא דחייט
 ומלמס גירחא
 חכמיה כילס לנמא

אנמסך חמל לזמנן ומנשג לאשת דחל
 למלאה יקול רכאץ ולוחא שיקול גוחל
 סי

כס מלחה תמנדעה קמטעה קסס סיסוס
 תאכל לכמל תקול אשתהינא רא ירוס
 עלהס סרד טוב ללסקינע ולמסנעס
 ואכרה אחוש שמא תכר בן תיחבה כחל
 נמקא סק למדא והיסענהא ס קולא
 סי
 ופלא יזאך לגדיר מלחה תמנא

Plate 1. MS Firkovich Evr...-Arab II 852 15a

גבנך לזוזה והים לנטר שכל וחש
 ועל לשאק לרקיק תכתלב או תנתקם
 איש סיפר לבקש על לבלאל או על אידי לבלאל
 תקלע לאיזאר תניב לבח לעל לבחאל

ס"ז

לפס ארש על סנעסן אריל לאנקבא
 לפס פאזק פ לבקאב תרעי אייאס לבכא
 ער סעל קתניב וזה סעל לבקארבא
 קארדיק לעיו תענקר אפי לבאר דאנ
 לבקארבא תניב שייסע לבסאל

ס"ח

לעמ סאלסני ואנא לביור לבדור
 גת לבאב לער יוס אמסרגתם חזור
 לבקארבא קאעניו סוק לבקאר

Plate 2. MS Firkovich Evr...Arab II 852 15b

אטב פוחס מניה בשוי נאת פלגאן
 וס לאיזאר ולקאב תמיי מיתוקל סמל
 ערת אמנשיו ולתמת נרת מעהם עמוז
 לקיארף ולבאטה פאמרהא שרע יגוז
 ועשהא מעסקה בלהיאכר ולחרו
 קלת איש בך יא שבאב קלתאמ קעו גל
 קלת תעלי אאזך גארות סת לשיון
 קלת אמא איש עמרהא קלת אמנשיו
 קלת אמא שוארהא קאלת מערה קעו גל
 קלת אמא איש אמלאכהא קלת לור סמל
 סלת ערסאן שעהא קלת טויל סת
 קלת ואיש הו גלהא קלת מערה לטמ

Plate 3. MS Firkovich Evr...Arab II 852 16a

כאת אחאזי לגטע אשתרוני בטוב לחות
 שיבכמני לרואע ולחריר מעדוס ונא
 קלת כה קב גוז קלת יע דור לטפח
 לעטר וטהר לפיע ולעלח דחר ולשריף
 ולמחוגב ולטביל ומשר ועבד לעריו
 גזקילם וזקיסנו וטמר והלחא
 ונ טחמט ושהאב ועלי ואבר כטאני
 קלת דא סערק אמור אודכא
 וללה חנה אשר סך דדהמני ואל
 והמטי איטא יוס ווס לה יזל
 אמא קרני לאנכאך לאנקע פולכפ
 לאת בלמא איש כאן נקאר להאדאת ופ
 כמל

Plate 5. MS Firkovich Evr.-Arab II 852 17a

